



Supplementary
Evidence for
Level 1 and Level 2

Award (QCF) in
Employability Skills

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Guidance for Teachers

Employment Skills Level 1

The two Credit Unit Group A units are:

Unit T/502/3584 Business and Customer Awareness

Unit A/502/3585 Problem Solving at Work (*may be classroom-based e.g. booking a computer suit for a certain day*)

Unit F/502/3586 Working in a Team (*football, netball, hockey, mini enterprise, class activity such as a charity raffle, organising a school event, youth club/church activity*)

The one Credit Group B units are:

Unit L/502/3610 Working with Colleagues

Unit H/502/3613 Job and Training Search Skills

Unit H/502/3614 Job Application Skills

Unit K/502/3615 Interview Skills

Employment Skills Level 2

The two Credit Unit Group A units are:

Unit T/502/3536 Business and Customer Awareness (some additional information needed)

Unit A/502/3537 Problem Solving in a Place of Work (the school environment may be used)

Unit F/502/3538 Working in a Team

The one Credit Group B units are:

Unit J/502/3542 Understanding Work Principles

Unit K/502/3565 Following Instructions

Unit A/502/3571 Working with Colleagues

Unit D/502/3578 Job Search Skills

Unit H/502/3578 Job Application Skills

Unit D/502/3580 Health, Safety and Security in the Workplace

- Two units from Group A and two units from Group B must be selected for Level 1 and Level 2.
- Three of the group B units in level 2 may be used from level 1 with some additional material.
- Units written in bold are common to Level 1 and Level 2.
- The criteria needed to cover the specifications for Levels 1/2 are in the booklets.
- Any additional information may be found in the Supplementary Booklet.
- Photocopy what you need for each unit and put the four units together in a portfolio when they have been completed.
- Where possible include photographic evidence to enhance the work completed.
- It is recommended that the learners do not take the booklets home.

Units T/502/3584 and T/502/3536

Business & Customer Awareness

Types of Businesses and Organisations

Automotive

Car manufacturers and dealerships

Finance – banks

Banks and building societies

Finance – insurers

Insurance companies and large brokers

Leisure

Fast-food outlets, pubs, entertainment and fitness centres

Public services – local

Local authority services, GP surgeries, emergency services

Public services – national

Central departments such as DELNI, agencies such as the DVLA and publicly-owned services such as Royal Mail

Retail – food

Supermarkets and convenience stores

Retail – non-food

High street shops, out of town stores etc.

Services

Domestic, breakdown, commercial services etc.

Telecoms

Fixed or mobile telephones

Tourism

Hotel chains and holiday operators

Transport

Buses, trains, air travel

Utilities

Gas, water & electricity suppliers

Good/Bad Attitude at Work

- 1 Understand the importance of having a good attitude on the job.
 - 2 Review the important skills in having a good attitude on the job.
- Having a good attitude and showing a good attitude are two different things. One worker could be really positive about his job, but not be cheerful or energetic. He may be perceived as having a bad attitude. Another worker may be perceived as having a good attitude because she smiles and appears to work hard. In reality, this person may complain a lot and only work hard when others are around. Some people tend to be happy and cheerful, and other people tend to be somewhat grumpy and unfriendly.
 - Have a discussion about what it means to have a good attitude while working. Which type of behaviour indicates a good attitude and which indicates a bad attitude?
 - Some indicators of a good attitude are: smile, good posture, talking in nice tone of voice, being interested in others, making complaints in appropriate ways at appropriate times, being respectful and courteous, being calm, doing a good job, and handling anger appropriately.
 - Some indicators of a bad attitude are: unhappy look on face, slumping in chair or while standing, causing trouble (constant complaining, telling co-workers about all the bad things about the job, encouraging co-workers to have a bad attitude, etc.), losing temper, whining, mumbling, doing a poor job, and ignoring others.
 - Discuss why it is important to have a good attitude on the job. Some examples include: you keep your job and have a better chance of getting promoted or getting a raise; you make friends; customers are easier to deal with when you have a good attitude; customers are more likely to come back to your business; and, co-workers work better with you.
 - Discuss some skills that are needed to have a good attitude.
 - All of these points relate to improving relationships on the job and resolving problems on the job. These skills can increase the likelihood that a person will keep a good attitude on the job. If particular learners need specific training in any of these areas, conduct a class to provide the training. As a final note, remind students that their job and their co-workers can affect their attitude. If they are working at a job they hate, and their co-workers have a bad attitude, it is going to be difficult to keep in high spirits. If the students find themselves at jobs like this, it may be time to look for a different job.

Customer Service:

The Institute of Customer Service (ICS). Website: www.csi.com

The ICS research found that the top ten from these priorities are:

- 1 Overall quality of the product or service
- 2 Being treated as a valued customer
- 3 Speed of service
- 4 Friendliness of staff
- 5 Handling of problems and complaints
- 6 Handling of enquiries
- 7 Competence of staff
- 8 Ease of doing business
- 9 Being kept informed
- 10 Helpfulness of staff

The UKCSI is based on the 20 priorities that UK consumers say are most important to them. The survey questions, tailored slightly for each sector are:

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with:

Professionalism	Timeliness
Staff appearance	Speed of service
Helpfulness of staff	On-time delivery/solution
Friendliness of staff	Being kept informed
Competence of staff	Handling of enquiries
Problem solving	Handling of complaints
Ease of doing business	Outcome of complaints
Treated like a valued customer	Reputation
Quality & efficiency	Price/cost
Product/service quality	Billing
Continuity of staff	Product/service range
Information/advice	Ease of doing business
Access/appearance of premises	

Problem Solving at Work

Units A/502/3585 and A/502/3537

5 Whys: Quickly Getting to the Root of a Problem

Why use the tool?

The 5 Whys is a simple problem-solving technique that helps users to get to the root of the problem quickly. Made popular in the 1970s by the Toyota Production System, the 5 Whys strategy involves looking at any problem and asking: "Why?" and "What caused this problem?"

Very often, the answer to the first "why" will prompt another "why" and the answer to the second "why" will prompt another and so on; hence the name the 5 Whys strategy. Benefits of the 5 Whys include:

- It helps to quickly determine the root cause of a problem
- It is easy to learn and apply

How to use the tool:

When looking to solve a problem, start at the end result and work backward (toward the root cause), continually asking: "Why?" This will need to be repeated over and over until the root cause of the problem becomes apparent.

Example:

Following is an example of the 5 Whys analysis as an effective problem-solving technique:

- 1 Why is our client unhappy? Because we did not deliver our services when we said we would.
- 2 Why were we unable to meet the agreed-upon timeline or schedule for delivery? The job took much longer than we thought it would.
- 3 Why did it take so much longer? Because we underestimated the complexity of the job.
- 4 Why did we underestimate the complexity of the job? Because we made a quick estimate of the time needed to complete it, and did not list the individual stages needed to complete the project.
- 5 Why didn't we do this? Because we were running behind on other projects. We clearly need to review our time estimation and specification procedures.

Key Points:

The 5 Whys strategy is an easy and often-effective tool for uncovering the root of a problem. Because it is so elementary in nature, it can be adapted quickly and applied to most any problem. Bear in mind, however, that if it doesn't prompt an intuitive answer, other problem-solving techniques may need to be applied.

1 Define the problem

This is often where people struggle. They react to what they think the problem is. Instead, seek to understand more about why you think there's a problem.

Defining the problem: (with input from yourself and others)

Ask yourself and others, the following questions:

- (a) What can you see that causes you to think there is a problem?
- (b) Where is it happening?
- (c) How is it happening?
- (d) When is it happening? i.e. With whom is it happening? (HINT: Don't jump to "Who is causing the problem?" When we're stressed, blaming is often one of our first reactions. To be an effective manager, you need to address issues more than people.)
- (e) Why is it happening?
- (f) Write down a five-sentence description of the problem in terms of "The following should be happening, but isn't..." or "The following is happening and should be: ..." As much as possible, be specific in your description, including what is happening, where, how with whom and why. (It may be helpful at this point to use a variety of research methods.)

Defining complex problems:

If the problem still seems overwhelming, break it down by repeating steps a – f until you have descriptions of several related problems.

Verifying your understanding of the problems:

It helps a great deal to verify your problem analysis for conferring with a peer or someone else.

Prioritize the problems:

- (a) If you discover that you are looking at several related problems, then prioritize which ones you should address first.
- (b) Note the difference between "important" and "urgent" problems. Often, what we consider to be important problems to consider are really just urgent problems. Important problems deserve more attention. For example, if you're continually answering "urgent" phone calls, then you've probably got a more "important" problem and that's to design a system that screens and prioritizes your phone calls.

Understand your role in the problem:

Your role in the problem can greatly influence how you perceive the role of others. If you're very stressed out then it'll probably look like others are too and you may resort too quickly to blaming and reprimanding others. If you are feeling very guilty about your role in the problem, you may ignore the accountabilities of others.

2 Look at potential causes for the problem

- (a) It's amazing how much you don't know about what you don't know. Therefore, in this phase, it's critical to get input from other people who notice the problem and who are affected by it.
- (b) It's often useful to collect input from other individuals one at a time (at least at first). Otherwise, people tend to be inhibited about offering their impressions of the real causes of problems.
- (c) Write down what your opinions and what you've heard from others.
- (d) Regarding what you think might be performance problems associated with an employee, it's often useful to seek advice from a peer or your supervisor in order to verify your impression of the problem.
- (e) Write down a description of the cause of the problem and in terms of what is happening, where, when, how, with whom and why.

3 Identify alternatives for approaches to resolve the problem

At this point, it's useful to keep others involved (unless you're facing a personal and/or employee performance problem). Brainstorm for solutions to the problem. Very simply put, brainstorming is collecting as many ideas as possible and then screening them to find the best idea. It's critical when collecting the ideas to not pass any judgment on the ideas -- just write them down as you hear them.

