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NVQS
1. INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

This resource pack will help you to develop your knowledge and understanding of NVQs as one of the learning solutions available to employers through the Train to Gain service.

It has been put together by the Learning and Skills Council at a national and regional level.

The pack aims to:

- Give more in-depth knowledge of solutions (funded or not) which can be brokered through Train to Gain.
- Build upon resource materials made available at the Train to Gain induction workshops.
- Help you deliver the Train to Gain service more confidently.
- Help you achieve units within the Skills Broker Standard.

This pack is NOT intended:

- To act as a marketing tool for visits to employers.
- To provide Brokers with a concise guide to all aspects of NVQs.
- To give in-depth information about LSC policy relating to NVQs or other nationally accredited qualifications.

After reading through the resource materials, you may find that you have some outstanding questions. In this case, you should follow up the recommended links throughout this document and/or contact your regional LSC team or broker organisation.
Once you have familiarised yourself with the content, it can also be used as a reference guide, to be dipped in and out of when required. You may also like to develop your own summary guide to take with you when you visit employers.

Once you have read this pack you should be able to:
• Understand what an NVQ is and what is involved in achieving one.
• Understand the NVQ Train to Gain eligibility criteria and what funding is available.
• Be able to discuss the business benefits of NVQs with an employer.
• Be able to access information about NVQs.
• Be able to ensure that employee needs are met appropriately from discrete Train to Gain funding or other LSC funded provision.

Knowing about NVQs will help you to meet the Skills Broker Standard. The information below shows which elements of the Skills Broker Standard are covered by this pack.

a2 Identify specific skill solutions in relation to business goals/challenges
a3 Proactively network and search new solutions
a4 Help the client to critically assess a training provider’s offer
a5 Broker deals with training providers
b1 Advice, learning and development solutions for clients
b2 The training provider infrastructure
b3 The framework of training and development delivery
NVQS
2. NVQ FACTSHEET
NVQ FACTSHEET

This document provides a background to NVQs regarding what they are, content and benefits. For more specific information relating to Train to Gain funding and NVQs please refer to NVQ Q&As and the Learner Eligibility Checklist found later in this document.

What is a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)?
- NVQs are work-related, competence based qualifications which are derived from the National Occupational Standards in a particular sector.
- They reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively.
- Show competency in the area of work the NVQ framework represents.
- Are part of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).
- Modular and unit based, aligned to specific industry and job.
An example of an NVQ and its units is available at the end of the factsheet.

Who can do an NVQ?
- Available to everyone (under Train to Gain, NVQs are only available to those 19 years or over). NB: Apprenticeships are the recommended route for vocational learners aged between 19 and 25. Apprenticeships are a framework built up from provision which will include a NVQ and this route should be taken instead of a ‘stand alone’ NVQ wherever possible.
- There are usually no upper age limits or special entry requirements, although this may depend on the assessment requirements that a Sector Skills Council may specify for a NVQ in its sector or through awarding body requirements.
- Full-time or part-time employees.
- Learners with a work placement or part time job.
- NVQs are for candidates who already have skills and want these to be either formally recognised or want to increase them, but also for those who are starting from the beginning.
- Within reason, NVQs do not have to be completed in a specified amount of time making them flexible.

What are the benefits of NVQs to the employer?
- Provides a useful tool to re-skill staff to relevant national standards.
- Demonstrates a commitment to employee development (many companies who support NVQs see a reduction in staff turnover and sickness levels, in addition to a more positive and committed workforce).
- Boosts the confidence of employees with few or no formal qualifications.
• Can help employees understand the business better (often resulting in greater productivity and competitiveness).
• The employer can help choose the pace, place and way in which employees learn.
• NVQs are mainly assessed in the workplace and therefore employees do not require time off-site for learning.
• Can help businesses meet the requirements for ISO and IIP.

What are the benefits of NVQs to employees?
• They obtain a nationally recognised qualification.
• Allow competency in a job role to be demonstrated and recognised.
• Can encompass underpinning knowledge and skills alongside competency in the job role so combining theoretical knowledge with what can be done in practical situations.
• They are a relatively flexible way of learning which can be tailored to suit the individual.
• Recognised by industry and employers as a competence based qualification.

What is involved in achieving an NVQ?
When candidates start an NVQ, the assessor will usually help them to:
• Identify what they can do already.
• Agree on the standard and level they are aiming for.
• Analyse what they need to learn.
• Choose and agree on activities that would allow them to learn what they need.

How is an NVQ assessed?
Assessment is normally through on-the-job observation and questioning. Candidates produce evidence to prove they have the competence to meet the NVQ standards.

The assessor tests candidates’ knowledge, understanding and work-based performance to make sure they can demonstrate competence in the workplace. In many cases the ‘assess train assess’ model will be employed.

Assessment usually takes place when the candidate is ready.

