NCFE Entry Level 3 Essential Digital Skills
QN: 610/7905/4



Qualification Specification

Version 1.0 October 2026

Qualification summary

Qualification title	**NCFE Entry Level 3 Essential Digital Skills**
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	610/7905/4
Guided learning hours (GLH)	48
Total qualification time (TQT)	48
Minimum age	14
Qualification purpose	The purpose of this qualification is to allow learners to demonstrate understanding of, and competency in, the essential digital skills they need for life and work. It will enable learners to engage with digital services and products in everyday life and work.
Grading	Pass/fail
Assessment method	Externally set and externally marked: • Section A (knowledge): externally set, externally marked multiple-choice questions (MCQ) completed under externally assessed conditions • Section B (skills): externally set, externally assessed task-based assessment, completed under externally assessed conditions.
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 610/7905/4.
Funding	This qualification may be eligible for funding. For further guidance on funding, please contact your local funding provider.

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Section 1: introduction

This Qualification Specification contains details of all the content and assessments required to complete this qualification.

Centres must ensure they are using the most recent version of the Qualification Specification on the NCFE website.

If you advertise this qualification using a different or shortened name, you must ensure that learners are aware that their final certificate will state the full regulated qualification title.

Aims and objectives

This qualification aims to:

- focus on the study of digital skills
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge and skills
- provide opportunities to acquire a number of essential digital skills.

The objectives of this qualification are to:

- build digital skills for everyday life
- build digital skills for work.

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook, which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Guidance for entry and registration

This qualification is designed for learners aged 14 and above.

Registration is at the discretion of the centre in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the NCFE Portal.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the learning outcomes (LOs) and complying with the relevant literacy, numeracy, and health and safety requirements.

Learners registered on this qualification should not undertake another qualification at the same level, or with the same/a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.

Achieving this qualification

To be awarded this qualification, learners are required to successfully pass the assessment requirements. This qualification has a compensatory structure of assessment.

Please refer to the list of content sections that follow or the content and amplification summaries in Section 2 for further information.

To achieve this qualification, learners must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all LOs of the units as detailed in this Qualification Specification.

Content sections

To make cross-referencing assessment and quality assurance easier, we have used a sequential numbering system in this document for each section of content.

Section number	Section title	Level	GLH
01	Being safe and responsible online and on digital devices	EL3	10
02	Using digital devices and handling information	EL3	14.5
03	Creating and editing	EL3	13
04	Digital communication	EL3	4
05	Transacting digitally	EL3	4.5

Progression

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to Level 1 Essential Digital Skills.

Resource requirements

There are no mandatory resource requirements for this qualification/these qualifications, but centres must ensure learners have access to suitable resources to enable them to cover all the appropriate LOs.

Digital foundation skills

This framework is intended to be used by everyone in the UK involved in supporting people to improve their essential digital skills. It would be beneficial for all learners to have an understanding of the following foundation skills which underpin all essential digital skills:

Digital foundation skills
I can: • turn on a device • use the available controls on my device • make use of accessibility tools on my device to make it easier to use • interact with the home screen on my device • understand that the internet allows me to access information and content and that I can connect to it through Wi-Fi • connect my device to a safe and secure Wi-Fi network • connect to the internet and open a browser to find and use websites.

Further examples of the digital foundation skills can be found at the gov.uk website.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment is the process of measuring a learner's skill, knowledge and understanding against the standards set in a qualification.

Unless otherwise stated in this Qualification Specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English.

There is one assessment consisting of two sections, representing 100% of the essential digital skills (EDS) result – an externally set and externally marked assessment lasting 1 hour 25 minutes which comprises:

- Section A (knowledge): 20 minutes – externally set, externally marked multiple-choice questions (MCQ) completed under externally assessed conditions
- Section B (skills): 1 hour 5 minutes – externally set, externally assessed task-based assessment, completed under externally assessed conditions.