4 Select an approach to resolve the problem

When selecting the best approach, consider:

- (a) Which approach is the most likely to solve the problem for the long term?
- (b) Which approach is the most realistic to accomplish for now? Do you have the
- (c) resources? Are they affordable? Do you have enough time to implement the approach?
- (d) What is the extent of risk associated with each alternative?
(The nature of this step, in particular, in the problem solving process is why problem solving and resources are highly integrated.)

5 Plan the implementation of the best alternative (this is your action plan)

- (a) Carefully consider "What will the situation look like when the problem is solved?"
- (b) What steps should be taken to implement the best alternative to solving the problem? What systems or processes should be changed in your organization, for example a new policy or procedure? Don't resort to solutions where someone is "just going to try harder".
- (c) How will you know if the steps are being followed or not? (*These are your indicators of the success of your plan*)
- (d) What resources will you need in terms of people, money and facilities?
- (e) How much time will you need to implement the solution? Write a schedule that includes the start and stop times, and when you expect to see certain indicators of success.
- (f) Who will primarily be responsible for ensuring implementation of the plan?
- (g) Write down the answers to the above questions and consider this as your action plan.
- (h) Communicate the plan to those who will be involved in implementing it and, at least, to your immediate supervisor. (*An important aspect of this step in the problem-solving process is continually observation and feedback.*)

6 Monitor implementation of the plan

Monitor the indicators of success:

- (a) Are you seeing what you would expect from the indicators?
- (b) Will the plan be done according to schedule?
- (c) If the plan is not being followed as expected, then consider: Was the plan realistic? Are there sufficient resources to accomplish the plan on schedule? Should more priority be placed on various aspects of the plan? Should the plan be changed?

7 Verify if the problem has been resolved or not

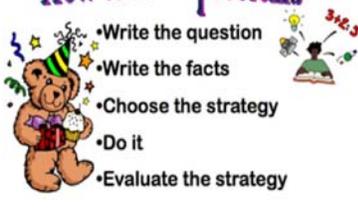
One of the best ways to verify if a problem has been solved or not is to resume normal operations in the organization. Still, you should consider:

- (a) What changes should be made to avoid this type of problem in the future? Consider changes to policies and procedures, training, etc.
- (b) Lastly, consider "What did you learn from this problem solving?" Consider new knowledge, understanding and/or skills.
- (c) Consider writing a brief memo that highlights the success of the problem solving effort, and what you learned as a result. Share it with your supervisor, peers and subordinates.

How to Solve a Problem

How to solve problems

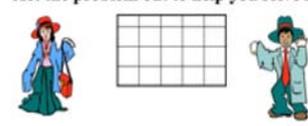
- Write the question
- Write the facts
- Choose the strategy
- Do it
- Evaluate the strategy



Strategy 1

Act it out

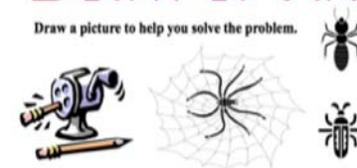
Act the problem out to help you solve it.



Strategy 2

Draw it out

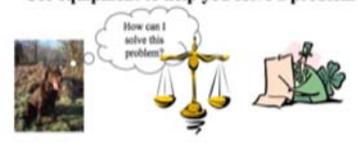
Draw a picture to help you solve the problem.



Strategy 3

Use equipment

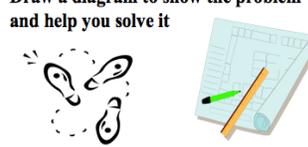
Use equipment to help you solve a problem



Strategy 4

Draw a diagram

Draw a diagram to show the problem and help you solve it



Strategy 5

Make a list

Be organised and write things down as you solve a problem



Strategy 6

Trial and improvement

If at first you don't succeed try try again

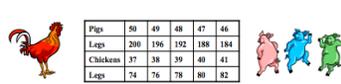


Strategy 7

Draw a table

Put your information in a table so you can spot any patterns and solve the problem

Pigs	50	49	48	47	46
Legs	200	196	192	188	184
Chickens	37	38	39	40	41
Legs	74	76	78	80	82



Strategy 8

Working backwards

Sometimes it's easier to start at the answer and work backwards to find the solution



Problem Solving at Work

- 1 Define the problem – A person cannot solve a problem until he clearly understands and identifies the problem. Try to label the problem in precise and concrete terms. For example, "Joe can't drive me to work" identifies a potential problem. However, it may or may not be a problem depending on other factors. The definition above describes the cause of a potential problem. Rephrasing the problem to "How will I get to work?" puts the focus of the problem solving on getting to work rather than on the fact that Joe stood you up. The fact that Joe can't drive you to work may not be a problem if you have other alternatives. When Joe told you he could not drive affects the significance of the problem. If he told you two days ago, you have less of a problem than if he called 45 minutes before work. A better definition of the problem is "I have to be to work in 45 minutes, my usual ride is not going to show up, and the next bus won't get me to work on time."
- 2 Develop alternative solutions – This is better known as brainstorming. No idea is a bad one. Each idea could be a possible solution. Try to predict your ability to accomplish each solution and predict the consequences. Using the example above, you may consider calling a taxi. In evaluating this alternative, factors such as cost and whether the taxi can get you to work on time would need to be considered. Have the class generate solutions to solve the problem proposed above.
- 3 Make a decision and execute – Pick the best solution and solve the problem using the solution you picked. Have the class pick the best solution to get to work on time.
- 4 Evaluate the outcome – This is where a lot of learning takes place. If the outcome was successful, then the person learns that this is a good solution if the problem arises again. If it was unsuccessful, the person knows that it would be best not to try that solution in the future.

Use the process from above to solve various problems in the booklet. The problems below may be defined well enough to complete the first step in the process. However, always clarify and ask, "What is the problem?"

Problems at Work Relating To People

- You see your best friend at work take some money that does not belong to him.
- Your boss asks you to work overtime, but your son needs to be picked up from school.
- You do not have enough money to pay this month's rent.
- You are laid off from your job.
- Your car needs brakes and you do not have enough in savings to pay to fix it.
- A customer approaches you and complains about the service she received from another worker.
- You break something at work.
- Somebody at work borrowed £20 from you and has not paid you back.

Discuss solving a problem in a crisis: What is a crisis for some people is not a crisis for others. Ask for examples of what the students consider crises. With the help of the students, discuss why it is difficult to make decisions during a crisis. To begin with, decisions that need to be made tend to be harder to make. This could be why a person is in crisis. They have put off making a tough decision or solving a problem until it was an emergency situation. One example is not deciding to go to the doctor for minor chest pains until the chest pains are unbearable. Another problem with making decisions in a crisis is people tend to be emotional, making it difficult to think clearly. A third problem with making decisions during a crisis is that they often need to be made in a hurry. This leaves less time to develop possible solutions. Discuss other factors that the students contribute.

Review some strategies for crisis management.

- Be prepared. A person can't be prepared for everything. However, some of these suggestions should help. Develop a savings account to prepare for the possibility of losing a job or making an emergency purchase. Keep some extra money at home for taxi or bus fare. Keep a spare tyre, jumper cables, and other emergency equipment in your car. Keep your home safe with fire alarms, locks on cabinets where poisons and medications are, and a phone list with emergency numbers.
- If a crisis does develop, try to stay as calm as possible. Keeping a cool head will increase the likelihood that you will make good decisions.
- Take as much time as possible to make a decision. Even if you are under a time crunch, it may be better to make the right decision a little late than a wrong decision early.
- Get assistance. Rely on other people to help you through the crisis.

Problem Solving at Work

Choose a problem relevant to the job as the subject of your interview answer. Give an example of problem solving at the right skill level, not too simple. You're trying to show strong abilities. Lastly, structure your interview answer like a story, with a clear beginning and end:

- 1 Describe the problem, and why it's a problem.
- 2 Explain what had to be achieved to solve the problem.
- 3 Explain how you solved the problem.
- 4 Describe the result, and why it solved the problem.

Example

The job is retail electrical sales. The interview question was 'Give an example of problem solving in your customer service work.'

'A customer had a warranty problem with an appliance. The customer needed it repaired, but we couldn't verify the warranty. The customer had lost the receipt. He was quite upset, and didn't want to have to pay for repairs.

I checked our old sales records, and found a payment, which looked right, given the information provided by the customer. I discovered from the customer that he'd paid by credit card and we could use the credit card statement to verify the date for warranty. The customer was very pleased.'

Analysis

This interview answer demonstrates:

- Good customer service ethic.
- Applicant fully aware of warranty issues.
- Applicant made extra effort to check information.
- Consulted with customer for details.
- Problem could not have been solved without this approach.
- Example relates directly to the sales position.
- The interview answer demonstrated an appropriate level of skills.

Question: How do you deal with difficult customers?

Answer: I listen to the customer and focus on the customer's problem. I don't argue or enter into a dispute over any issues. I work on finding a productive solution, or other helpful options available to the customer.

Explanation for the answer: This answer shows you're staying on track with the business situation. You're representing the employer's interests, and providing the correct response to the customer's needs.

Question: How do you handle complaints?

Answer: There are specific policies and procedures for customers to complain about goods or services. I explain these guidelines to the customer, and take them through each stage, so they understand the process. I don't express any opinion on the outcome of the complaint.

Explanation for the answer: This is the strictly by the book approach, and it's the only truly correct answer. There are no other options in this situation. You can't express an opinion about the outcome of the complaint, because it is usually not up to you to make the decision. You can inform the client of their rights and company policies.

Question: A customer is not sure what they need and comes to you for advice about a product. How do you advise the customer?

Answer: I ask some questions, to find out what product features or other needs the customer requires. It's usually helpful to create a dialogue, so you can check out any particular requirements, or preferences. When I've got that information, I'll show the customer several options and explain how they meet the customer's needs.

