Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy at NFQ levels 1-3
Guidelines, Toolkit and Research Report

Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy.
A Handbook of National Guidelines

Contents

Foreword

We are very pleased to introduce these Guidelines and the accompanying Toolkit which were developed by ETBI and SOLAS and which reflect a comprehensive evidence gathering, stakeholder consultation and research process.

The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019 focusses on skills provision for social inclusion and mobility, economic growth and insulation from unemployment. A necessary foundation for all of these outcomes is well developed and durable literacy and numeracy skills in the adult population. This publication comprises a suite of resources which support tutors, coordinators and managers and which will facilitate continued good practice in assessment of literacy and numeracy for learners.

To assist learners in building and sustaining their literacy and numeracy skills, the ability to provide accurate initial and ongoing assessment is crucial. Literacy and numeracy are complex and multifaceted areas and impact on the whole person. The initial and ongoing assessment system provided in this publication appreciates and responds to the complexity of literacy and numeracy skill assessment in a way that is learner-centred, rigorous, supportive, user-friendly and accountable.

The experience of developing these Guidelines and Toolkit has been very encouraging, with high levels of engagement and support from stakeholders across the literacy and numeracy sector including ETB staff, management teams and advisory groups.

It is clear from the research undertaken that good practice in assessment is nothing new to those working in literacy and numeracy provision across ETBs. The Guidelines and Toolkit distil much of this good practice across literacy and numeracy provision and provide a practical assessment system that will build even greater coherence in initial and ongoing assessment in the sector.

The widespread use of this resource across literacy and numeracy provision, will contribute to ever more flexible and responsive provision enabling learners to achieve their learning goals, maintain and further develop their skills and grow in confidence.

We acknowledge the continued good work of ETBs and trust that this resource will serve to benefit every learner who attends literacy and numeracy provision.
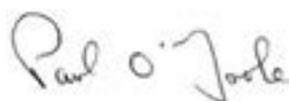
Paul O'Toole
Chief Executive Officer, SOLAS
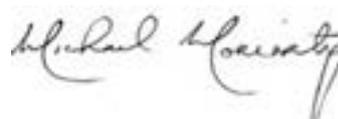
Michael Moriarty
ETBI General Secretary

Acknowledgements

Section 1:
Introduction

This document gives an overview of national guidelines for initial and ongoing assessment of adult literacy and numeracy. Methods and procedures are set out in the form of a practical handbook which is designed to support managers, tutors and learners in adult literacy centres. This assessment strategy is presented in support of the Active Inclusion goal in the SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy[1] and the policy and procedures in the Department of Education and Skills Operational Guidelines for Adult Literacy.[2]

The measures described below are based on evidence drawn from a wide range of sources, including research into national and international assessment practice, analysis of policy and theory, and consultation with literacy and numeracy practitioners in all 16 Education and Training Boards. Details of the research process and the theoretical and policy analysis that contributed to the development of these guidelines are provided in a companion document, the Final Project Report[3].

This Handbook of national assessment guidelines contains four sections and is supported by an accompanying Toolkit.

Section 1 summarises the national guidelines and the purposes, definitions and concepts which underpin the general approach.

Section 2 describes the structure and format of the initial assessment phase.

Section 3 describes the structure and format of ongoing assessment.

Section 4 contains a set of three standard forms to record assessment results, designed for use by all ETBs.

The Toolkit contains resources and sample materials which support the practical implementation of the strategy described in this Handbook.

---

1   SOLAS/Dept of Education and Skills (2014) Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019 Dublin: SOLAS.

2   Dept of Education and Skills Adult Literacy Programme Operational Guidelines for Providers 2012

3   Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy. Research Report.

Users of this Handbook can either work through it systematically from beginning to end, or else dip into the sections most relevant to their own learners and their learning environment. Practitioners may decide to make use of the sample materials provided in the Toolkit, when these resources are relevant to their own learners and specific learning context. However, they are most likely to use the sample tasks as a model to develop their own resources, rooted in their local context.

1.1 National assessment guidelines: Guiding Principles, Conditions, Criteria

The national assessment guidelines are composed of:

- **Six Guiding Principles** which define the ethos underpinning literacy and numeracy assessment.

