niace
promoting adult learning

Using the ITQ (Information Technology Qualification) in adult and community learning

FACT – a well trained IT user generally makes 50% fewer errors than an untrained employee (E-Skills UK – Anthony Sherlock).

This briefing sheet describes a pilot project managed by NIACE during 2005-6 which utilised the diagnostic tool, the E Skills Passport, and the newly developed ITQ materials (by LSDA) for teaching and support staff, within eleven adult and community learning organisations. The project was managed by the ICT and Learning Team at NIACE as part of the three year e-learning programme for Adult and Community Learning (ACL) which commenced in 2003.

As the managing agents for the extension of the National Learning Network initiative to ACL, NIACE adopted a plan to widen the use of e-learning in ACL. This included supporting a number of innovative e-learning projects that would trial ideas, assess their value to the sector, and conduct research into good practice and new ideas for staff development. This project was part of wider staff development research and looked at the sustainability of using the ITQ to accredit staff IT user skills in ACL.

ITQ (Information Technology Qualification – NVQ at Levels 1-3)

The ITQ is the new IT user qualification and training package that has been created by employers for employers to ensure that staff are trained in exactly the IT skills that they need to carry out their job roles. It has replaced the former NVQ in IT and has been developed in consultation with employers by LLUK (Lifelong Learning UK) and E Skills UK as a flexible qualification for the workforce in general. The ITQ is one of the vehicles proposed for accrediting the IT skills of practitioners involved in the delivery of ICT Skill for Life. This is a flexible option, using assignments rather than formal tests to prove evidence of ability. The ICT Skill for Life Standards have been designed to map into the ITQ, although the ITQ is more demanding.

Employers recognise that employees have varying skills across the IT user packages and have developed an approach which allows candidates to take different units at different levels to reflect their level of ability. The flexibility of ITQ allows bespoke units to be included into the qualification. Organisations can have tailor made qualifications that are appropriate to their needs. Staff can be certificated for training on software that is unique to the organisation.

The E-Skills Passport

The E-Skills Passport is a nationally recognised method of assessing IT skills. By building up a profile of their IT needs, participants are better able to define their future training needs. The Passport is about to be re-launched with some of the functions of an e-portfolio.

The Passport can set improvement goals and build individual learning plans by determining one of five different skills levels. The self assessment evaluates 14 IT user skills in the following areas:

General IT skills:	computer operation, troubleshooting, maintenance, security
E-based skills:	internet and world wide web, email
Applications:	word processing, spreadsheets
Design:	web design, art and design
Presentations:	design and purpose
IT technology:	evaluate the impact of IT, determine the appropriate use of IT

ITQ and E-Skills Passport Adult Community Learning Project

Eleven ACL providers (nine Local Authority ACL services, one Former External Institution and one WEA region) were invited to participate in this pilot project, each organisation piloting the E Skills Passport online assessment tool with 10 members of teaching and support staff. After assessment, they undertook the ITQ using training materials provided to enable them to build up a portfolio of evidence related to their job role at level 2. Each organisation provided an in-house assessor/trainer to moderate the portfolio evidence and provide additional training when required.

The NLN funding provided each of the participating ACL organisations with the following funding and support:

- £2,500 towards staff development costs
- E Skills Passport Licences for 10 participants
- Free mentoring support for the in-house assessor and participants
- Free training pack and CD Rom with materials at Level 2

The project was completed at the end of October 2005 and the final report is now available on aclearn.net. Early messages from the reports are:

> "Accrediting existing IT skills proved very motivating to the staff."
> "E-Skills Passport proved to be a very positive way of assessing current level of skill. All learners loved the interactive approach and the immediate feed back of results."
> "The training pack and CD Rom provided were invaluable … and it was especially useful to have all the unit resources on a CD that was very straightforward to use."
> "Candidates who have previously compiled an NVQ, appreciate the collection of evidence by electronic means as opposed to gathering reams of paper-based evidence."
> "The ITQ qualification brings a flexibility previously impossible with NVQs and most ICT qualification frameworks …"

Delays were experienced by projects who did not have ITQ test centre status, staff who had experience of delivering NVQs and assessors and moderators. Different funding profiles have emerged depending on whether or not NVQ assessment and moderation had to be bought in from an external provider.

The ITQ Units

Unit title	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Make selective use of IT (Mandatory)	15	25	35
Use IT systems	5	15	25
Operate a computer	10	20	30
IT Trouble-shooting for users	5	15	25
IT maintenance for users	5	15	25
IT security for users	5	15	25
Artwork and imaging software	10	20	35
Internet and intranets	5	15	25
Email	5	15	25
Word processing software	10	20	30
Spreadsheet software	10	20	35
Database software	10	20	35
Website software	10	20	35
Presentation software	10	20	30
Specialist of bespoke software	10	20	30
Evaluate the impact of IT	5	15	25
Use IT systems	5	15	25
Use IT to exchange information	5	15	25
Sector specific unit	10	20	30

LSC Update

"The LSC will be working to build on the success of ITQ pilots and grow capacity for ITQ delivery. As already mentioned … *ITQ Newsletter issue 4 from City and Guilds* … ITQ Champions have been appointed in each LSC region to help promote ITQ, supported bv an ITQ team at National Office" – *source: David Burden of the ITQ Team at LSC National Office.*

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Useful Resources

Final project evaluation report: www.aclearn.net

City and Guilds are producing an electronic newsletter, which provides up to date information about the ITQ and its delivery including useful case studies and articles. (Subscribe by email to: ITQUPDATE@cityandguilds.com and back copies are available from www.cityandguilds.com/itq)

Useful websites are: www.e-skills.com (for general information about the ITQ, the E Skills Passport), www.e-skillspassport.com (for a demonstration version of the software) and www.e-skills.com/cgi-bijn/wms.pl/649 (to download the ITQ Calculator).

NIACE ICT & Learning Team, in partnership with LSDA, is reviewing the accreditation of IT skills in Teacher training for delivery of the ICT Skill for Life curriculum and will be reporting to the DfES in April 2006 – the ITQ is one qualification under consideration.

The DfES 2 year Pathfinder project for ICT Skill for Life delivery - KPMG are managing this research project and inviting post 16 delivery organisations to undertake differing models of delivery including the ITQ Contact richard.barrett@kpmg.co.uk if interested in participating in the pilot project.

Awarding Bodies provide information on the ITQ on their websites:
ITQ Handbook for Centres available for download at www.ocr.org.uk
Scheme documentation from www.cityandguilds.com/itq

ICT Skills for Life Briefing – to be published three times a year with reference to the ITQ as a vehicle for accreditation of practitioner and learner IT skills – email ict@basicskillsbulletin.co.uk (Peter Robinson) to subscribe.

ITQ Awareness Project and events being held by Greater Manchester LSC (www.lsc.gov.uk/search on ITQ.

Statistical data and background information at www.lsc.gov.uk on ITQ - Media Channel.

This is the seventy-first in a series of briefing sheets, which aim to provide an introduction to a variety of lifelong learning issues. Many earlier titles in the series are still available including:

70. Widening participation and E-learning
69. Older people and learning - key statistics
68. Learning in later life
67. Adult education working in care settings
62. Ideas for using ICT in adult and community learning

Requests for briefing sheets in other formats, such as large print are welcomed, we will be pleased to consider your request. Copies of this and other sheets are available from NIACE

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They are also available on the website at www.niace.org.uk/information

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties, or insufficient resources. Registered charity number 1002775; Company registration number 2603322