Explanation for the answer: Customers only have so much information. They pick up this information from various sources, and frequently can't tell which product is the one they want. The dialogue allows the customer service person to find out what the customer wants from the product and then give correct advice.

Question: You're supervising on a public counter. There's lots of people waiting, and more coming in. What do you do, to get things moving?

Answer: I create a fast line system; one line that will serve anybody with jobs that can be done quickly, the other line for slower moving customer issues. I assign one or two people to deal with the customers. That cuts the numbers down and allows people with more difficult jobs to move faster.

Explanation of the answer: Customers should receive prompt service. A long wait in line is good grounds for complaint. Good customer service practice recognizes the need for efficient time frames.

Pros and Cons Decision-Making Method

Another simple process for decision-making is the pros and cons list.

Pro means 'for', and con means 'against' or in other words, advantages and disadvantages. This method also applies to all sorts of problem solving where issues and implications need to be understood and a decision has to be made. Some decisions are a simple matter of whether to make a change or not, such as moving, taking a new job, or buying something, selling something, replacing something, etc. Other decisions involve a number of options, and are concerned more with how to do something, involving a number of choices. Use the brainstorming process to identify and develop options for decision-making and problem solving.

- 1 First you will need a separate sheet for each identified option.
- 2 On each sheet write clearly the option concerned, and then beneath it the headings 'pros' and 'cons' (or 'advantages' and 'disadvantages', or simply 'for' and 'against'). Many decisions simply involve the choice of whether to go ahead or not, to change or not; in these cases you need only one sheet.
- 3 Then write down as many effects and implications of the particular option that you (and others if appropriate) can think of, placing each in the relevant column.
- 4 If helpful 'weight' each factor, by giving it a score out of three or five points (e.g., 5 being extremely significant, and 1 being of minor significance).
- 5 When you have listed all the points you can think of for the option concerned compare the number or total score of the items/effects/factors between the two columns.
- 6 This will provide a reflection and indication as to the overall attractiveness and benefit of the option concerned. If you have scored each item you will actually be able to arrive at a total score, being the difference between the pros and cons column

totals. The bigger the difference between the total pros and total cons then the more attractive the option is.

- 7 If you have a number of options and have completed a pros and cons sheet for each option, compare the attractiveness - points difference between pros and cons - for each option. The biggest positive difference between pros and cons is the most attractive option.
- 8 N.B. If you don't like the answer that the decision-making sheet(s) reflect back to you, it means you haven't included all the cons - especially the emotional ones, or you haven't scored the factors consistently, so re-visit the sheet(s) concerned.

You will find that writing things down in this way will help you to see things more clearly, become more objective and detached, which will help you to make clearer decisions.

This example weighs the pros and cons of buying a new car to replace an old car. The weighted pros and cons are purely examples - they are not in any way suggestions of how you should make such a decision. Our decision-making criteria depend on our own personal situations and preferences. And your criteria and weighting will change according to time, situation, and probably your mood too.

Use whatever scoring method you want to. The example shows low scores but you can score each item up to 10, or 20 or 100 - whatever makes sense to you personally. Or you can use an 'A/B/C' or three-star scoring method, whatever works for you.

Problem: Should I replace my old car with a new one?			
Pros (for - advantages)	Score	Cons (against - disadvantages)	Score
Better comfort	3	Cost outlay will mean making sacrifices	5
Lower fuel costs	3	Higher insurance	3
Lower servicing costs	4	Time and hassle to choose and buy it	2
Better for family use	3	Disposal or sale of old car	2
Better reliability	5	Big decisions like this scare and upset me	4
It'll be a load off my mind	2		
Total 6 pros	20	Total 5 cons	16

In the above example, on the basis of the pros and cons and the weighting applied, there seems to be a clear overall (and quantifiable) advantage in the decision to go ahead and buy a new car.

Use the tables in the booklet to demonstrate how you would solve a problem and make a decision using pros and cons.

Problem Solving at Work

Context: This activity provides an introduction for learners to understand the complexity involved in the decisions businesses need to make. These issues often arise when business needs to balance the needs of various groups such as their employees, consumers and often the demands of government in areas such as the environment.

Aims:

- To make learners aware of the ethical dilemmas that face many business.
- To understand how demands made from outside such as government or consumers can have an affect on business.

Learning outcomes:

As a result of engaging in these activities learners will be able to:

- Recognise some of the ethical decisions that businesses may face.
- Identify how governments can affect businesses in different ways.
- Understand how these decisions can impact on productivity.
- Understand on how these issues relate to competition in the market place.

Background Information:

Businesses are established in order to meet a need in the market and to make a profit. This way they can cover all their costs and satisfy their investors, if they have any. Sometimes businesses have to make decisions that are at odds with the needs of their workers, consumers or perhaps the environment. These demands create what we know as 'ethical' dilemmas for business.

Some companies give their employees extra benefits than those they are obliged to do by law e.g. a subsidised gym membership. This type of company believes that happy and healthy employees will be more productive and therefore good for business.

Some companies are very committed to recycling paper or buying recycled goods even though they can be more expensive.

Not all companies behave in the same way and sometimes the Government needs to step in to ensure that all businesses behave to a minimum standard.

You run an Internet company

- Good profits are great but Internet business is cut throat and you need to keep re-investing to stay ahead of the game.
- High turnover, low margins.
- Happy workers are good for business
- Giving to charity is good PR

You produce battery hen eggs

- Calling the eggs free-range would be illegal, and could cost your company a lot in legal fees.
- Putting 'produced in battery conditions' would not be good for sales!
- Many battery eggs are sold as "farm fresh", which consumer organisations think is misleading.
- The labelling of food is an increasingly important political issue.

You run a shop

- Often being environmentally friendly can save a business money, if a company makes sure it uses energy efficient lights, doesn't waste electricity etc.
- Also, if the shop cuts down on its packaging generally this would save them money. Do customers need packaging?

You manufacture jeans

- You could cut costs or you could invest more in making your brand stand out from the rest.
- Incentives for workers may do the trick and not cost you more than your increased productivity.

It is important for learners to understand the complexities involved in running any kind of business whatever the size. It is also important for students to understand that although businesses are bound to do some things they can choose to do others. This activity requires the learners to put themselves in the place of a business faced with a range of ethical dilemmas.

The activity requires the learners to put themselves in the place of a business faced with a range of ethical dilemmas.

They will be then be asked to feedback their discussion to the group and compare it with other issues faced by different groups.

There are 4 business dilemmas (see dilemmas cards in the booklet) and a space to add your own if you prefer.

Problem Solving and Creativity

Problem solving and creativity skills are also known simply as thinking skills. Many people associate them with just a small number of extraordinary people, such as inventors, entrepreneurs and so on. In fact, most employers value these skills for their use in more mundane situations.

These skills and capabilities include:

- Reflective skills
- Independence
- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Thinking skills
- Research skills
- Empathy

You don't need to be Einstein to have a good idea or to find a solution to a problem. Most students use problem solving and creativity in their academic studies, even if they aren't given those names. Constructing an argument for an essay and working out how to design an experiment both call on these skills. In the workplace, it is often the small ideas that have a big impact: helping offices to run more efficiently; improving a product's performance; creating effective marketing materials; or restructuring staff responsibilities.

Have you done any of the following? You could also use this list as a guide for developing further skills.

Have you?

- Investigated alternative solutions to a problem?
- Overcome difficulties with your work?
- Put forward a suggestion which improved things for other people?
- Found a way of saving money in your place of work?
- Persuaded others to try a new way of doing things?
- Set up a new system for handling information?
- Set goals for yourself and achieved them?

Working in a Team

Units F/502/3586 and F/502/3538

Team Building: Small businesses rely on teamwork, just as much as their bigger counterparts. When a small group of people starts working towards shared goals and producing results that add up to more than the sum of the parts, it becomes a team. Successful team working gets results in all areas - including sales, IT, problem solving and managing new projects. People work more productively and their motivation and loyalty to your business are also increased.

1. Assembling the People

- (a) When forming a team, bear in mind that the ideal size is usually between 5 and 12 people. A team will function effectively with fewer people, but if the team you are putting together is larger than this consider redefining your objectives.
- (b) Bring together a range of diverse qualities and skills.
- (c) Make sure you have the know-how you will need in all the necessary areas of technical expertise. For example, if you are planning a sales meeting, involve someone from accounts to advise on late payers. A range of personal styles and approaches is an asset when solving problems. Even 'difficult' people may bring essential skills, knowledge or drive. Be aware of personal and group rivalries when choosing team members and Allocating responsibilities.
- (d) Ideally, choose people to fit each of the key roles involved in the team's activities. In a small business, you may have to redefine the roles to fit the people you have available.

2. The Initial Briefing

Teams need clearly defined objectives and structures to get results.

- (a) Focus on **one clear goal** for the team.
 - Break down the team goal to define a role and an objective for each team member. For example, if the goal is to manage a move to new premises, one team member may be made responsible for services, one for handling the IT aspects and one for purchasing furniture and equipment.
 - Ask for people's ideas on how the goals could be refined.
 - Make team members' roles clear to themselves and others.
 - Avoid conflict by making sure job descriptions do not overlap or clash.
 - Specify how functions within the team will interrelate.
 - Explain the chain of command.
- (b) Outline how the team will operate.
 - Discuss and agree what methods will be used for decision making, problem solving and running meetings.
 - Explain that individual performance will be reviewed in regular team meetings and through random quality checks.

- (c) Agree how you will resolve day-to-day problems and disagreements in the team.
- If one team member is unhappy with another, he or she should discuss the matter with the person concerned. If that does not work, the problem should be brought to the team leader.

3. Leading the Team

Leading teams is an art. But the basic skills of leadership can be learnt.

(a) Successful leaders **organise** and **enable**.