- **Seven Conditions** which establish a balance between consistency and flexibility in how assessment processes are implemented nationwide.

- **Ten Quality Criteria** or essential standards for all methods and materials.

Guiding Principles

All assessment procedures and support materials are based on established principles of adult education and good practice in literacy work with adults. Assessment is:[4]

- **Learner centred**: based on the individual's knowledge, skills, goals and aspirations; any dimension of literacy or numeracy the person needs in order to achieve their goal should be assessed.

- **Voluntary:** learner's informed choice is central to all stages of assessment process.

- **Confidential**: information is stored securely and the learner's personal data, including information on progress and achievements, may only be distributed to professional colleagues on a need-to-know basis.

- **Constructive:** supports the learner in developing an awareness of their potential.

- **Accurate:** generates verifiable evidence of progress and achievements.

- **Purposeful:** leads to action that support learners' progress.

Seven Conditions

The seven conditions listed below describe:

- A *standard, national approach* to methodology used to assess literacy and numeracy in adult literacy centres (Conditions 1 – 5);

- *Flexibility* in key areas of implementation (Conditions 6 – 7).

Standard national policy and procedures

1. Initial and ongoing assessment of adult literacy and numeracy is carried out using the *performance task* method of assessment.[5]

2. All assessment performance tasks are aligned to Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and to the relevant QQI modules at those levels.

3. All assessment performance tasks, materials and support resources comply with a common set of Quality Criteria.

4. The general structure of the initial assessment process is common to all ETBs.

5. All ETBs record assessment results for initial and ongoing assessment, and plan learning, using three standard forms shown in Section 4 below: an Individual Learner Plan (ILP); an Individual Progress Tracking Form; and a Group Progress Tracking Form.

Flexible areas of implementation

6. The specific assessment performance tasks, materials and support resources used at local level are selected by individual Adult Literacy Centres and coordinated by each ETB.

7. Arrangements for the timing and organisation of assessments are coordinated by each ETB and selected by individual Adult Literacy Centres.

---

4   Draws on NALA (2012) "Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work," Dublin: NALA pp 23, 24.

5   The learner demonstrates ability by engaging in complex tasks that probe their technical abilities, skills and competence in broader dimensions of learning. Performance is assessed and recorded according to specified criteria or outcomes.

Quality criteria for assessment methods, activities and resources

1. All methods and materials are designed for use with adults.

2. The assessment process generates a profile, mark, level or grade, but not reading or spelling ages.

3. Materials are aligned to literacy and numeracy Levels 1, 2, 3 on the NFQ/QQI framework. For more complex activities, sub-skills and specific dimensions may be at different levels.

4. Resources are selected to be consistent with the learner's goals and specific learning objectives.

5. Resources are organised and stored in a format that is accessible across the whole ETB. This could be a ring-binder, where resources are grouped according to knowledge/skill and QQI level; and/or an online platform which facilitates sharing of materials.

6. Where possible, resources make use of authentic tasks, situations and materials.

7. Recording of assessment results refers to specific learning goals which allow for ease of monitoring progress over time.

8. Recording of assessment results refers to technical knowledge and skill *and also*, to the relevant broader dimensions of application and competence.

9. Recording of assessment results references objective evidence of learner's progress and achievement.

10. Methods and materials are reviewed and updated regularly, at least every two years.

1.2 Literacy, numeracy and assessment: definitions and concepts

'Literacy,' 'numeracy' and 'assessment' are complex concepts that can be understood in different ways by different people, depending on the situation and the purpose.

Literacy

"...the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts in order to participate in society, achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential." [6]

"...the provision of basic education, including reading, writing and numeracy skills, and ICT for adults who wish to improve their literacy and numeracy competencies to enhance their participation in personal, social and economic life." [7]

Numeracy

"...the ability to access, use, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life." [8]

---

6   OECD (2016) "Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills," OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris p. 38.

7   Department of Education and Skills Adult Literacy Programme "Operational Guidelines for Providers 2013.

8   OECD (2016) "Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills," OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris p. 48.