Section A: AO1 (knowledge) – 12 marks:

Section title	% weighting of section (approx.)	Marks
Being safe and responsible online and on digital devices	41.7% to 50%	5 to 6
Using digital devices and handling information	25% to 33.3%	3 to 4
Creating and editing	8.3% to 16.7%	1 to 2
Digital communication	8.3% to 16.7%	1 to 2
Transacting digitally	8.3% to 16.7%	1 to 2

Section B: AO2 (skills) – 28 marks:

Section title	% weighting of section (approx.)	Marks
Being safe and responsible online and on digital devices	0.0%	0
Using digital devices and handling information	14.3% to 21.4%	4 to 6
Creating and editing	36% to 42.9%	10 to 12
Digital communication	17.9% to 25%	5 to 7
Transacting digitally	17.9% to 25%	5 to 7

Learners will be entitled to unlimited resits; however, they will not be permitted to resit the same assessment. If a learner has attempted all live papers, they will not be able to resit until a new version is available. Resitting learners will be required to sit both sections of the assessment. If a learner does not achieve their assessment, they should have a period of teaching and learning before resitting. Charges will apply to resits.

External assessment

Each learner is required to undertake each section of the external assessment.

External assessments are set and marked by NCFE. The assessment assesses learners' knowledge, understanding and skills based on unit content of this qualification. Centres must not assess or internally quality assure external assessments or provide any feedback to the learner about their performance in the external assessment.

The external assessment consists solely of:

- one on demand (invigilated) assessment – the centre schedules the assessment date and time when making the bookings.

The external assessment is administered under specified assessment conditions and will last for 1 hour 25 minutes.

Completed assessments can only be accessed from within the relevant online assessment screens and cannot be downloaded to a local device.

For instructions on conducting online external assessments, please refer to the Regulations for the Conduct of Digital Skills Assessments and Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery (QSID) documents, available on the NCFE website.

Enquiries about results

All enquiries relating to learners' results must be submitted in line with our Enquiries about Results and Assessment Decisions Policy, which is available on the NCFE website.

On demand assessment

For on demand assessments, the centre may choose the date, time and location of the assessment.

The assessment for the qualification is only available through our online assessment platform.

Learners will be issued with one of the following results:

- pass
- fail.

Learner results will be made available on the Portal. For more information about how to get started with online assessment, please go to the NCFE website.

Learners will have the opportunity to resit the external assessment. If a learner disagrees with the outcome of the assessment, the appeals process can be invoked.

Online assessment

The assessment will be taken via NCFE's online assessment platform Surpass. It is important that all devices being used to sit assessments meet the required specifications and that continual checks are carried out on these devices to check they continue to meet them. Online Assessment Surpass Technical Requirements can be found at Online assessment | NCFE

External assessment conditions

For instructions on conducting external assessments, please refer to our Regulations for the Conduct of Digital Skills Assessments and Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery (QSID) documents, available on the NCFE website.

Section 2: content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the content and amplification of this qualification, including level, and guided learning hours (GLH).

The explanation of terms explains how the terms used in the content sections are applied to this qualification. This can be found in Section 3.

The content contains information which must be covered by the tutor and is open to assessment.

The amplification is an extract from National Standards for Essential Digital Skills (reference: DfE-00082-2019).

For further information or guidance about this qualification, please contact our Customer Support team.

01 Being safe and responsible online and using digital devices

Section summary	In this section, learners will understand about being safe and responsible online and on digital devices. Learners will gain knowledge in digital threats and security, reporting concerns and digital wellbeing.
Guided learning hours	10
Level	Entry Level 3

Learning outcomes
LO1: Protecting privacy and data
LO2: Being responsible online
LO3: Digital wellbeing

Information in this section must be covered by the tutor during the delivery of the content.

LO1: Protecting privacy and data

1.1 Digital threats and implications

Learners will understand the threats to digital security, including:

- viruses/malware
- using unsecure Wi-Fi
- phishing emails
- accessing suspicious hyperlinks.

Learners will understand the potential implications of sharing personal information, including:

- identity theft
- fraud
- unauthorised access
- compromised digital devices.

1.2 Digital security

Learners will understand methods to protect personal information and privacy, including:

- website security:
  - hypertext transfer protocol secure (HTTPS)
- privacy settings
- passwords
- facial/fingerprint recognition
- anti-virus software and firewalls
- securing mobile devices.

Learners will be able to use methods to protect personal information, data and privacy, including:

- privacy settings
- passwords
- facial/fingerprint recognition
- anti-virus software and firewalls.

1.3 Storing personal information and data

Learners will understand why personal information may be stored online and on devices, including:

- marketing
- personalised online experience
- legal:
  - freedom of information
  - data protection.