- Make sure your objectives for the teams are SMART – specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time-limited.
- Provide appropriate resources for the team to do its job e.g. adequate equipment and working space.
- Delegate tasks and make sure they are carried out and quality controlled.
- Draw up flexible contingency plans so you can deal with things when they go wrong. For example, make sure another team member can deputise if a colleague is ill on the day of a critical sales presentation.

(b) Leaders **motivate** and give their teams energy.

- Be enthusiastic about the team's objectives and the likelihood of success.
- Praise team members' achievements generously and promptly.
- Celebrate and publicise achievements. For example, if a team successfully launches a new product, congratulate the people involved at your company meeting and tell other employees via email.
- Ask team members for their opinions and explain the thinking behind your decisions.
- Lead by example. Show that you keep your word and that you support team rules and procedures.

(c) Review the **performance** of the team itself.

- Hold reviews regularly.
- Keep the tone of reviews positive.
- Discuss how the team is organised. For example, could one member of the team be doing something differently to improve the team's effectiveness?

(d) Review the team's **objectives**.

- Do they need modifying?
- What extra resources might be required?

- (e) The team leader takes final **responsibility** for the team's success or failure.
- Be prepared to be disliked.
 - Leaders must sometimes risk being unpopular by identifying poor performance and taking decisions some team members will disagree with.
 - Be ready to make the final decision.
- (f) Leaders must be prepared to act as **counsellors**.
- Develop your listening skills. Make it clear that your door is open to anyone who wants to discuss aspects of the team's work.
 - Maintain confidentiality when team members come to you with problems. Do not let individuals undermine the team by lobbying for changes in private.

4. Making Meetings Productive

- (a) Ensure meetings are well **organised**.
- Hold meetings regularly and often. Teams that meet frequently take less time to gel.
 - Keep the purpose of each meeting clear.
 - Brief team member in preparation for particular or unusual stages of a project.
 - Circulate agendas in good time.
 - Keep meetings short, smart and finish on time.
 - Use team briefings to keep everyone informed of relevant developments (e.g. changes in technology).
- (b) Get the whole team's **involvement**.
- During discussion, invite contributions from each member of the team.
 - Avoid using leading questions. Ask 'How can we increase our margins?' rather than, "Are we going to have to raise our prices to increase margins?"
 - After discussing each point, assign responsibility to an individual, for completion by a certain date.
 - Make sure action points are understood and agreed by those concerned.
 - At the end of each meeting, review what has been covered and check all teammembers are happy with the outcome.
- (c) **Follow up** after each meeting.
- Circulate minutes no later than two days afterwards.
 - Review progress on all actions at the next meeting.

5. Developing Team Spirit

(a) Establish a team culture in which people feel **valued**.

- Get to know individual team members' skills and goals and consider these when allocating tasks. Enthusiasm for a job leads to effectiveness. Avoid favouritism.
- Encourage contributions from all members of the team, regardless of position or seniority.

(b) Make working as part of the team **rewarding**.

- Provide support and training to help all team members develop.
- Give team members opportunities to learn from each other. For example, ask a long-term employee, who has a good understanding of the business, to work with a newer employee who has excellent IT skills.
- Find out what motivates team members and reward them accordingly (e.g. with money, time off or more responsibility).
- Make rewards prompt and appropriate.

(c) Give team members opportunities to **relax** together.

- Organise and take part in social events, such as team meals.

6. Dealing with Problems

(a) **Friction** between team members leads to wasted energy and poor productivity.

- If personal criticism crops up in meetings, refocus the discussion by asking what needs to be done, not who is at fault.
- If necessary, clarify job descriptions and reporting lines within the team.
- Where possible, allow distance between team members who do not get on.
- Discuss personal conflicts between members privately with each party – and ask each of them to propose a solution.
- If one member is at odds with the others and cannot function happily within the team, be ready to say goodbye.

(b) **Rivalries** may develop between teams within a business.

- You may need to go out of your way to reinforce the idea that you are all on the same side.
- Invite members of other teams to attend your meetings.
- Set up mixed-team task groups to solve the problems teams have in common.
- Ask other teams to tell you what your team does that helps them, and what you could do differently to help more.
- Organise teambuilding activities where members of different teams are mixed together.
- Include members of other teams in some of your social activities.

- (c) It may become clear that the team is making **bad decisions**.
- Be ready to hold a spontaneous review if a problem arises.
 - If a poor decision has been made, analyse the decision-making process e.g. was everyone consulted and did everyone really agree to the plan?
 - Examine who influenced the group and why.
 - Ask what the team can learn that will help it avoid making similar mistakes in the future.
- (d) The team may collectively **underperform**, delivering less than you would expect from the people involved.
- Begin by gaining the whole team's acceptance that all is not well. You cannot begin to change the situation if some team members are in denial and insisting that nothing is wrong
 - Get a trusted 'outsider' to sit in on meetings and comment frankly on the team at work. This person might be a senior member of the business, or a representative of another related team.
 - Maintain the discipline of assigning actions to individuals and making sure actions are reviewed on the agreed date.
 - Organise a meeting specifically to re-motivate the team.
 - Review team goals and recognise successes to date, reinforcing pride in the team's positive achievements.
- (e) Towards the end of its life, a project team may start to feel **demotivated**.
- Arrange a formal ending that team members can look forward to. This might be a party for team members, an official launch, or high-profile internal publicity within the business about the achievement of the team's objectives.
 - Get the team to discuss and draft a press release for publication in relevant trade magazines or local papers.

Working in a Team at School and at Work

Teamwork is a vital part of life, both at school and away from school, because you will always have to work in some way with other people. A good place to find examples of the importance of teamwork is in sports, such as netball, football, soccer, basketball, hockey, rugby or relays. As well as sport there are many other examples of where teamwork is essential, such as in debating, musicals, projects or assignments.

In any team all of the members rely on each other and have to help and support each other in order for the team to do well. When all of the people in a team or group do work well together, they will perform better than a group of people who do not work together. It is also important to remember that when a team does succeed, each member also individually succeeds. In addition to helping people do well, teamwork can also be fun.

Think of some examples of different teams or groups that you have been involved with and enjoyed.

- Some of the reasons why teamwork can be helpful include:
- Teams can allocate tasks to different members' strengths.
- You can get the job done faster.
- You can have other people to talk with about what you are doing.
- You can do more with a group than by yourself.

How else can working together be helpful?

When you work by yourself you don't have to think or worry about anyone else. But when you work in a team, you do have to think about others, which is why it is important to remember a few things to help you work with others.

To help you work in a team:

- Listen to other peoples' opinions and do not interrupt.
- Wait your turn to speak.
- Ensure that everyone is able to make suggestions.
- Make sure that you share your thoughts.
- Write down what each person has to do.
- Ensure that you share the jobs and that one or two people do not do all of the work and others do hardly any work.
- Get together and see how everyone in your team is going.
- Encourage and support each other.
- Be patient and remember that different people work at different speeds.

What do you think are some other important things when working in a team?

Some common challenges when working in a team include:

- Being impatient with other members.
- Feeling like you are not being included.
- Feeling like you are not a valued team member.
- Allocating too many or too few tasks to team members.

- Having different goals to other team members or not being unified in aiming towards your goals.
- Some members only wanting to do certain aspects of the work.
- Some possible solutions to overcome the challenges listed above include, having regular meetings or reviews to monitor progress, keeping notes or minutes from the meetings.
- Sharing the workload, ensuring that the team environment is enjoyable, as well as focused on the task, and ensuring that the team communicates effectively with all members.

What are some additional challenges you may face in a team environment?

What solutions can you suggest to overcome any challenges?

- Working together can be challenging but the results and rewards can be significant.
- When you do work in a team, you can also share the rewards, emotions and memories of achieving something, which can be special.

Working with Colleagues

Units L/502/3610 and Unit A/502/3571

Your relationships with your colleagues are important. Good workplace relationships can help you do your job better. They can make going to work everyday enjoyable. Bad relationships with colleagues can distract you and can turn a so-so job into a nightmare. These resources will help you have good relationships with your colleagues.

Respect your Colleagues

Respect is the foundation of all good relationships, including those you have with your colleagues. Do your best to avoid offending those with whom you work. Of course there will be the occasional prickly co-worker who is easily offended. There's little you can do about that.

The Actions to Avoid

How can we avoid offending the people we work with? It seems as if it should be blatantly obvious. Let's take a look now at actions that may offend your co-workers (*in no particular order*).

- Having loud telephone conversations;
- Not cleaning up after yourself in the staff kitchen;
- Showing up late for meetings;
- Looking at a co-worker's computer screen over his or her shoulder;
- Taking supplies from a co-worker's desk;
- Neglecting to say please and thank you;
- Wearing too much perfume;
- Chewing gum loudly;
- Taking the last of something without replacing it;
- Talking behind someone's back;
- Asking someone to lie for you;
- Blaming someone else when you are at fault;
- Taking credit for someone else's work;
- Asking a subordinate to do something unrelated to work, i.e. run errands;
- Trying to convert others to your political or religious beliefs;
- Opening someone else's mail;
- Sending unwanted or offensive emails;
- Telling offensive jokes;
- Smoking in common areas;
- Not pulling your own weight;
- Complaining about the company, boss, and co-workers;
- Having a condescending attitude toward others.

Respect

Everybody needs a little respect. You know when you have respect. You know when you don't. But what is respect really? And, how is respect demonstrated at work?

You can demonstrate respect with simple, yet powerful actions. These TEN ideas will help you avoid needless, insensitive, unmeant disrespect, too.