Numeracy

> "…encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and to meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings. It means being able to: estimate, predict and calculate, identify patterns, trends and relationships gather, interpret and represent data, express ideas mathematically, engage in problem solving, using investigation and reasoning skills, use digital technology to develop numeracy skills and understanding."[9]

These definitions show that literacy and numeracy:

- Are multi-faceted concepts, composed of inter-related strands.

- Include technical knowledge and skills.

- Include personal and social dimensions.

- Depend on context (personal, social, economic).

The concept of competence

These definitions also highlight the importance of applying technical knowledge and skills in real-life situations. The Council of Europe uses the term 'competence' to describe

> "the ability of individuals to act in a self-organised way[10] by deploying a combination of knowledge, skills, and personal and social capabilities appropriate to each context and relevant to each situation."

The EU Reference Framework[11] of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning[12] emphasises that

> "competence in the fundamental basic skills of language, literacy, numeracy and in information and communication technologies (ICT) is an essential foundation for learning, and learning to learn supports all learning activities. There are a number of themes that are applied throughout the Reference Framework: critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking, and constructive management of feelings play a role in all eight key competences."

Achieving competence therefore means being able to use a skill where, when, and how it is needed. Adult learners of literacy and numeracy need to be able to apply their skills in real life situations. The concept of 'competence' can help practitioners to clarify which aspects of literacy and numeracy should be assessed, and for what purposes. Broader dimensions of competence – which may include attitudes, personal and social behaviour, independence or awareness of one's own learning process – can make the difference between being able to apply the technical knowledge and skill effectively, or not. Tutors and learners need to decide which of these broader dimensions are important for the learner, and work out ways to highlight and assess them.

9   Department of Education and Skills (2017) "Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011-2020): Interim Review 2011-2016; New Targets 2017-2020."

10   Council of Europe (2010) Council Conclusions on Competences supporting lifelong learning and the new skills for new jobs initiative, May 10th, 2010

11   RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN

12   For the revised version the Key Competences framework, published January 17th, 2018, see https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/educa-tion/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf "

Assessment: definitions and purposes

There are many definitions of assessment which emphasise different aspects and purposes. This Handbook of National Guidelines uses the Cedefop definition, which accommodates the many learning environments found in the adult literacy service and also, the broader dimensions of competence mentioned above. Assessment is[13]

> "[the] process of appraising knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria. Assessment is typically followed by certification."

Assessment of adult literacy and numeracy learners in the FET sector in Ireland often leads to accreditation in the form of a Level 1, 2 or 3 QQI award. The purpose of assessment in those cases is *summative*: that is, it verifies the learner's achievement and gives credit in the form of certification.

Many learners come to the literacy service hoping to get a qualification. Others start out with no clear goal and only decide after some time to focus on achieving an award. For those learners, assessment involves gradually building up a portfolio of work that meets QQI specifications. There are also learners who choose not to aim for accreditation and focus on other goals instead.

The national assessment strategy described in this handbook does not replace or duplicate assessments leading to accreditation. That purpose is already served by learners' preparation for QQI awards at Levels 1, 2 and 3.

These guidelines describe formative assessment methods which are designed to *complement* the assessment for accreditation process by providing practical supports for a *range of additional purposes not directly related to accreditation.* The methods and resources provided here will enhance the progress of all adult literacy and numeracy learners, including those who are working towards a qualification, as well as those who are not.

Figure 1 below summarises a range of purposes which assessment can serve.[14]

Figure 1: Purposes of initial and ongoing assessment

Screening
Identifies the presence of a learning need; → **person either joins the service or moves on to other learning.**

Placing
Identifies the general level which the learner has already reached → **decide on the best learning environment for the individual, open Individual Learning Plan.**

Diagnostic
Identifies specific areas of strength, weakness, learning needs → **identify learning goals, draw up Individual Learning Plan.**

Formative
Checks progress → **sets new learning goals, adjusts methods/materials.**

---

13   https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/education-and-training-glossary/a.

14   Acknowledgement to Scottish Executive (2004) "An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland," Edinburgh: Learning Connections Scotland pp 21 – 23. [updated 2014] for part of this model.