On the whole there is no need for attendance at college and written tests are kept to a minimum (depending on the type of NVQ).
What is the role of the LSC, Provider and Employer, Awarding Body in the NVQ process?

LSC: provides funding for learners to complete their first full Level 2 or Level 3; this is paid directly to the training provider contracted to deliver the training.

Provider: carries out initial employer checks (i.e. Health and Safety), enrolment of learner, initial assessment of learner and appoints an assessor to carry out internal assessment which includes assessing evidence of candidate competence against the National Occupational Standards and ensuring that evidence is valid, current, authentic and sufficient and in line with awarding body requirements. The provider appoints an Internal Verifier who can sample assessment decisions across a range of assessors and work closely with the awarding body appointed External Verifier.

Employer: offers support to the learner during the programme and for those new to the role (mentoring) and time off the job for learning.

Awarding Body: responsible for assuring the quality of the NVQ offered by the centre (provider) it has approved, including through the appointment of an External Verifier.
Who is involved in developing an NVQ?

A number of organisations are involved in the process of developing and delivering NVQs.

- Sector Skills Councils (SSCs): identify, define and update employment-based National Occupational Standards (statements which describe the outcomes of competent work in an occupational field) and from which NVQs are developed.
- Working closely with SSCs Awarding bodies: design assessment methods, ensure quality standards, and approve centres that wish to offer the assessment of NVQs and appoint External Verifiers and award the NVQ.
- QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority): responsible for the accreditation of NVQs into the National Qualification Framework, ensuring that NVQ qualifications meet appropriate criteria, are positioned at the appropriate level and are comparable across different sectors.

How popular are NVQs?

The following statistics taken from the QCA website (http://www.qca.org.uk) show that there are more learners enrolling on NVQ programmes:

- The total number of NVQ certificates awarded to 30 June 2007 was 6,253,299 (an increase of 10.9% on the total awarded to 30 June 2006).
- There were increases in the growth of four of the five NVQ levels in the 12 months to 30 June compared to the preceding 12 months ranging from 4.6% for level 3 to 10.1% for Level 5.

What topics are covered by NVQs?

NVQs are accredited for a maximum of five years and sometimes for three; as a result, new and revised NVQs are constantly becoming available.

A full listing of all NVQs currently accredited into the NQF and available can be found by searching the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ). http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk.

NVQs range from the general ”NVQ in Business and Administration” to the more specific ”NVQ in Rail Transport Operations (Signal Operations)”.

A full list of NVQs can be found on http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section97, http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/LAD/ or refer to the NVQ NDAQ link listed above.
What levels of NVQ are there?
The primary purpose of the national qualifications framework (NQF) is to create a coherent classification for NVQs and to facilitate transfer and progression, both within areas of competence and between them. The areas of competence across NVQ levels result from an analysis of work roles and provide the initial organising structure for competence-based qualifications. The following definitions of NVQ levels provide a general guide and are not intended to be prescriptive.

**Level 1**
Competence which involves the application of knowledge and skills in the performance of a range of varied work activities, most of which may be routine or predictable.

**Level 2** *
Competence which involves the application of knowledge and skills in a significant range of varied work activities, performed in a variety of contexts. Some of the activities are complex or non-routine, and there is some individual responsibility and autonomy. Collaboration with others, perhaps through membership of a work group or team, may often be a requirement.

**Level 3** *
Competence which involves the application of knowledge and skills in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts, most of which are complex and non-routine. There is considerable responsibility and autonomy, and control or guidance of others is often required.

**Level 4**
Competence which involves the application of knowledge and skills in a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources is often present.

**Level 5**
Competence which involves the application of skills and a significant range of fundamental principles across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of substantial resources feature strongly, as do personal accountabilities for analysis and diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation.

* Train to Gain funding is available for first full Level 2s and Level 3 “jumpers”.

Further Information
Information in this document has been sourced from the QCA website. It has an extensive section regarding NVQs which includes statistics, the background to why they were created and additional information. See: http://www.qca.org.uk/610.html.

Information about specific NVQ titles and industry sectors can also be found on Learndirect, local colleges and the individual Sector Skills Councils (SSC) websites, links for these are included on the Broker Website: https://brokers.traintogain.gov.uk/.
EXAMPLE NVQ

Taken from NDAQ, below is an example of an NVQ and the units involved:

City & Guilds Level 2 NVQ in Accounting

Reference: 100/3615/5

Awarding body: City & Guilds – The City and Guilds of London Institute

Qualification Level: 2

Type: NVQ - National Vocational Qualification

Accreditation start date: 01 May 2004

Accreditation end date: 31 December 2008

Certification end date: 31 December 2010

Qualification offered in and the approval age ranges:
England: 16-18, 18+, 19+
Wales: 16-18, 18+, 19+
N.Ireland: 16-18, 18+, 19+

DCSF/DIUS:
Approval start date: 04/05/2004
Approval end date: 31/12/2008

Other countries offered in: Ireland – Scotland

Languages offered in: English

Progressions: There is a direct pathway for candidates who have achieved the level 2 NVQ to then move to the level 3 qualification.