- 1 Treat people with courtesy, politeness, and kindness.
- 2 Encourage co-workers to express opinions and ideas.
- 3 Listen to what others have to say before expressing your viewpoint. Never speak over, butt in, or cut off another person.
- 4 Use people's ideas to change or improve work. Let employees know you used their idea, or, better yet, encourage the person with the idea to implement the idea.
- 5 Never insult people, name call, disparage or put down people or their ideas.
- 6 Do not nit-pick, constantly criticize over little things, belittle, judge, demean or patronize. A series of seemingly trivial actions, added up over time, constitutes bullying.
- 7 Treat people the same no matter their race, religion, gender, size, age, or country of origin. Implement policies and procedures consistently so people feel that they are treated fairly and equally. Treating people differently can constitute harassment or a hostile work environment.
- 8 Include all co-workers in meetings, discussions, training, and events. While not every person can participate in every activity, do not marginalize, exclude or leave any one person out. Provide an equal opportunity for employees to participate in committees, task forces, or continuous improvement teams. Solicit volunteers and try to involve every volunteer.
- 9 Praise much more frequently than you criticize. Encourage praise and recognition from employee to employee as well as from the supervisor.
- 10 The golden rule does apply at work, or, as professional speaker Leslie Charles, says, *"Implement the platinum rule: treat others as they wish to be treated."*

There are many other ways to demonstrate respect at work. These ten constitute a solid foundation. Implemented consistently at work, these respectful actions help ensure a respectful, considerate, professional work place.

Effective Work Relationships

These are the top six ways you can play well with others at work. They form the basis for effective work relationships. These are the actions you want to take to create a positive, empowering, motivational work environment for people.

- 1 Bring suggested solutions with the problems to the meeting table: Some employees spend an inordinate amount of time identifying problems. Honestly? That's the easy part. Thoughtful solutions are the challenge that will earn respect and admiration from co-workers and bosses
- 2 Don't ever play the blame game: You alienate co-workers, supervisors, and reporting staff. Yes, you may need to identify who was involved in a problem. You may even ask the heading question: what about the work system caused the employee to fail?

But, not my fault and publicly identifying and blaming others for failures will earn enemies. These enemies will, in turn, help you to fail.

- 3 Your verbal and nonverbal communication matters: If you talk down to another employee, use sarcasm, or sound nasty, the other employee hears you. We are all radar machines that constantly scope out our environment.
In one organization a high level manager said to me, "I know you don't think I should scream at my employees. But, sometimes, they make me so mad. When is it appropriate for me to scream at the employees?" Answer? Never, of course, if respect for people is a hallmark of your organization.
- 4 Never blind-side a co-worker, boss, or reporting staff person: If the first time a co-worker hears about a problem is in a staff meeting or from an email sent to his supervisor, you have blind sided the co-worker. Always discuss problems, first, with the people directly involved who "own" the work system. Also called lynching or ambushing your co-workers, you will never build effective work alliances unless your co-workers trust you. And, without alliances, you never accomplish the most important goals.
- 5 Keep your commitments: In an organization, work is interconnected. If you fail to meet deadlines and commitments, you affect the work of other employees. Always keep commitments, and if you can't, make sure all affected employees know what happened. Provide a new due date and make every possible effort to honour the new deadline.
- 6 Share credit for accomplishments, ideas, and contributions: How often do you accomplish a goal or complete a project with no help from others? If you are a manager, how many of the great ideas you promote were contributed by staff members? Take the time, and expend the energy, to thank, reward, recognize and specify contributions of the people who help you succeed. This is a no-fail approach to building effective work relationships.

Working with Colleagues

- 1 Discuss how we will not get along with everyone we work with. Sometimes we don't like how they behave, sometimes we don't like what they believe in, and sometimes we don't like how they look.
- 2 Think about the terms "prejudice" and "tolerance". This will help set up the discussion about how to separate disliking someone because of what he/she does and disliking someone because he/she belongs to a certain group.

Prejudice

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, prejudice is a preconceived idea; an opinion held in disregard of the facts that contradict it; and/or, intolerance or hatred. A person is prejudiced toward another person when he does not like or has untrue beliefs about that person because he/she is part of a certain group. The groups that are usually the focus of prejudice are women, minority races, different religions, and homosexuals. However, people can hold prejudices against any person of any group. All lawyers are..., all people from the South are..., people who work in fast food are... The person makes this judgement about the other person without getting to know what that person is like. The judgement may be true, but it has nothing to do with the group he/she belongs to; rather, it has to do with what that person is like. Some examples of prejudices are: men are only interested in sex, women are weak, Jewish people are stingy, African-Americans are lazy, and Asians are smart. It is true that some men are only interested in sex, some

women are weak, some Jews are stingy, some coloured people are lazy, and some Asians are incredibly intelligent. But, you can find these characteristics across all different groups of people. So, when a person is lazy, it is not because of her race but because she is quite simply just a lazy person.

The following is another illustration. A co-worker, who is coloured, takes two days off because her son is sick. The days are during the busiest part of the year for that company, and a co-worker automatically assumes she is lazy, and says, "*Isn't that typical of one of them.*" This assumption is wrong in two areas. First, there are no facts to indicate that African-Americans are a lazy race. There are some coloured people who are lazy, but there are also white people who are lazy. Laziness has nothing to do with race; it has to do with the individual person. The second problem is that the person has neglected to notice that this co-worker is one of the hardest working people on the job, and the fact is, her child has had a temperature of 104 during these past two days.

Tolerance

According to Webster's Dictionary, tolerance is respecting the beliefs and practices of another person. Thus, when a person does something a different way or holds certain beliefs, you do not condemn that person or interfere with that person. That does not mean you have to agree with that person, it means that you tolerate the way he does things. On the job, there are going to be people who behave in a way that you do not agree with. If that behaviour is interfering with your job or the company, you have the right to talk to that person or go to the supervisor. For example, a co-worker may believe it is OK to drink on the job. You do not have to tolerate this. Talk to her or your supervisor. On the other hand, if you did not believe that using drugs or alcohol was OK at any time, you may have a hard time tolerating when someone talks about the parties she goes to on the weekends. If this is the case, you could ask that person not to tell you about his partying on the weekends. But, most likely you will need to tolerate the fact that he drinks outside of work.

- When we hold prejudices about certain people and are intolerant of their beliefs and practices (when they do not harm anyone), it makes it very difficult to get along with others. It is important to get to know the person for who they are and respect that person's beliefs. We are not going to agree with everything a person thinks, says, or does, so working with people who are exactly like you is going to be difficult. There are probably people who they are close to that have different beliefs from them. Most people have arguments with family members and friends over what they do and what they believe in, but we do not dislike those people because they are similar to us. Therefore, we should not dislike people who are different from us in skin colour, religion, ethnicity, etc., just because they have different beliefs or practices.
- Discuss with learners why they would not like working with certain people and try to get them to look at why. See if they can recognize the differences between not liking a co-worker because of how they behave (i.e., doing things that cause problems on the job) and not liking a co-worker because of who they are. Identify whom the learner would like to work with. Pick out a few of the different "types" of workers and ask the students the following types of questions:
 - "Is this a good reason to not like a person? Why or Why not?"
 - "Is that acceptable behaviour at work? Why or Why not?"
 - "Did any of your answers change after our discussion?"
- Make a list of alternatives of what a person can do when they don't get along with somebody they work with. If it is because a co-worker is behaving in a certain way

that is bothersome or interferes with the job, the person can talk to this person or speak with a boss. Role-play speaking to that person or speaking to a supervisor.

If the person just does not like the co-worker, instruct the person to find the positive in the person and try to focus on the good points of the person when working with him/her. Have the student identify a person with whom he/she has not gotten along and list both the positives and negatives of that person. Discuss.

Discuss behaviours that make it difficult for co-workers to get along. Try to identify areas on which they need to work.

List behaviours that make it difficult for people to get along at work e.g. they:

- Talk a lot about their religious or political beliefs
- Have a poor attitude or an unhappy disposition
- Are unwilling to help
- Carry out poor work
- Are absent or late a lot
- Gossip
- Talk too much
- Are unfriendly
- Are disrespectful to supervisor or co-workers
- Tell supervisor about things people do wrong all of the time
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Job and Training Search Skills

Units H/502/3613 and D/502/3578

Job and Training Search Skills

Explore Qualifications

There are many reasons why you should think hard about what qualifications will be best suited to you, here are just a few:

- The facts show that adults without any qualifications have more difficulty in getting well-paid jobs than people who do have them.
- People with higher-level qualifications generally earn above average wages and are able to afford a better standard of living.
- Gaining qualifications gives you confidence in yourself – you know you've made the grade and can hold your own against anyone else.
- So get qualified and get the feel good factor.

The type of job and the level at which you enter that job depends on qualifications gained through exam passes, training and experience.

Have a look at the list below. For more information on any of the qualifications look at the detailed explanation below.

- GCSE - General Certificate of Secondary Education
- GCE AS Level - General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary Level 1st Year of A Level
- GCE A2 Level - 2nd Year of A Level
- A-Level - Advanced Level of Secondary Education Combination of AS & A2 Level
- VCE - Vocational Certificate of Education
- AVCE - Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
- NVQ- National Vocational Qualification
- GNVQ - General National Vocational Qualification Foundation & Intermediate
- BTEC - Business and Technology Education Council
- C&G City & Guilds of London Institute Qualification
- RSA - Royal Society of Arts Qualification
- This organisation has been merged and now goes under the title of Oxford, Cambridge and RSA
- OCR - Oxford Cambridge and RSA Qualification
- Key Skills Qualifications to develop the skills of communication, application of number and IT, drawing on evidence from their programme of study
- Essential Skills - to improve adults' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills
- HND & HNC - Higher National Diploma & Higher National Certificate
- Foundation Degree
- Degree
- Post-Graduate

GCSE

General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is the means of assessing the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4. Pupils around the age of 16 normally take this exam. Results are issued in the form of lettered grades A*-G in descending order of merit. A* grade recognises outstanding achievement. For a full list of GCSE subjects contact Joint Council for General Qualifications.