LO2: Being responsible online

2.1 Reporting concerns with online content

Learners will understand how to report illegal, inappropriate or harmful content to the appropriate organisation, including:

- online protection charities
- police
- platform/website owners.

LO3: Digital wellbeing

3.1 Physical stresses

Learners will understand the potential physical stresses when using digital devices, including:

- bad posture
- eye strain
- headaches
- repetitive strain injury (RSI).

Learners will understand how to minimise the potential physical stresses, including:

- adjustable furniture:
  - desk
  - chair
  - footrest
  - back support
- position of hardware
- correct hardware
- screen breaks
- screen filters.

Amplification

Extract from National Standards for Essential Digital Skills (reference: DfE-00082-2019):

Protecting privacy and data	**Personal information** stored by devices and online activity refers to the collection and use of personal information and data by organisations (often used to personalise online experiences and target advertisements). Methods of protecting personal information and privacy may include: • guarding your date of birth and telephone number online • using a pseudonym on social media sites • looking for HTTPS when entering login credentials or other personal data • being aware that the security of your digital devices can be compromised, hacked and/or hijacked. Know and understand implications of sharing personal information. Know when personal information may be stored by devices.
Being responsible online	**Concerns with online content** could include illegal, inappropriate or harmful content.
Digital wellbeing	**Physical stresses** include pain from poorly positioned equipment and/or bad posture, and repetitive strain injury caused by repeated movements over a long period of time, such as eye strain and headaches and so on. Know and understand the terminology and concepts relating to potential physical stresses of using devices. Know that the effects can be minimised by using an adjustable chair which supports good posture, and not being too close or too far away from the screen/device and peripherals (for example, keyboard and mouse).

02 Using digital devices and handing information

Section summary	In this section, learners will understand digital devices. Learners will gain knowledge of hardware and software, and be able to use digital devices to handle and search for information.
Guided learning hours	14.5
Level	Entry Level 3

Learning outcomes
LO1: Using digital devices
LO2: Find and evaluate information
LO3: Manage and store information
LO4: Identifying and solving technical problems

Information in this section must be covered by the tutor during the delivery of the content.

LO1: Using digital devices

1.1 Hardware, software, operating systems and applications

Learners will understand the main features of digital devices and their uses, including:

- computers (desktop/laptop)
- mobile/smart devices
- wearable technology.

Learners will understand the terminology used for digital devices and their role, including:

- hardware
- software:
  - applications
  - operating systems
- storage requirements.

1.2 Locate and install an application

Learners will understand how to locate applications, including:

- internet
- app stores.

Learners will be able to install applications on digital devices, including:

- computers (desktop/laptop)
- mobile/smart devices.

1.3 Applying system settings

Learners will understand system settings terminology for digital devices, including:

- display
- sound
- connecting to Wi-Fi
- time
- language
- accessibility:
  - magnifier
  - screen reader
  - voice control.

Learners will be able to select and adjust system settings, including:

- display
- sound
- connecting to Wi-Fi
- time
- language
- accessibility.

LO2: Find and evaluate information

2.1 Searching for information and content

Learners will understand the terminology and processes used when searching for information and content online, including:

- hyperlink navigation
- Uniform Resource Locators (URLs)
- web browsers
- search engines
- keywords/search terms
- search filters.

Learners will be able to search for information and content using digital devices.

2.2 Navigate online content

Learners will be able to use online navigation tools to review required information, including:

- menus
- hyperlinks
- browser navigation controls:
  - back and forward buttons
  - bookmarks.

LO3: Manage and store information

3.1 Working with files and folders

Learners will understand the terminology and processes used when working with files and folders, including:

- naming conventions
- file types:
  - .doc
  - .pdf
  - .jpeg
  - .mpeg
  - .wav
- file size
- folders
- storage:
  - local
  - remote.

Learners will be able to use files and folders to manage and store information on digital devices, including:

- opening
- saving
- storing
- organising
- retrieving
- back-up/syncing.

LO4: Identifying and solving technical problems

4.1 Recognising and solving technical problems

Learners will understand common technical problems and user errors, including:

- user errors:
  - incorrect credentials
  - incorrect hardware connections
  - opening files in unsuitable applications
  - saving files using inappropriate characters
- technical problems:
  - error messages
  - system/application freeze
  - connectivity issues
  - communication issues.