Potential job occupations:
Accounting Technician
Accounts/Finance Clerk
Credit Analyst
Private Practice Accountant
Public Sector Accountant

Qualification sector/subject area Qualifications sub-areas:
Business, Administration and Law
Accounting and Finance

Qualification guided learning hours: N/A
Overall grading system for the qualification: Pass

Overall assessment method for the qualification: For unit 3 the learner must complete an assignment which is set by City & Guilds and internally marked by the centre.

Qualification structure summary: Must complete seven mandatory units plus an assignment for unit 3

**Qualification structure**

- **M/101/8097** – Recording Income and Receipts
- **T/101/8098** - Making and Recording Payments
- **H/101/8100** - Preparing Ledger Balances and an Initial Trial Balance
- **K/101/8101** - Supplying Information for Management Control
- **L/101/8088** - Working with Computers
- **J/101/8090** - Contribute to the Maintenance of a Healthy, Safe and Productive Working Environment
- **L/101/8091** - Achieving Personal Effectiveness

For further information visit the NDAQ website: [http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk](http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk)
NVQS
3. LEARNER ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST
LEARNER ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

Learners are eligible for Train to Gain funding for their first full Level 2 if they:

- Are in paid employment (with a contract of employment).
- Do not have a first full Level 2 qualification.
- Are a Level 3 ‘jumper’, i.e. they do not have a first full Level 2, but would like to complete a Level 3.
- Are 19 years of age or older (there is no upper age limit).
- Only hold a ‘thin’ qualification (e.g. a Vocationally Related Qualification, such as Level 3 BTEC National Award in Floristry).
- Are integrated back into the community on release from prison and hold a contract of employment.
- Are a non EU citizen having legally settled in the UK for 3 years and therefore with the right to abode. Please see most recent LSC Learner Eligibility document on the following web page for further details. [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/strategic-overview/](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/strategic-overview/)
- Are employed in England (employer or place of employment must be in England).

Learners are not eligible for Train to Gain funding if they:

- Already possess a full Level 2.
- Are aged 16, 17 and 18 - this age group is already entitled to free (or funded) learning, i.e. 16-24 year olds are eligible for an Apprenticeship.
- Are taking part in a New Deal Programme with Jobcentre Plus - when their New Deal programme ends they can be eligible for Train to Gain.
- Are a pre-release prisoner on paid work experience.
- Are only trying to achieve a ‘thin’ qualification (e.g. VRQ) and not a full Level 2.

Options for learners not eligible for Train to Gain funding:
If a learner already possesses a full Level 2 and wishes to complete another Level 2, they may be eligible for Further Education Type A (mainstream) funding as long as the employer/learner pays an appropriate proportion of the fee. It may be necessary to approach a provider to find out the appropriate proportion. There may also be options via the European Social Fund.

For further information on funding and eligibility both through Train to Gain and Work Based Learning please see:

- Most recent Requirements for Funding Train to Gain: [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/traintogain/](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/traintogain/)

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1 Within Train to Gain, 16, 17 and 18 year olds can go down the Apprenticeship route (funded by work-based learning). Those individuals that are 19-25, therefore, are eligible for both Train to Gain funding for an NVQ or work-based learning for an Apprenticeship. However the Government’s preferred option for this age group is the Apprenticeship – see Funding requirements Train to Gain for details.
NVQs
4. Funding
**NVQ FUNDING**

**NVQs**

- **Mainstream (FE) Funding**
  - First Full Level 2 Entitlement
  - **NVQ Level 3** (fee usually attached)

- **Train to Gain**
  - First Full Level 2
  - **Level 3 Jumpers** (funded at same rate as L2)

**NVQ Funding Available**

There are 2 main types of funding available for NVQs, Type A (mainstream - mainly via FE colleges) and discrete Train to Gain funding (monies dedicated to Train to Gain).

Anyone resident in England who has not completed a first full Level 2 is entitled to receive Train to Gain funding for a Level 2 (or equivalent) but the NVQ provision will depend on the capacity in each region and the range of NVQs offered by that provider (i.e. some more specialised qualifications will not be readily available). Those not eligible for Train to Gain funding (i.e. those not employed, or with a first Level 2, or under 19) could be referred to training providers who access Type A (mainstream) or, in some cases, European Social Funds.

NB: those wishing to do a second Level 2 under mainstream will be (in most cases) subject to paying towards the cost. Under Type A (mainstream) there is also a fee for a Level 3 unless there are extenuating circumstances (i.e. if the learner is on job seekers allowance there is a fee remission).