GCE AS and A2 Level

The GCE AS (Advanced Subsidiary) level was introduced, both as the first year of GCE A (A2) level and as a qualification in its own right. A-levels enable those who wish to remain in school or college after the age of compulsory schooling to continue their education for another two years. A-levels are considered academic, with the exception of a few such as Business Studies that have a more vocational theme.

All A-levels are composed of six elements, which are referred to as units. The first three units comprise the AS-level with the final three studied as A2. If you choose the modular route, units may be taken throughout the course in both January and June of the first and second years. If you choose the linear course, units are all assessed at the end of the two years.

As well as contributing to the full GCE A level award, the GCE AS is recognised as a separate qualification. Students normally study four and sometimes five subjects. The number of subjects then reduces to two, three or four in the second year of the course (called A2), which are carried on to the full A-level.

However, the A2 units only contribute to the full GCE A level and are not a separate qualification. Both the AS and the A2 are graded on an A-E scale, E being the lowest pass grade awarded, with U being unclassified which is not certificated. For the purposes of higher education one AS would equate to approximately half a GCE A level. For a full list of GCE A-levels have a look at the CCEA website.

VCE

VCE qualifications enable students to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in the vocational area they are studying and prepare them for both the world of work and progression to higher education.

AVCE

An AVCE is awarded on a grading system of A-E making it comparable with GCE A/AS level. AVCEs were developed from GNVQs.

AVCE: Double Award - the former Advanced GNVQ has been replaced by the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education: Double Award and is equivalent to two GCE - levels and would normally be taken over two years.

NVQ

NVQs are related to real work and test how competent you are in the actual tasks involved in a job. There are NVQs for almost every industry and employment sector.

Every NVQ is divided into units, each covering a particular part of your job. You can study for NVQs at any age or stage of your career. They start at whatever level suits you. There are no formal entry requirements. However, you need experience for the higher levels. There are no strict time limits to finish the course.

There are difficulties in providing exact equivalencies between (G) NVQs and GCSEs and A- levels, as there are differences between the structures of the types of course. The following may be taken as a general guideline for broad equivalencies in Northern Ireland.

- NVQ Level 1/GNVQ Foundation equivalent to four GCSEs, grades D-G.
- NVQ Level 2/GNVQ Intermediate equivalent to four GCSEs at grade C or better.
- NVQ Level 3/GNVQ Advanced equivalent to two GCE A-Levels.
- NVQ Level 4 is at a higher level than two GCE A-Levels and would equate approximately to the BTEC Higher National as stated above.

GNVQ

GNVQs are offered at foundation level (equivalent to 4 GCSEs: Grades D-G) and intermediate level (equivalent to 4 GCSEs: Grades A-C). Many students who complete an intermediate GNVQ progress to VCE.

BTEC

These are nationally recognised work-related qualifications. There are three main BTEC qualifications:

- First Certificate/Diploma: is generally recognised as being equivalent to 4/5 GCSEs at grade C or better.
- National Certificate/Diploma: meets the standard university entrance requirements and is equivalent to two GCE A Levels.
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma: is accepted by many employers as equivalent to pass degree for recruitment purposes. Higher Education Institutions may accept Higher National holders to Years 2 or 3 of their degree course.
- At each of the levels BTEC Certificates and Diplomas are of the same standard. Certificates are normally taken part-time by candidates in employment, recognition is given for the knowledge, skills and understanding gained at work. Diplomas are normally taken on a full-time basis.

C&G

These are nationally recognised awards in a variety of occupations. City and Guilds qualifications have four levels of vocational awards, levels 1-4. These are of a mainly vocational nature. For further details click on www.city-and-guilds.co.uk

RSA

This organisation now goes under the name Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR)

- Stage 1 is generally considered to be below GCSE standard.
- Stage 2 is generally considered to be equivalent to GCSE at grade C or above.
- Stage 3 is generally considered to be equivalent to A-level standard.

OCR

These are diplomas in areas such as administration and secretarial work, information technology, entertainment, language and education.

Key Skills

Key Skills are the skills you need to do well in education and training, to succeed at work and to get on in life. They cover: -

- Communication
 - Application of number
 - Information technology
 - Working with others
 - Improving your own learning and performance
 - Problem solving
-
- You can use these skills in a whole range of situations, from checking that you've been given the correct change to working in a team, or organising your holiday.
 - Key skills are an important part of every course, from A Levels and VCEs to NVQs.
 - You can also take specific key skills qualifications. They are designed to develop your skills in communication, application of number and information technology – each of these is a qualification in its own right.
 - You can take them alongside other courses, whether you are in full-time education or on a work-based training programme such as a Modern Apprenticeship.
 - Like other qualifications, you can study key skills at the level, which best suits your needs.
 - If you want to know more click on:
www.qca.org.uk/keyskills/www.ccea.org.uk/keyskillsdocs.htm

Essential Skills

- The Essential Skills qualifications were developed to support Northern Ireland's Essential Skills Strategy to improve adults' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
- Essential Skills qualifications are nationally accredited qualifications that are available throughout Northern Ireland and are a key part of all post 16 further education and professional and technical learning provision, including apprenticeships.
- Essential Skills give learners the opportunity to demonstrate how they select and apply speaking, listening, reading and writing skills for different purposes and to demonstrate their numerical skills in interpreting information.
- A full suite of Essential Skills qualifications are available at different levels from entry level 1, 2 and 3, Level 1 and Level 2.
 - Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills - Numeracy
 - Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills - Literacy
 - Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills - Application of Number
 - Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication
 - Level 1 Certificate in Essential Skills – ICT
 - Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills - Application of Number
 - Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills - Communication.
 - Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills – ICT
- Essential Skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number have replaced the existing Key Skills Qualifications within full time Further Education Programmes.
- The Essential Skills ICT qualification has been piloted over the last 2 years and will be rolled out across all Further Education provision from August 2009.
- Essential Skills are the building blocks that make it possible for you to learn and participate fully in your community and in the workplace.
- You can study Essential Skills at the level, which best suits your needs.
- Essential Skills provision is flexible and available in a wide range of settings (within employer premises), further education colleges, training organisations as well as a range of voluntary and community groups.
- For more information see www.delni.gov.uk/essential-skills

HND and HNC

These are nationally recognised qualifications, well known and well regarded in industry, as they tend to have a more vocational focus than degrees.

- HNDs are full-time and last for two years. They consist of 16 modules. You may progress to a degree.
- HNCs are of the same standard as HNDs, but are studied on a part-time basis over two years. They consist of 10 modules.

Foundation Degree

The Foundation Degree is an innovative degree course, which focuses on developing the work-related skills that employers require. It is developed in partnership with employers and a university and is delivered in an FE College. The course takes two years to complete when taken full-time, but can also be taken part-time and both include accredited work experience. The degree is a qualification in its own right, but graduates may then “top-up” to a relevant honours degree course.

Degree

There are five main types of degree courses, which can vary in length from three to five years (full time) depending on the subject or the course arrangements:

Single Honours: On single honours courses you will graduate in one subject. In the second and third year of your course you will be able to choose subject options depending on your special interests. Each institution offering the same subject is likely to offer slightly different options.

Joint Honours: These courses involve the study of two subjects. In some cases the subjects will be related, such as Maths and Physics; in others they will be quite different such as History and Music. In all cases the length of time taken to study each subject will be the same.

Combined Honours: These courses can involve two or three subjects, each of which is studied equally usually within the framework of the same faculty.

Major/Minor: In these courses students choose two subjects to study, one of which is studied over a longer period than the other.

Sandwich: These involve alternating periods of study and work-related experience, which usually extends the course to four years.

Postgraduate: Postgraduate certificates and diplomas offer vocational training or a professional qualification. Courses usually last for one or two years of full-time study and can lead to qualifications or may be integrated into Masters degree programmes. A Masters degree can be obtained by pure research or by a course of instruction, which will include a short research project and an examination.

Doctorates: Are normally awarded after at least three years of supervised research.

Identify 2 possible sources of job vacancies and provide an example of a job opportunity that might suit them from one of the sources.

Job Application Skills

Units H/502/3614 and Unit H/502/3578

Job Hunting

Starting to look for that job, see below for some handy tips to help you

Think about yourself

- What qualifications do you have, have you any hobbies?
- What type of person are you – adventurous, reliable or shy?
- What job would you be good at?
- What job would you like best?

There is no point in applying for just any job, so think carefully but be realistic!

Begin your search using:

Newspapers

If you don't get the papers at home try the local library, JobCentre, Jobs and Benefits Office or Careers Office. Free local papers sometimes have job adverts. Keep a close eye on the papers in case you miss something!

Post Office

Most post offices display job vacancies on a notice board with brief details of the job. These jobs tend to be in the area close to the post office.

Shop Windows

The next time you are passing your local shops have a look at the windows, you may see the job you want!

Family or friends

Ask your family and friends about their jobs. Find out what the work involves, what hours they work, if they work indoors or outdoors, do they use a computer. Get them to tell you the good and bad points about their jobs. If you like the sound of those jobs ask them to let you know if there are any vacancies in the places they work.

JobCentres, Jobs and Benefit Offices, Careers Offices

Pay a visit to your local office, job vacancies are advertised in the reception area and there will be someone available to give you further information and even better perhaps give you an application form!

Internet Sites for Job Searching

More and more people are advertising job vacancies and finding suitable employment through the Internet.

www.jobcentreonline.com

Contains all the JobCentres' current vacancies. In partnership with the Social Security Agency, the site also has details of work related benefits. Contains some useful links.

www.nijobs.com

Direct access to employment vacancies in Northern Ireland

<http://www.jobcentreonline.com/>

Displays contract and permanent jobs from many agencies.