The assessment process may be formal or informal, structured or unstructured, but it always poses a question and the answer always leads to some kind of action. What form that action will take depends on the learner's goals and aspirations. These may include:

- Educational goals, e.g. to get a qualification or manage the literacy or numeracy of higher level FET provision.

- Economic goals, e.g. to find a job or to advance in their present job.

- Personal, e.g. to manage literacy and numeracy tasks at home, in family life or to pursue a personal interest.

- Social or community, e.g. to engage with friends and peers in community activities.

These goals are not mutually exclusive and many people hope to achieve a combination of them. However, practitioners report that new learners do not always have a clear idea of their goals, and some start out with particular goals that change over time. Others have no definite aspirations and only discover their goals after a while.

Often, success in one area can have a positive impact on others:

- People who gain qualifications are more likely to be successful in finding a job or improving on the one they already have.

- Improved confidence in their ability to handle literacy and numeracy tasks can equip people to participate in social activities or engage with their local communities.

- Improved literacy and numeracy can enhance people's self-esteem and their readiness to take on more challenging educational goals.

For many learners in adult literacy, making progress towards personal and social goals is a necessary first step on the way to aiming for a qualification or a job, or in making other positive changes in their lives. There are therefore many points of entry for those who start the learning journey. The general aim of literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres needs to accommodate this diversity.

The overall, long-term purpose of literacy and numeracy assessment in the adult literacy service is to enhance the teaching and learning process so that learners can achieve their life goals, needs and aspirations.

1.3 Components of Assessment

The national guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment identifies three distinct, but related, components of initial and ongoing assessment:

Assessment methods refer to the activities of the learner and/or tutor during the assessment process. These may include: tutor's observation of the learner's performance on a task, test, role play, discussion and others.

Support materials and resources may include paper-based or online documents, images, books, tests, worksheets and other tools such as the NFQ.

Recording instruments are paper-based or online forms and templates used to record and keep track of the information generated by the assessment methods.

These three components are addressed in relation to both Initial Assessment (Section 2) and ongoing assessment of progress (Section 3). Standard recording instruments to support both initial and ongoing assessment are supplied in Section 4. Assessment methods are described in detail and supported by sample resources in the accompanying Toolkit.

The following icons indicate where and when different support materials are used.

 Recording Tools, Handbook Section 4 and Toolkit

 Toolkit, Support Tools.

 Toolkit, Sample Tasks.

Section 2:
Initial Assessment of Adult Literacy and Numeracy

The adult literacy service supports learners whose literacy or numeracy abilities range from beginner, up to Level 3 on the National Framework of Qualifications. In addition, some FET students following higher level provision find that they need help to manage the literacy or numeracy demands of their programme.

People can therefore enter the ETB literacy service through several routes. They may be:

1. **Self-identified and voluntary:** learners who make an independent decision to work on literacy or numeracy and approach the literacy service on their own initiative.

2. **Referred or identified internally:** learners who have started or intend to start FET provision in the ETB who have difficulty with the literacy or numeracy demands of their programme and may be referred for help by a FET manager or tutor.

3. **Referred or identified externally:** learners who are identified by an agency outside the FET system e.g. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Health Service Executive; sometimes, but not always, voluntary participants.

Some ETBs have already developed strategies for identifying the literacy and numeracy needs of prospective or actual FET students (number 2 above). Two sample methods are given in the Toolkit. These examples are supplied for reference only, as *assessment for literacy and numeracy screening in the wider FET context and by external agencies (numbers 2 and 3 above) is not the focus of this this Handbook*. Future research into the methods and protocols used in those wider contexts is needed, in order to expand these National Guidelines to describe an integrated national strategy.

This first stage in the development of national guidelines for adult literacy and numeracy applies to learners in the *first category* listed above: people who have themselves identified a learning need and approached the literacy service voluntarily.

2.1 Overview

Initial assessment is a process that happens over time. It explores the following three questions in distinct, but related, stages:

- **Initial assessment 1, Initial Screening**: Does the learner have a literacy or numeracy difficulty?

- **Initial assessment 2, Placing**: What are the learner's goals, learning needs and general level?

- **Initial assessment 3, Diagnostic:** What are the learner's specific strengths, gaps and learning needs?

