



Learner Handbook

Information and practical advice for Learners



improving people's lives



Leading learning and skills

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1. Who are A4e Skills?

A4e Skills are a division of A4e, we are one of the leading national providers of vocational training. Our aim is to provide the best training, fully customised, to the best standards for you and your employer. We work in close co-operation with employers, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and colleges to achieve this.

To find out more about A4e Skills visit:

www.a4eskills.co.uk or call our customer centre on **0800 345 666**

2. Why do a Vocational Qualification?

- You gain a nationally recognised qualification
- Earn while you learn
- Prove your skills and knowledge and help you perform well in your job
- Gain more credibility in your workplace
- Qualifications mean a better chance of promotion
- You could even earn more when you're qualified

There are a number of different programmes available for vocational qualifications depending on your career choice and experience. Here are just a few examples:

- Business Administration
- Customer Service
- Management
- Team Leading
- Cleaning & Support Services
- Health & Social Care
- Distribution, Warehousing & Storage
- Retail Operations
- Child Care Learning & Development
- Hospitality Service
- Hospitality Supervision
- Food Service
- Children & Young People

3. National Vocational Qualifications, NVQs

3.1 What are NVQs?

NVQs or National Vocational Qualifications are practical qualifications that are achieved largely by what you do in your job. The rules, or "standards", of the qualifications are designed by the industry that the qualification relates to. It is achieved largely by further training plus gathering and recording what you do on a day-to-day basis.

An NVQ is split into units which relate to specific areas of your job. Some units are mandatory and some optional but all will relate to the industry sector in which you are working.

There are five NVQ levels and you will be working towards the NVQ level which suits you and your job role best. After you have completed your NVQ, why not look at what you might like to achieve next:

- **Level 1: Basic Industry Skills.**
- **Level 2: Enhanced Industry Skills.**
- **Level 3: Junior management.**
- **Level 4: Middle management.**
- **Level 5: Senior management.**

3.2 Key Skills

There are a generic set of skills that are required to do any job well and you will need to complete two of these mandatory units as part of your Apprenticeship. There are also four optional units to be completed depending on the Apprenticeship you are following. Some of these skills will be tested either at your local A4e Skills centre or online. Either way we will be supporting you prior to taking the tests to ensure that you have the relevant knowledge.

3.3 Exemptions and Contributions

Any previous qualifications can be used to assess your existing knowledge and may exempt you from taking some of the Key Skills tests. Your Learning Assessor will confirm which qualifications relate to specific Key Skills.

Application of number (mandatory)

This is where you develop and demonstrate your skills in interpreting information involving numbers, carry out calculations, interpret results and present findings.

Communication (mandatory)

Communication Key Skills develop and demonstrate your speaking, listening, reading and writing skills for different purposes.

3.4 optional units

You may be required to complete some or all of the following units:

- **Information and Communication Technology.**
- **Working with others.**
- **Problem Solving.**
- **Improve your own learning and performance.**

3.5 Technical certificates

The Technical Certificate is designed to provide additional broad based knowledge associated with your industry. All Technical Certificates are specific to the learning you'll be undertaking and provide an opportunity to test and improve knowledge in your chosen sector.

They are delivered through a taught programme of off-the-job training, unlike NVQs, which are delivered through on-the-job training. Technical certificates may be existing qualifications such as Foundation Health and Safety in Hospitality or new qualifications developed to meet the needs of a particular sector, e.g. Food Hygiene.

Please be aware that Technical Certificates are tested either online or at one of your local centres and will require time away from your place of work.

4. Apprenticeships

4.1 What are Apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships provide learners with a mixture of on and off-the-job training while they are at work. They are varied and meet the needs of all different sectors of industry and commerce.

Employers benefit as Apprenticeships help create a highly trained and motivated workforce.

There are two levels of Apprenticeships:

- 1 Apprenticeships**
equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; Key Skills and in some cases a Technical Certificate.
- 2 Advanced Apprenticeships**
equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, Key Skills and a Technical Certificate.

Both deliver training which recognises your achievement with an accredited qualification. In most cases the Apprenticeship is made up of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), Key Skills and Technical Certificates.

4.2 Eligibility

Apprenticeship programmes are intended for people starting or wanting to progress to the next stage in their career.

As a general rule you should not be in full time education and not hold a degree. You are either employed or effectively employed by the organisation sponsoring the programme and must work for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

4.3 Progression

You are able to progress from Level 2 to Level 3, which is an Advanced Apprenticeship, and then into higher qualifications dependant on your chosen career path.