<http://www.gisajob.com>

Opportunities for 14 to 30 year olds with some career development courses on offer.

www.princes-trust.org.uk

Guide to graduate jobs, careers and postgraduate study, each job profile includes information about the employee.

www.prospects.csu.ac.uk

This website attracts advertisers from most major industry sectors. Register for free and you may just find that perfect job.

www.jobsite.co.uk

Fill in the application form and you'll receive regular e-mails with the job listings relevant for you.

www.thejob.com

The leading global online resource for careers and job hunting covering the UK, Canada, US, Netherlands, Belgium, Australia and France.

www.monster.co.uk

The latest job vacancies – updated hourly.

www.jobsjobsjobs.co.uk

UK vacancies and professional appointments.

www.jobsin.co.uk

Access to vacancies across all disciplines in Ireland.

www.irishjobs.ie

www.nijobs.com

Why Must I Apply in Writing?

Many employers ask applicants to write letters of application, especially if they are looking for someone who can spell accurately and write well for a clerical job. These letters are often the first stage in the selection process and are extremely important. Those who send in badly written, untidy letters may not be offered an interview.

What to Include

The aim of your letter is to get an interview so if you have to write a letter of application remember the following points:

- Always write a rough copy first to make sure you don't leave anything out.
- Use proper writing-paper and ink or ball-point pen or have it typed, if allowed
- Make sure that your writing or typing is neat and legible, that you do not make spelling mistakes and that your punctuation is correct. Don't use a long word if a short one will do.
- Set out the letter accurately, with the correct beginning and ending and make sure the addresses are in the right place.
- If you start with '*Dear Sir*' or '*Dear Madam*' end with '*Yours faithfully*' and if you start with '*Dear Mrs. Jones*' end with '*Yours sincerely*'.
- If you are replying to an advertisement address your letter to the person mentioned e.g. Personnel Officer or Manager.
- If your letter relates to a definite vacancy, start off by mentioning this and say how you heard about it.
- Next, give brief details about yourself:
 - Your date of birth
 - The name of your school and the date of leaving
 - Details of qualifications and any courses taken since leaving school
 - If you were employed before, state the job(s) and the length of time spent in it (them)
 - Mention part-time jobs.
- Include your reasons for applying for the job, any relevant activities or interests, names of referees and finally dates and times which would suit you to come for an interview.
- Some employers may ask you to send a CV (Curriculum Vitae) which is a detailed summary of your past experience. If so, you should attach a short covering letter with it. [Click here](#) if you need some help to write your CV.
- Always enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope so that you will be more likely to receive a reply.

Remember! Double check that you have included your name, address, phone number, e-mail address and that you have signed and dated your letter.

Why are Application Forms Used?

Most employers ask applicants to complete an application form. These may differ but the information being looked for is basically the same. Think carefully before completing one so that you present yourself in the best possible light.

Hints and Tips

Keep the following points in mind:

- If a job advertisement asks you to write for an application form, your letter need only say: 'Please send me an application form for the post of as advertised in' etc. There is no point in including further details, as you will have to repeat them on the form.
- Make a photocopy and practise completing it before copying the information neatly in ink (preferably black) on to the real form.
- Read the application form right through before you start. Get the feel of what to put where and how much space you have.
- Follow the instructions and answer questions accurately keeping them short and to the point. If it says 'use block capitals' make sure you do.
- Look at what information you have about the job and the organisation in order to judge the sort of person they are looking for. Use this information as a guide when completing the form.
- If you are not sure about personal details check with a parent or guardian – e.g. place of birth - it is enough to give the town and county.
- Be as accurate and truthful as possible.
- Write neatly and clearly.
- Check spelling and grammar.
- Most application forms ask for names of referees. Referees are people whom the employer can ask for information about you.
- You should give the names and addresses of two or three people who are not related to you but who know you well and are prepared to comment on your character, honesty, attitude to work etc.
- If you are still at school or have recently left, you could give your principal's name and if you have a part-time job you might include your employer. Other possibilities are a doctor, clergyman, councillor, youth leader or magistrate, providing that he/she knows you well.
- If you need more space attach a separate piece of paper - don't cram everything into the space provided.
- Be sure you know the closing date for submitting the application form and send it away in good time.
- Keep a copy of the form or a note of your answers as a reminder for the interview.
- The copy will also help if you are completing similar application forms.

Remember

Your application form is used to select you for interview. It will then be used during the interview for checking points with you. If you are successful it may become the basis for a permanent personnel record within the firm.

Job Application Skills Unit

How Do I Apply for a Job?

The process of finding a suitable job begins before you leave school. If you have had careers classes in school these will have given you information on a variety of jobs and helped you to decide what jobs are most suitable for you.

If you are still not sure what to do, your careers officer can help. You can contact your careers officer at your local Job Centre.

Applying for a Job

The usual methods of applying for a job are:

- To write a letter of application.
- To complete an application form – written or electronic.
- To telephone for an appointment.
- To be sent direct from the Job Centre with an introduction card.

Letter of Application

- Many employers require applicants to write letters of application, particularly where the ability to spell accurately and write well may be important to the job e.g. clerical work.
- These letters are often the first stage in the selection process and are extremely important.
- Those who have sent in badly written, untidy letters may not be offered an interview. If you have to write a letter of application remember the following points:
 - Use proper writing paper and ink or ballpoint pen or have it typed.
 - Make sure that your writing or typing is neat and legible, that you do not make spelling mistakes and that your punctuation is correct.
 - Set out the letter accurately, with the correct beginning and ending and make sure the addresses are in the right place.
 - If you are replying to an advertisement this will indicate to whom the letter should be addressed e.g. Personnel Officer or Manager.
 - A business letter of this kind usually begins ‘Dear Sir’ or ‘Dear Madam’ and ends with ‘Yours faithfully’.
 - If your letter relates to a definite vacancy, start off by mentioning this and say how you heard about it. For instance, you might begin: ‘With reference to your advertisement in the Belfast Telegraph of 18 July for a trainee cook’ or; ‘I understand that you have a vacancy for a junior clerk’.
 - Next give brief details about yourself – your date of birth, the name of your school and the date of leaving, details of qualifications and any courses taken since leaving school. If you were employed before, state the job(s) and the length of time spent in it (them). You should also mention part-time jobs. Include your reasons for applying for the job, any relevant activities or interests, names of referees and finally dates and times, which would suit you to come for an interview.

- Some employers may ask you to send a CV (Curriculum Vitae) which is a detailed summary of your past experience. If so you should attach a short accompanying letter. See leaflet ‘How Do I Write A CV’ in this series.
- Always enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope so that you will be more likely to receive a reply.

Application Form

If a job advertisement asks you to write for an application form, your letter need only say: *‘Please send me an application form for the post of as advertised in’* etc. There is no point in including further details, as you will have to repeat them on the form.

- When completing an application form remember to do the following.
- Make a photocopy and practice completing it before copying the information neatly in ink (preferably black) on to the real form.
- Read the instructions carefully and answer questions accurately. If it says ‘use block capitals’ make sure you do.
- If you are not sure about personal details check with a parent or guardian – e.g. place of birth, it is sufficient to give the town and county.
- Most application forms ask for names of referees. Referees are people whom the employer can refer to for information about you. You should give the names and addresses of two or three people who are not related to you but who know you well and are prepared to comment on your character, honesty, attitude to work etc. If you are still at school or have recently left, you could give your principal’s name and if you have a part-time job you could include your employer.
- Other possibilities are a doctor, clergyman, councillor, youth leader or magistrate, providing that s/he knows you well.
- Be sure you know the closing date for submitting the application and send your form in good time.

Electronic Application

Most newspapers and recruitment agencies advertise their vacancies on-line and many jobseekers check and apply for jobs on the Internet. A number of sites also have helpful advice on CVs and interview preparation.

If applying for work using the Internet, make sure you have a genuine and secure site before you give personal details. Application details are similar to a written application. Remember to save a copy of your application for future reference.

Phoning for an Appointment

If possible try to avoid a pay phone but if you have no alternative, make sure that you have plenty of change and that it’s reasonably quiet. If you are phoning in response to an advertisement, make sure that you know whom you should ask for and the details of the job you want to apply for. Make sure you have a pen and paper handy in case you need to note down details of an interview.

Referred by the Jobcentre

Job Centres are located in all the main towns throughout Northern Ireland. When you leave school you should go to the Job Centre to see your careers officer. Once you do this, the careers officer will know that you are looking for a job and will let you know about vacancies, which are notified to the Job Centre. You do not have to wait for the careers officer to contact you – you may call regularly at the Job Centre as jobs can sometimes be filled very quickly.

If the Job Centre or the careers officer sends you for an interview you will be given an introduction card with the name of the person you are going to see and the date and time of the interview. Make sure you give this card to the employer. S/he will return it to the Job Centre with a note to say whether or not you have been successful.

Do not worry if you do not get the first interview you go for – keep trying. Your careers officer will keep in touch with you and suggest ways, which might help you, get a job. After you start work your careers officer will write to you to see how you are settling into your new job, and remember you can still talk to the careers officer at any time if you are having any problems.

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Job Application Skills:

CV

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is a detailed summary of your education, professional history and qualifications. If you are job-hunting, a good Curriculum Vita (Latin for ‘the story of your life’) can improve your chances of getting an interview. Its purpose is to set out your details in a precise, factual and interesting manner. It allows you to tell an employer what you can do and what skills you have. An employer can see quickly and easily whether or not you have something to offer each other. Therefore first impressions matter, if you’re CV doesn’t attract the reader’s attention in the first 20-30 seconds then your chances of obtaining an interview are greatly reduced. The following aspects are covered in the leaflet. Examples of CVs and a covering letter are at the end. The details are fictional.

Hints and Tips for a Good CV

First of all sit down with pen and paper and look back over your experiences so far. Allow yourself time to think and you will be reminded about skills, abilities and strengths that are wanted by employers. The visual layout is very important – check out our section on what makes a good CV. Once you have a master copy it can be photocopied and used as required or sent in reply to advertisements in the press.