The overall processes of initial and ongoing assessment yields information that **supports targeted teaching and learning experiences.** This involves a series of steps designed to close the gap between what the learner knows and can do at the start of their learning journey, and what they need to be able to do in the future.[15]

Initial assessment described in this Section supports the first three steps. Ongoing progress assessment, which refers to steps four and five, is addressed in Section 3 below.

2.2 Initial Assessment, Placing

Questions: Does the learner have a literacy or numeracy difficulty?

What are the learner's general needs and level?

At this stage, the practitioner gathers the information needed in order to decide, with the learner, on the best experience or environment for that individual. This involves probing the person's

- Technical knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy.

- Confidence and attitude to literacy/numeracy and to learning in general.

Purpose of assessment
- To clarify and negotiate the best learning environment for the learner. This may be within the literacy service, or in another learning situation.

- To open an Individual Learning Plan. See Recording Tools, Section 4 below.

Figure 2: Targeted teaching and learning

Step 1: Identify broad learning goals	Step 2: Define specific learning objectives	Step 3: Clarify learner's strengths and weaknesses, in relation to goals	Step 4: Track progress in relation to defined learning objectives	Step 5: Adjust teaching and learning process, as needed

---

15   See Toolkit, item 9 on Scaffolding, Vygotsky and the Zone of Proximal Development.

Questions addressed

- Does the learner have a literacy or numeracy difficulty?

- What is the learner's level, their general strengths and weaknesses?

- Can the literacy service support and help the person? Is this the best learning environment to meet their needs?

Outcomes and Actions

- If the learner is within the range of target group for literacy service work, QQI levels 1, 2, 3, they are placed in a group or with a one-to-one tutor and begin their study.

- If the learner does not have a significant literacy or numeracy difficulty that requires input from the adult literacy centre, they are referred to the ETB Guidance Service to help them to choose another option.

- If the learner has special needs, complex or profound needs, tailored supports are put in place to help them to participate.[16]

- If the adult literacy centre cannot meet the learner's needs at this time, the learner is referred to the ETB Guidance Service or to a relevant specialist agency to help them choose an alternative.

Strategy Overview

All Initial Assessments comprise:

- Individual interview: one-to-one meeting with the learner.

- Task completion: learner completes literacy and/or numeracy tasks.

The individual interview is carried out in accordance with the Toolkit *Guidelines,* item 3. These are supported by the *Interview Prompt Sheet* in the Toolkit, item 4.

The individual interview provides a general initial indication of the learner's general level. This is verified or corrected by the learner's performance on selected literacy or numeracy tasks.

Literacy and Numeracy Tasks are chosen to suit each individual learner, to match their area of interest and their general level.

The Sample Tasks section of the Toolkit provides model performance tasks aligned to NFQ Levels 1, 2 and 3. Practioners can select and use these in the form presented, or as the basis for developing tasks built around topics of local interest.

Time scale: options

The duration and time scale within which the two assessment components are completed varies, depending on the individual learner and the local organisational requirements. ETBs choose from these three options:

- Both assessment components, the interview and the tasks, are completed on the same occasion, during the learner's first meeting. Duration – from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

- The individual interview is carried out at an introductory meeting. Assessment Tasks are carried out at a subsequent meeting, no later than two weeks after the individual interview, either at another one-to-one meeting with the ALO or with the tutor as part of the initial stages of learning.

- In some ETBs this process may be carried out as part of an Induction Programme.

---

16   Guidelines on supporting people with special needs in the public sector, which includes literacy and numeracy support, are forthcoming from ETBI/NALA.

2.3 Initial Assessment, Diagnostic

Question: What are the learner's specific strengths and learning needs?

The learner's participation in the initial interview and completion of assessment tasks give a general indication of their strengths and learning needs. To plan a learning experience in detail, more detailed information is needed.

Purpose of assessment
- To identify specific areas the learner will work on, connecting their wider goals with their learning needs.
- To devise specific learning goals and outcomes for the long-term Individual Learner Plan and make entries to the ILP.

Questions addressed
- What are the learner's specific areas of strength and weakness?
- Which skills and competences do they need to meet their goals?

