



## PROBLEM SOLVING

### SCQF Level 5

# WORKPLACE CORE SKILLS UNIT

## *What are Core Skills?*

Core Skills are skills and abilities that everyone needs in their work. This is true for every job in every workplace.

The Core Skills are:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Numeracy
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology
- ◆ Problem Solving
- ◆ Working with Others

Employers look for Core Skills when they are appointing new staff. They also expect their existing staff to have these skills.

Core Skills are important because they help you work effectively in your present job and also prepare you for jobs that you will do in future. Developing your Core Skills helps you deal with today's rapidly changing world and improve your career prospects.

## *What is this Core Skills Unit about?*

This Unit is about solving non-routine problems in the workplace.

It is important to note that the focus of this Unit is about how you deal with problems and not whether the problem was completely solved.

Your assessor will explain anything in this Unit that you do not understand.

## *What should I know or be able to do before I start this Unit?*

You should either:

- ◆ have achieved the Core Skills Unit in Problem Solving at SCQF level 4 or an equivalent qualification

or

- ◆ be able to show that you have some experience of solving problems in the workplace, for example improving an ordering system; setting up a procedure for deliveries to customers

## *What do I need to do?*

You will need to carry out each of the following three tasks.

### *Task 1: Investigating*

Investigate and analyse why a non-routine problem in your workplace has arisen. The problem is likely to involve either a situation that is unfamiliar to you or a familiar situation where you need to clarify the relationships between the contributing factors. Managing the task may involve more than one strand of activity. To do this you will have to:

- ◆ identify the factors contributing to the problem, situation, or issue, for example:
  - ◆ what are the causes of the problem
  - ◆ why has the situation arisen
  - ◆ who and what is involved
  - ◆ what effects is the problem causing?
- ◆ decide on the relative importance of these factors and how they relate to one another
- ◆ apply problem-solving techniques such as sub-dividing the problem into its component parts
- ◆ develop an approach to deal with the problem

## Task 2: Planning and solving

Plan, organise, and carry out your suggested approach. To do this you will have to:

- ◆ work out an action plan to deal with the key factors contributing to the problem, for example:
  - ◆ identifying the tasks needed to deal with the problem
  - ◆ deciding the order in which these tasks should be undertaken
  - ◆ deciding which tasks may be undertaken simultaneously
  - ◆ deciding who should carry out each task
  - ◆ working within workplace limitations
  - ◆ managing time
  - ◆ managing people
  
- ◆ decide on and get the resources you will need to carry out your action plan; you may have to search for these. At least two of them should be resources you are not familiar with, for example:
  - ◆ equipment
  - ◆ information
  - ◆ money
  - ◆ input from other people
  - ◆ procedures for obtaining these resources
  
- ◆ carry out your action plan

### *Task 3: Checking and evaluating*

Check how well the problem-solving activity worked in practice. To do this you will have to:

- ◆ work out how you will decide whether each stage of your of your problem-solving activity has been successful, for example:
  - ◆ did you identify the correct causes of the problem
  - ◆ did your action plan address these causes
  - ◆ did your action plan keep to the specified timescale
  - ◆ did everyone carry out their allotted tasks
  - ◆ did you use resources effectively?
- ◆ gather evidence to help you decide how well your problem-solving activity worked in practice, for example:
  - ◆ by interviews and questionnaires
  - ◆ through analysis of cost or time savings
- ◆ decide how effective each stage of your problem-solving activity has been in resolving the situation or issue, referring to the evidence you have gathered
- ◆ explain how solving similar problems could be improved in future using this evidence to support your explanation

## *How will I show that I have achieved this Unit?*

You will need evidence to show that you have achieved all the tasks in this Unit.

Some of the evidence might come from your assessor watching you carrying out some tasks that are part of your problem-solving activity. In addition, your assessor may ask you questions to check your knowledge, understanding, and practical abilities, and make notes or a recording of what was said and/or done.

You may have video evidence or written evidence, such as notes of discussions with colleagues, the action plan itself, records of activities that you have undertaken, and your thoughts on how well things went.

You must choose one problem-solving activity to show that you can do all three tasks. You are not allowed to gather evidence from different problem-solving activities.

## *What might be involved?*

This Unit may be achieved in many ways. Examples of tasks you might do are:

- ◆ An unexpected large order from a good customer means that your department's work schedule is temporarily upset. You have to look at how this problem will be handled. You will have to look at the staff available, their areas of expertise, and how they might best be deployed. You would consider alternatives like rescheduling less urgent work, over-time for existing staff, employing temporary staff, and asking the customer to extend deadlines.
- ◆ The wastage level in production by your team has risen over the past months. You have been asked to investigate the causes of this and propose and implement a solution that will bring the wastage level down to what it was before.

## *What can I do next?*

You could move on to the Problem Solving Core Skills Unit at SCQF level 6.

You could consider doing other Core Skills Units in:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology
- ◆ Numeracy
- ◆ Working with Others

Your assessor can advise you about this.

## *Guidance for assessors*

Further information about delivery, assessment, and evidence requirements for this Unit can be found in the corresponding Assessment Support Pack. In addition, the *Guide to Assessing Workplace Core Skills* provides further information on assessment.

## *Disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs*

The additional support needs of individual learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative competence standards for Units.

Additional advice and guidance for learners with disabilities and/or additional support needs should initially be discussed with the centre where the learner is registered.

If the centre is unable to offer a satisfactory solution then the learner, usually in conjunction with the centre, should contact the External Verifier of the Awarding Body where the learner is registered for certification.

## *Becoming an approved awarding body*

Workplace core skills may only be offered by an SQA approved awarding body. Information on how to become an 'approved' Awarding Body is published on SQA Accreditation's website.

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/48712.html>

## *Unit reference codes*

This workplace core skills unit is offered by a number of different awarding bodies. The unit reference codes for each awarding body offering this workplace core skills unit are as follows:

[http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/Workplace\\_Core\\_Skills\\_Table.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Workplace_Core_Skills_Table.pdf)



## ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### Credit Value

6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5



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**Tel:** 0345 213 5249  
**Fax:** 0345 213 5000  
**Website:** <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/42321.2720.html>

### Optima Building

58 Robertson Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8DQ

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