5. Skills for Life

5.1 What are Skills for Life?

Skills for Life qualifications are designed to help you develop the skills you use in everyday life, such as reading, writing or maths. They can help you boost your CV or move on to further study and additional qualifications. You can take a Skills for Life qualification if you:

- Are over 16 years of age.
- Have left compulsory full-time education.

Skills for Life Certificates are available in:

- Adult literacy.
- Adult numeracy.
- Information and communications technology (ICT).

(There is also a Skills for Life qualification in English for Speakers of Other Languages.)

Skills for Life Certificates are available at a level of learning to suit you, and the levels are:

- Entry level (three entry levels to choose from).
- Level 1.
- Level 2.

(The Skills for Life Certificate in ICT is available at entry level only.)

5.2 How you are assessed

The type of test or task you take, and how it is assessed, will depend on which level of qualification you choose. Some tasks can be tested online for Entry Level 3:

- **Entry levels:**
Skills for Life qualifications consist of tasks assessed by your learning centre, college or school.
- **Levels 1 and 2:**
You will sit a test which can be paper based or taken online.

5.3 Where can they lead?

Skills for Life qualifications are based on national standards so everyone, including potential employers, can see what you're capable of. Skills for Life qualifications can:

- Give you more confidence in your own abilities.
- Show what you have achieved in your learning programme.
- Boost your CV.
- Help you get onto other courses such as NVQs.
- Prove your ability to produce accurate work.

6. What you need to know

6.1 Progress Visits

Your Learning Assessor will conduct visits with you to discuss, confirm and record the activities undertaken during the period of review.

At this visit you will agree actions and targets which will be completed on a Contact Report. Your Mentor/Manager will also be involved in these visits and this is the time to ensure that you are increasing your levels of competence and progressing towards the final achievement of your goals.

6.2 Evidence

Evidence is made up from pieces of work that you complete in your day-to-day responsibilities to provide proof of certain skills. These range from simple examples of your work to appraisals from your Manager.

You need to ensure that all evidence is:

- **Current** – as a general rule not more than 2 years old.
- **Valid** – relevant to your NVQ subject.
- **Sufficient** – more than one example is always preferable.

To help you in collecting evidence we've listed some examples:

- **Examples of products of materials you have produced.**
- **Records of telephone calls e.g. customer service calls.**
- **Photographs of you doing aspects of your job.**
- **Correspondence e.g. letters, completed forms.**
- **Question and answer sessions with your Learning Assessor.**
- **Customer and Manager statements in the form of testimonials.**
- **Appraisal reports.**
- **Previous experience.**

6.3 The Portfolio

Your portfolio is where you keep all your evidence. You will receive an "Programme Binder" shortly after completing your personal learning plan. This binder is where you should keep all your evidence to create a "portfolio".

6.4 Employment Status

If you are working towards your qualification whilst you are employed you will abide by your company's terms and conditions including pay, holiday, sickness procedures, working hours and so on. We will, however, have discussed with your employer opportunities for learning outside of the work place.

Please ensure that you know what applies to you by discussing with your Learning Assessor and Employer and make a note. You should know about your company's Health & Safety and Grievance policies and procedures and their Equality & Diversity policies.

6.5 Absences, Illness and Accident Procedure

Absence from your place of work will be in accordance with the terms and conditions set by your Employer.

If you will be absent from a pre-arranged appointment with your Learning Assessor please contact your Learning Assessor directly.

Where you have an accident at work, which results in you being absent from work for 3 working days or more, you must inform your A4e Learning Assessor or Verifier.

6.6 Grievance Procedure

This is to ensure that whilst you are on the programme there is a clear procedure for you to follow if you have any problems or feel you are being unfairly treated.

If you have a grievance relating to your organisation, training or otherwise, the points below should be followed:

1. In the first instance, raise your problem with your immediate line manager.
2. If you are not satisfied, raise your problem with your A4e representative.
3. If the matter is still not resolved, raise your problem with the Internal Verifier.
4. If the above step fails to bring you any satisfaction, then either contact Head Office's "Customer Relations Team" on the freephone telephone number 0800 345 666, or you have the right to raise your problem with your local Learning & Skills Council.