For further information see Requirements for Funding, Version 4, 2007/08: [https://brokers.traintogain.gov.uk/funding/](https://brokers.traintogain.gov.uk/funding/)
The following questions about NVQs were raised in the Introductory Broker Training Workshops. For further general questions about NVQs please refer to the Factsheet.

Q1: Who is eligible for a Train to Gain funded full Level 2 qualification?
A: Paid employees 19 and over who do not already have a full Level 2 qualification (i.e. anybody without 5 GCSEs A-C/5 O Levels or an NVQ at Level 2 or similar qualifications), who have been in the UK for 3 years and are classed as "settled" (See Requirements for Funding Work-based Learning for Young People 2006/07 for further details).

Apprenticeships are the recommended route for vocational learners aged between 19 and 25 and this route should be taken instead of an NVQ wherever possible.

Q2: What are foreign qualifications worth in relation to 'Level 2'?
A: To determine whether an individual is eligible for Train to Gain funding see http://www.naric.org.uk/, a subscription service which gives information regarding the UK equivalents to foreign qualifications. It is the training provider’s responsibility to clarify if a learner has already got a Level 2 qualification. In most cases a learner who does not possess a foreign equivalent to a degree qualification will be eligible.

Q3: What is discrete Train to Gain funding?
A: Discrete Train to Gain funding is specifically allocated funding for Train to Gain that is separate to any mainstream funding. Providers could therefore have an allocation of discrete, mainstream and other funding such as from the European Social Fund (ESF).

Q4: Which Level 2 qualifications are eligible for discrete Train to Gain funding?
A: All full vocational Level 2 qualifications.

Q5: What is a “full” qualification?
A: A “full” qualification is any of those listed on the Learning Aims Database http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/lad/. For example an NVQ would be a full qualification.
A “thin” qualification is defined as a qualification which does not count towards the Level 2 Public Service Agreement target and therefore would not attract full fee remission funding. This is usually the case with vocationally related qualifications which are below 325 guided learning hours.

Q6: What if an individual needs to improve their skills in more than one subject?
A: Only one full Level 2 will be 100% funded by Train to Gain, any additional modules may be part funded by Train to Gain and part funded by the employer or individual.

Q7: How important is the initial assessment of learner capacity and need?
A: It is important for two reasons:

- It determines the appropriate level and nature of provision linked to the needs, capacity and aspiration of the learner. A learner assessed as already having skills at, for example, Level 1 has a need for provision at Level 2 in order to achieve measurable improvement and meaningful progression and to undertake provision which is best suited to their needs.

- It determines the appropriate LSC funding stream, or whether the employer should meet the costs. The following examples are designed to help:

(a) An employee without a full Level 2 qualification is assessed as having vocational Level 2 training needs. The Level 2 learning leads to an NVQ at full Level 2 so can be supported through discrete Train to Gain funds.

(b) An employee with a full Level 2 qualification is assessed as having a training need at Level 2. The employer will have to pay at least a contribution to the cost of this training but not fully Train to Gain funded.

(c) An employee with a ‘thin’ Level 2 qualification is assessed as having a training need at Level 2. The Level 2 learning aim leading to an NVQ at full Level 2 can be supported through discrete Train to Gain funds.

(d) An employee without a full Level 2 qualification has training needs but is capable of / more suited to Level 3 learning (this is a Level 3 jumper). The provider must follow the guidance of the regional LSC as different funding rules may apply in different areas (i.e. L3 Trial).
Key Sources of Information:
List of useful websites and documents:

https://brokers.train2gain.gov.uk/
http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/lad/
http://www.naric.org.uk/
http://www.qca.org.uk/
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/section97

Requirements for Funding Train to Gain 2007/08:
https://brokers.train2gain.gov.uk/funding/

Requirements for Funding Work-based Learning for Young People 2006/07:
NVQS
6. LEVEL 2 LIST
NVQs Level 2 by Sector

Sourced from the National Database of Accredited Qualifications, this provides a list of sectors that have Level 2 NVQ qualifications (data is correct as of 21st April 2008).

To access the latest full list of NVQs click on the NDAQ link below: http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk
Then click on ‘search for qualifications’, check the box for ‘qualification level 2’, select qualification type as ‘NVQ’ and then search. There is an option at the bottom of the page to download the list as an excel spreadsheet.

Please note: it may be necessary to check that the provision is available in your area first. You can do so by checking the Employers Guide to Training Providers (http://www10.employersguide.org.uk/advanced_search/)

Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care
Arts, Media & Publishing
Business, Administration and Law
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment
Education & Training
Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies
Health, Public Services and Care
Information and Communication Technology
Languages, Literature and Culture
Leisure, Travel and Tourism
Retail & Commercial Enterprise
Science and Mathematics