A CV Tells Employers:

- Who you are
- What you did at school
- Any work or training you have had
- Your personal qualities and skills
- Your interests and hobbies
- Who will give you a reference

Personal Details

These should include your name, address, telephone number, date of birth and any other details you wish to include e.g. marital status, nationality (if you are applying for jobs abroad). Although not a requirement, you may also include your mobile phone number and e-mail address so long as your e-mail tag is not inappropriate.

Education, Qualifications and Training

List your qualifications and education history, for example:

- 1980–1983. BSc (Hons.) 2.2 in Biochemistry at the University of Ulster,
- 1978–1980. GCE A Levels: Maths [C], Biology [B], Chemistry [C]
- 1973–1978 GCE O Levels (or GCSEs if you did them): Maths [B], English Language [C], History [C], Geography [C], French [C], Chemistry [C], Biology [C].

Mention any short courses you have completed in work may also be included especially if they are relevant to the position for which you are applying. Accurate dates are very important.

Employment History and/or Work Experience

Should always be listed with your most recent position first. State the position and then details of the duties you carried out – stressing those duties, which are most relevant to the post you are applying for. Do not omit your current role.

Skills

This can be, for some people, a very important section because it tells the employer what you have learned from past experiences and what you can bring to the new job. E.G. IT skills, Languages (state whether your skills are spoken, written etc. Driving Licence (*state if Full/Clean*)). Highlight to the employer the benefits of employing you.

Interests/Hobbies

This area is important because it says a lot about the type of person you are. Try to include one where you mix with others. Be prepared to talk about your hobbies, as it will allow interviewers to assess your communication skills. Also list any positions of responsibility you hold or have held in any club or organization e.g. youth minibus driver shows you can be responsible, participating in team sports shows you can get along with others.

Referees

Always ask a person's permission to use his/her name. You usually need to supply two names, preferably including one who has known you in a work setting. Give their job titles and full address and telephone number.

What Makes a Good CV?

- It should be neat, short, preferably typed – one to two sides of white A4 size paper (on separate pages, not back to back).
- It should be clearly and carefully laid out as appearance counts for a lot. Overall presentation can determine whether the recipient chooses to read it or not.
- Stick to commonly used typeface, do not use coloured type – it doesn't scan or photocopy well. Do not mix formats and fonts.
- Use techniques such as 'star' or 'bullet points' as these can make you CV easier to read, be sure they are well set out and aligned.
- It should be concise and specific and focused to the job on offer. Tailor it as required for every position applied for in order to identify key achievements.
- Check details – spellings, postcodes etc. be consistent: 2 September 1988 – 3 January 1992 and not 2nd September 1988 – 3/1/92. If a postcode is used in one address it should be included in all addresses. Be careful to include everything.
- Be positive and to the point – do not lie or exaggerate.
- Do not use overly formal language.
- Remember it's your personal CV so emphasise your strengths.
- Your CV is a sales document to an employer. If it does not tell an employer why to employ you it has failed.

Finally, make sure your CV is free of errors – ask family/friends to check and proof read your CV for any spelling and grammar errors. Check everything as many times as possible. A CV full of grammatical mistakes and misspelled words will ruin your chances of success.

Interview Skills Unit K/502/3615

Describe what the interviewers will be expecting with regard to punctuality, dress sense, behaviour and language use.

Identify factors that will enhance interview performance.

- (a) Punctuality: It is very important to arrive in good time for an interview. Make sure you know exactly where the interview is to be held so that you do not waste time.
- (b) Personal Presentation: Dress appropriately; clean-tidy casual is fine for an apprenticeship but not perhaps for an office job. Remove any obvious body piercings and cover up all tattoos. Girls should not dress provocatively.
- (c) Confidence: It is important not to be too confident as this could be seen as arrogance. Good preparation and research before the interview will help you to be yourself.
- (d) Motivation: It is important to give the impression that you are keen on getting the job. If you are not and have not done any preparation it will show, as it is difficult to bluff in an interview.
- (e) Body Language: It is important not to fidget or fold your arms. If you fold your arms it will tell the interviewer that you are not interested. If you fidget it will detract from what you have to say.

Types of Interview Scenarios e.g. Formal/Informal

Formal: In the formal interview the interviewee will have to present themselves before a panel. Sometimes for senior positions they will be asked to give a presentation. They will have to answer questions put by the panel and the person judged best would be offered the position.

Informal: In the informal interview the boss could just show you around the firm. He/she will be keen to see how interested you are and what kind of questions you might ask. Some of the supermarkets will give you a list of items in their store and you have to find them and collect details about them. Speed and accuracy here is important.

Preparing for your Interview

- Purpose of the interview
- Before the interview
- Questions an interviewer might ask

Purpose of the Interview

Most employers select people for jobs by interviewing them. It is a chance for the interviewer to find out more about you. It should also be an opportunity for you to ask questions and discover whether or not it is the type of job you think you would like.

Before the Interview

It is important to find out as much as possible about the organisation and the job. If possible, try to find out about the company and the job before you go for interview. This shows initiative and will help you answer the questions.

Find out:

- Where its headquarters and branches are.
- What service it provides or what it produces.
- Who the main competitors are.
- Where the main market is.
- Staff numbers.
- Know where the interview is being held and how to get there.
- Allow plenty of time for traffic jams and public transport running late.
- Be there a few minutes early so that you have time to relax before you are called.
- If you are delayed, telephone and let the firm know you will be delayed and explain why - it creates a bad impression if you arrive late!
- Know the name of the person you have to see and his/her position in the organisation. Write it down if you are likely to forget!
- Appearance is important. Do not overdress, but look neat and tidy. Even though attitudes to appearances have changed most employers are still looking for people who are clean and smart.
- An interview may last 15 minutes or up to an hour. You will be asked many questions – some straightforward and others more complicated.

Questions an Interviewer Might Ask

Here are some questions employers frequently ask at an interview – and the reason why they ask them.

- 1 Why do you think you would like to work for our company? (To see if you have learned anything about the company before applying.)
- 2 What subjects did you enjoy at school? (Your answer reveals some of your interests/attitudes.)
- 3 What activities do you participate in, outside of work? (To see abilities and interests which your work or school record did not reveal.)
- 4 What do you consider to be your strengths? (An honest answer is a great help to and but be careful not to brag.)
- 5 What do you consider to be your weaknesses? (Shows if you can recognise your own faults – but do not overdo it)
- 6 What sort of job do you hope to have in five years? (This is your chance to show your drive, ambition and ultimate goal.)
- 7 What starting salary would you expect? (If you are not certain, say; “Any fair salary is fine to start.)
- 8 Would you accept a job, which required you to travel? (Many jobs require travel)
- 9 What do you feel you have to offer to the job? (This gives you a chance to show you have abilities useful to your employer.)

- 10 Why did you leave your last job? (In case you had problems there.)
- 11 What did you like best and least about your last job? (Try to bring up the qualities that would make you a good employee.)
- 12 What suggestions or changes did you make in your last job? (This gives you a chance to show you are a constructive person who has accomplishments.)
- 13 Why did you apply for this job? (Most employers prefer a person who has selected a job to one who drifted into it.)
- 14 If you could have any job in the world what would you choose? (This should relate to the job for which you are applying; but do not show limited ambition by setting your sights too low.)
- 15 What types of books do you read or films, TV do you watch? (To see if you are a well-rounded person, with varied interests.)
- 16 How did your previous employers treat you? (If you think they all treated you badly, you may be viewed as a chronic complainer.)

Interview Practice

- 1 Be clear about the exact nature of the role you are applying for.
- 2 Re-read a copy of your completed application form because some of the interview questions may refer directly to the information you provide on the form.
- 3 Take the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.
- 4 After the interview, complete a personal reflection on how you feel the interview went.

Example Questions

- Tell me a little about your working history including anything that you feel is relevant for this post.
- What has attracted you to apply for this position?
- Why do you think you would enjoy working for this company?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges for you in this job and how will you make sure that you meet these challenges?
- What do you think we look for in all of our employees?
- Look through the application form and ask the applicant to expand on a few of the answers he/she gave in the form.
 - Tell me about your experiences of serving customers.
 - What did you find difficult about serving customers?
 - What did you find enjoyable about serving customers?
 - How did you make a contribution to working in a team in the past?
- What do you believe your greatest strengths are?
- What steps have you taken to develop these strengths?
- What do you believe your weaknesses are?
- What steps have you taken to address these weaknesses?
- Have you any questions you would like to ask us about the position you have applied for or the company?

Interview Skills (K/502/3615)

Learners will study the skills they need to prepare for and take part in an interview.

Your Interview Skills Profile

- Some learners might not have had experience of an interview; this should be ascertained and grouping should reflect a range of experience of students.
- Learners should include such points as knowing how to get to the interview and on time; considering what to wear, knowing something about the company and the job and thinking about questions they might be asked. Encourage learners to reflect on interviews they may have had in the past and to consider specific aspects of job or work experience interviews. They should consider the skills involved in the process, such as finding out about travel in the area, reading maps, telling the time and timekeeping.
- Record learners' ideas under the headings 'Behaviour' and 'Skills used'. Help them to consider how the interviewees in the illustration are sending positive and negative messages and to think about the skills they are demonstrating, such as punctuality, polite greetings and departures, confident manner (*even if nervous*), attentive body language, eye contact, posture and appearance.
- Encourage groups to focus on the positive and negative aspects of the illustrations to give them ideas and remind them that they are thinking about skills and behaviours they just identified and can see displayed.
- Consider other aspects of interviews such as qualifications and career routes in companies.
- Produce a leaflet for use in interview planning, giving suggestions on how students could improve their skills.
- Produce a 'Do's and Don'ts' for Interviews' poster for class use.