Learners will be able to apply solutions to solve problems and errors, including:

- application restart
- device reboot
- network reconnection.

Amplification

Extract from National Standards for Essential Digital Skills (reference: DFE-00082-2019):

Using digital devices	**Devices** will include computers (desktop/laptop), mobile devices, smart devices, and wearable technology. **Hardware** means main physical elements that make up computers (desktop/laptop), mobile devices, smart devices, and wearable technology. It does not include an understanding of computer architecture. **Software** means the various kinds of programs providing functionality on devices. **Operating systems** include those typically used for computers (desktop/laptop) and mobile devices. **Applications** include applications for computers (desktop/laptop) and mobile devices. **System settings** include display, sound, connecting to Wi-Fi, time, language settings and accessibility settings. Accessibility settings include use of a magnifier, use of screen readers and use of voice controls.
Find and evaluate information	**Searching** refers to searching online for a specific and clearly defined piece of information or content.
Managing and storing information	Know and understand terminology and concepts relating to: • files and file types • file size • applications typically associated with file types • folders • digital storage (memory, hard drives) • local and remote storage.

Identifying and solving technical problems	**Recognise when a technical problem has been encountered** includes recognising when there is a problem with a device or software and knowing that some problems are caused by user errors. User errors may include: • using incorrect credentials • incorrectly connecting hardware • attempting to open a file with an unsuitable application • attempting to save a file using a filename with inappropriate characters. **Solving simple problems** refers to solving issues (such as system or application freeze, or internet connection issues) with a simple solution, such as an application restart, device reboot or network reconnection. Be aware of typical technical problems (for example, onscreen error messages arising from application or peripheral hardware malfunctions, or online connectivity and communication issues).

03 Creating and editing

Section summary	In this section, learners will understand about entering, editing and formatting information. Learners will gain knowledge of different file types and how to use suitable applications with different digital media.
Guided learning hours	13
Level	Entry Level 3

Learning outcomes
LO1: Creating and editing documents
LO2: Creating digital media

Information in this section must be covered by the tutor during the delivery of the content.

LO1: Creating and editing documents

1.1 Enter, edit and format information

Learners will understand the terminology and processes used when editing and formatting text, numbers and graphics, including:

- editing:
  - entering or amending
  - selecting
  - copying and pasting
  - cutting and pasting
- formatting:
  - bold
  - underline
  - italics
  - font
  - sizes
  - colours
  - text/image alignment
  - bulleted and numbered
- formatting graphics:
  - positioning
  - sizing
  - borders.

Learners will be able to select and use suitable applications for editing and formatting.

LO2: Creating digital media

2.1 Capture and save images, sound and video

Learners will understand different media file types, including:

- images – JPEG
- sound – WAV
- video – MPEG.

Learners will be able to capture and save media files using digital devices, including:

- grab images/screenshot
- record sound
- record video.

Amplification

Extract from National Standards for Essential Digital Skills (reference: DFE-00082-2019):

Creating and editing documents	**Editing text** includes entering or amending, selecting, copying, cutting and pasting text. **Formatting text** includes bold, underline, italics, font sizes and colours, text alignment, bulleted and numbered lists. **Formatting graphics** includes positioning, sizing and borders. Know and understand terminology and concepts relating to documents (including types, such as word processed, presentations and associated applications), with understanding of the purpose of different applications and typical uses of different document types.
Creating digital media	**Capture and save** means using a device to grab an image, record video or record sound, and storing the result on the device. Know and understand terminology relating to digital devices and digital media, including common file types (for example, JPEG, MPEG and WAV).

04 Digital communication

Section summary	In this section, learners will understand digital communication. Learners will gain knowledge of digital footprints and different types of digital communications.
Guided learning hours	4
Level	Entry Level 3

Learning outcomes
LO1: Manage online activities
LO2: Communication and sharing

Information in this section must be covered by the tutor during the delivery of the content.

LO1: Manage online activities

1.1 Understanding a 'digital footprint'

Learners will understand digital footprints, including:

- definition of a digital footprint
- activities that contribute to a digital footprint:
  - search history
  - websites
  - social media
  - emails
  - uploaded/downloaded media
  - blogs/vlogs
- implications of a digital footprint
- management of a digital footprint.