6.7 Appeals Procedure

If you are not satisfied with the results of your coursework or assessment, you have the right to appeal. (Stages must be followed in order):

- **Stage 1:**
Your concerns should be raised directly with the trainer/tutor/Learning Assessor concerned to try to find an informal solution.
- **Stage 2:**
You should inform the appropriate line manager who will ensure the matter is investigated informally.
- **Stage 3:**
You may raise the matter informally by completing the official complaint form.
- **Stage 4:**
You may contact the examining body for your qualification in order for them to investigate your complaint.

This is to ensure that while you are on the programme you have a clear procedure to follow if you disagree with any assessment decision that is made towards your qualification.

Your appeals procedure will be issued to you with your portfolio by your Learning Assessor. You will be advised who to make your appeals to and their contact details. You will also be informed of your Awarding Body appeals procedure and the Awarding Body contact for your qualification. It is important that you familiarise yourself with this procedure whilst you are completing your qualification.

7. Your Training Team

Starting any new qualification can be a daunting task, that's why A4e offers you advice and guidance throughout the duration of your programme.

YOUR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR

Your induction and initial contact from A4e will be with one of our Business Development Advisors. It's their job to welcome you on board and introduce you to the programme.

YOUR LEARNING ASSESSOR

You are assigned a personal Learning Assessor at the induction stage who will guide you through every aspect of your training. Your Learning Assessor will arrange to visit you within 10 days of this induction meeting. Visits will then be arranged and completed a minimum of every 4 weeks.

THE MOST IMPORTANT

YOU

MEMBER OF THE TEAM

YOUR MENTOR

Your mentor is a work colleague from your organisation (often your line manager) assigned to support your learning.

They will be able to answer questions, provide witness statements, be involved in guided discussions with your Learning Assessor and provide access to product evidence.

A4E SKILLS CUSTOMER CENTRE

You can contact our Customer Centre:

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 5.00pm

Tel: 0800 345 666

8. Health & Safety

As an employee you have a right to protection from hazards in the workplace. Employers have to take steps to make sure that they know about the hazards. Having assessed the risks, they then have to control them.

Your Learning Assessor will tell you how to work safely, avoid hazards where you work and how to be risk aware. If your employer has five or more people working for them they will have their own safety policy. It will spell out the procedures which are in place to ensure that you are working in a safe environment.

8.1 You are responsible too

By law, you must not interfere with or misuse anything provided for safety. You should use all equipment and protective clothing provided and report things that seem dangerous, damaged or faulty. Only use tools, machinery or substances after you have been trained and given permission to do so and never play practical jokes in the workplace.

8.2 Health & Safety issues to consider

There are lots of Health & Safety issues to consider, some won't be relevant to your work place. However, if you take a look at the list below you can make sure that you know which areas relate to your job.

- Tidiness and Hygiene
- Protective Equipment and Clothing
- Moving about the Workplace
- Lifting and Carrying
- Working at Heights
- Safety around the Building
- Machinery
- Hand Tools and Knives
- Working with Animals
- Hazardous Substances
- Working with Computers
- Fire
- First Aid
- Personal Safety

Ask your employer for specific policies, let your Learning Assessor know if you want more information or download a great, easy to read booklet from www.lsc.gov called "Be Safe" or visit www.safelearner.info

A copy of the A4e Health & Safety policy is available to download at www.a4e.co.uk or simply ask your Learning Assessor.

9. Equality & Diversity

A4e is committed to the promotion and development of equality and diversity both in the provision of its services and in its role as an employer.

We believe that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. As such we aim to provide a working and learning environment which values individuals equally regardless of age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or religion.

We are committed to working towards the elimination of unlawful and unfair discriminatory practices and strive to be recognised as a learning provider which is representative of the learners and employers we work alongside.

Our aim is that every learner that comes to A4e will find their experience is filled with opportunities that not only reflect their culture, diversity and interests but also allows them to fully and equally participate in our programmes and so achieve their goals. We also want to support our learners in understanding the importance of equality and diversity and providing them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge inequality.

This commitment is central to our mission to improve people's lives.



10. Managing Queries and Complaints

It is the company's aim to ensure that all queries and complaints are dealt with quickly and effectively; all queries will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

If a Learner wishes to make a complaint without involving their Learning Assessor or their Local Centre, they can contact our national **Customer Service Centre on 0800 345 666**.

Alternatively they can contact their local careers service or the Local Government agency (funding bodies) that helps to fund their training. Details of how to contact all these agencies will be provided as part of induction.



improving people's lives

Preparing today's work-force for tomorrow's challenges

0800 345 666 | skills@a4e.co.uk

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