



Consultation on development of a new Vocational Award in ICT (Technical Award)

Recent research commissioned by the Local Government Association has found that baseline digital skills such as Microsoft Office and other productivity software tools are commonly required in jobs across all skills levels and have become a ticket to entry in the labour market with over 75% of job openings requesting digital skills¹.

The UK is the leading destination in Europe for inward investment into the digital sector, attracting £6.7 billion in 2016 (50% higher than any other European country²). Global tech companies have announced significant investments in the UK since the referendum to leave the EU.³ However, the reported digital skills shortage in the UK⁴ highlights the importance of qualifications in developing the digital skills of young people.

Our new Vocational Award in ICT is being designed to support learners aged 14-16 year old to develop fundamental ICT skills that can support them in their careers and further study.

Proposals relating to the qualification structure and topic areas included

We propose that the qualification is made up of two units:

| Unit | Unit title | Assessment | GLH |
|------|----------------|------------|-----|
| 1 | ICT in society | External | 48 |
| 2 | ICT in context | Internal | 72 |

Unit 1 ICT in society

Unit 1 will allow the learner to explore the wide range of uses of hardware, application and specialist software in society. They will investigate how Information Technology is used in a range of contexts, with business and organisations, education and home use of information technology being explored. In response to a recent sector review⁵ this unit contains content on emerging technologies as well as

¹ https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/LGA-2019_SkillsGaps_FINAL.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-2017-employment-and-trade>

³ <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Exiting-the-European-Union/17-19/Sectoral%20Analyses/36-Technology-ICT-Report%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2002) Measuring the Information Economy. Paris: OECD publications.

⁵ Qualification Wales (2018) Delivering Digital – Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualifications System in Information and Communication Technology

being based on the fundamental concepts of the subject, rather than software/hardware, to help future proof the qualification. Topics will include:

- How IT can be used to fulfil the needs of organisations¹ and individuals
- How data and information is used and transferred
- Legal, moral, ethical, cultural and environmental impacts of IT and the need for cybersecurity

Unit 2 ICT in context

Unit 2 will allow the learner to gain a broad working knowledge of databases, spreadsheets, automated documents and images and to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems in vocational settings. The content of this unit reflects that evidence that teachers liked the skills that learners obtained through spreadsheet and database tasks.⁶ The topics chosen, about how ICT skills can be applied to solve real-world problems in a variety of contexts, will help ensure that the qualification stays up to date. Topics will include:

- Planning, creating, modifying and using databases
- Planning, creating, modifying and using spreadsheets
- Planning, creating and modifying an automated document
- Planning, creating, manipulating and storing images

This structure has been proposed to equip learners applied knowledge and understanding related to a range of disciplines within ICT. It is designed with both practical and theoretical elements. The course will also develop a variety of transferable skills including evaluation, communication, presentation and problem-solving. These skills will stand any learner in good stead for the future, irrespective of their chosen career path.

We have considered whether the Vocational Award in ICT should encompass additional digital technologies such as website creation but have not included it at this stage due to overlap with other qualifications. Therefore, the Vocational Award in ICT will be distinct from and complementary to other qualifications such as GCSE Computer Science. This will allow learners to study both areas if required.

Proposals relating to our approach to assessment

We propose that **Unit 1** is externally assessed through an examination taken on-screen. Feedback from both centres and learners has indicated that the current on-screen assessment is engaging and motivating for learners. On-screen assessment will also allow us to introduce new and innovative question types including the use of audio and/or video clips where appropriate.

The first assessment of this qualification will be in 2024 and we anticipate that there will be greater use of technology in learning and assessment by this time. We will keep this proposal under review throughout the development process and will consult further with centres and stakeholders to ensure that schools have the technical infrastructure in place before we make a final decision.

We propose that **Unit 2** is internally assessed and will primarily assesses the use of ICT skills. We propose that this unit is assessed through a practical task-based assessment completed under controlled

⁶ Qualification Wales (2018) Delivering Digital – Sector Review of Qualifications and the Qualifications System in Information and Communication Technology

conditions. Controlled assessment in our Vocational Awards is designed so that knowledge, skills and understanding are assessed through tasks that have many of the characteristics of real work in the sector. Assignment briefs are designed around an applied context which acts as a focus for the assessment. We envisage this assessment for this unit to be holistic, requiring candidates to use different applications in an integrated way to solve a set problem.

Additional areas for consideration

In addition to your views on the proposals for this qualification we are also interested in hearing your views on a number of other areas including resources. Within the online form, there is an opportunity to join a closed forum to discuss these areas further.

Consultation questions

To provide your views on these proposals please complete the online form [here](#).