1.2 Public and private digital communication

Learners will understand public and private digital communication, including:

- public types:
  - blogs/vlogs
  - social media
  - forums
- private types:
  - email
  - private messenger
  - text message
- benefits of public and private communication
- characteristics of public and private communication
- management of public and private communication.

LO2: Communication and sharing

2.1 Communicating digital content

Learners will understand the terminology of online communication, including:

- emailing
- texting
- messaging apps
- video calls
- contacts and groups.

Learners will be able to use online communication with individual and multiple recipients, including:

- creating
- editing
- sending:
  - sharing
- receiving.

Amplification

Extract from National Standards for Essential Digital Skills (reference: DFE-00082-2019):

Manage online activities	Know and understand terminology and concepts relating to private and public communications (including the characteristics and benefits of each) and the actions which contribute to an individual's digital footprint. Know that a digital footprint is data left by online activity, including search history and websites/social media platforms visited, emails, uploaded photos and information sent to online services, blogs and social media activity.
Communicating and sharing	**Sending digital content** includes sharing access to online content. **Video call** refers to a simple one-to-one communication via live video. It does not include a video conference involving groups of people, nor does it require scheduling meetings or inviting participants. Know and understand terminology and concepts relating to emailing, texting and using other messaging apps, contacts and groups, and video calls.

05 Transacting digitally

Section summary	In this section, learners will understand transacting and using online services. Learners will gain knowledge of verification checks and be able to use online forms.
Guided learning hours	4.5
Level	Entry Level 3

Learning outcomes
LO1: Using online services and verifications
LO2: Buying securely online

Information in this section must be covered by the tutor during the delivery of the content.

LO1: Using online services and verifications

1.1 Verification checks

Learners will understand the terminology and processes used for verification, including:

- password
- pin code
- security question
- facial/fingerprint recognition
- CAPTCHA.

Learners will be able to comply with verification checks.

1.2 Complete and submit a form as part of an online transaction

Learners will understand the terminology and processes used to complete an online form, including:

- optional/mandatory fields
- text input field
- drop down
- data entry and validation
- confirmation of submission.

Learners will be able to complete, validate and submit an online form.

LO2: Buying securely online

2.1 Online purchasing and payments

Learners will understand online payment methods, including:

- credit/debit card
- third-party
- mobile payment
- digital wallet.

Learners will be able to select and use online payment methods securely.

Amplification

Extract from National Standards for Essential Digital Skills (reference: DFE-00082-2019):

Using online services	**Online form** typically comprises a simple single page form used to enter information (such as name and/or contact details) to register for or to request a service (for example, make an appointment or collection of household rubbish). Know and understand terminology and concepts relating to online forms and data validation, verification checks, and entering data (including numerical data, for example, in an online form or calculator).
Buying securely online	**Online payment** methods may include: credit/debit cards, third-party online and/or mobile payment services, and third-party online and/or mobile digital wallet services.

Section 3: explanation of terms

This table explains how the terms used at **entry level** in the unit content are applied to this qualification (not all verbs are used in this qualification).

Contribute to	Give ideas or opinions about the subject.
Demonstrate	Show an understanding of the subject.
Describe	Provide some details about the subject or item.
Explain	Provide some details about the subject with simple reasons showing how or why.
Give (an example of…)	Provide a relevant example to support the subject.
Identify	List or name some of the main points.
Indicate	Point out or show.
Label	Give the correct name to identify the subject.
List	Make a list of words, sentences or comments.
Name	Give the correct words which identify the subject.
Order	Arrange in a logical way.
Plan	Think about, organise and give information in a logical way. This could be presented as written information, a diagram or an illustration.
Respond to	Reply or answer in words.
Show	Give some information that includes knowledge about the subject.
State	Give some of the main points in brief, clear sentences.

Section 4: support

Support materials

The following support materials are available to assist with the delivery of this qualification and are available on the NCFE website:

- diagnostic assessment tools
- learning resources
- Qualification Factsheet.

Useful websites

Centres may find the following websites helpful for information to assist with the delivery of this qualification:

- Essential digital skills framework - GOV.UK
- National standards for essential digital skills

Other support materials

The resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Products to support the delivery of this qualification may be available. For more information about these resources and how to access them, please visit the NCFE website.

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