Outcomes and Actions
- If the learner has clear long-term goals, their strengths and learning needs in relation to those goals are identified and recorded on the ILP.

- If the learner does not have clear goals, their short-to-medium term learning goals are discussed. Use Toolkit item 5, *Connecting life goals with learning goals*, to support this process.

- Specific learning goals are entered in the Individual Learner Plan in the form of Learning Outcomes. Toolkit items 6 and 7 provides background information on Learning Outcomes and a method for developing them.

At the initial assessment stage, many of the learner's specific strengths and needs are observed by the tutors during their day-to-day work with the person. Toolkit item 23, *Observation Schedule for Performance Tasks* provides a structured framework for recording the results of this diagnostic assessment.

When learners make important changes or transitions, such as a new learning goal, the ILP is updated.

Overview of strategy
- Observation of learner's performance on an ongoing basis.
- Observation and recording learner's work on performance tasks,
- Supported by Sample Assessment Tasks in the Toolkit.

Time scale
Diagnostic assessment is an integral part of the teaching process and occurs at all stages. In the early stages, the frequency of entries to the ILP will vary, depending on how often the learner attends the literacy service.

The processes described above comprise an in-depth approach to gathering and analysing information about learners' literacy and numeracy abilities. It is therefore essential that it is carried out by staff who are equipped to interpret the results.

Question: Where is the learner making or not making progress and what, if anything, needs to be changed?

Ongoing assessment is a regular part of the teaching and learning process. Sometimes called 'formative assessment', this involves continuous dialogue about what is going well, what the learner finds easy or challenging and reveals any need for adjustments in the teaching and learning process.

Having a clear idea of which areas the learner can already handle and where they get stuck, allows the tutor to *scaffold* the learner's experience of literacy and numeracy: that is, to provide just enough support for the person to practise and consolidate new skills, but not so much as to inhibit their growing independence. See Toolkit item 9 for guidelines on *Scaffolding.*

Assessment for Learning

This view of assessment as a support to teaching and learning has been developed extensively in the "Assessment for Learning"[17] movement. The methods and resources developed by that project are designed to enrich the teaching process – hence, Assessment *for* Learning. This complements "Assessment *of* Learning," which sums up the final outcome of a learning process.

Assessment of adult literacy and numeracy in adult literacy centres makes use of both these approaches:

- Assessment *of* learning is conducted through the QQI accreditation process.

- Assessment *for* learning happens as a normal part of the teaching and learning process.

See Toolkit item 10 for more details and *Assessment for Learning* tips.

In addition to frequent, informal feedback, from time to time the tutor and learner consciously reflect on progress in a systematic way that allows them to track advances and identify obstacles over time.

These insights may emerge from a formal process, such working on a specially designed task or a test. But they can also arise from informal observation of the learner's work during a session or a social or cultural event, or an event recounted by the learner that illustrates progress or highlights a particular difficulty.

Whether from formal or informal situations, the observations arising from conscious, systematic assessment of a learner's progress are periodically:

- Discussed and agreed with the learner.

- Recorded for later tracking, using the Individual Progress Tracking Form Section 4 below.

17   Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998), "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment," Phi Delta Kappa, October 1998: http://www.rdc.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/InsideBlackBox.pdf

Section 3:
Ongoing assessment of progress

3.1 What to assess?

Not everything needs to be assessed. Tutors and learners decide together which elements of literacy or numeracy they should assess and record systematically. The decision is determined by:

- The learner's general goals.

- The specific learning objectives arising from those goals, recorded in the Individual Learning Plan at the start.

- Their agreed definitions of 'progress': what counts?

There are many ways to define progress or achievement. Learners can advance, or get stuck, in any one of these. Not all of these are relevant for all learners all the time, so tutors and learners negotiate which are most important.

Ongoing assessment also takes note of unplanned learning, when individuals may achieve unexpected gains they had not thought possible or had not previously identified.

What counts as progress

- **Specific literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills**, related to an overall goal, including QQI module outcomes.

- **Getting closer to long-term goals**: to get a QQI qualification, find a job, enrol in further education or training, personal transformation.

- **Distance travelled** – moving on from the starting point, including completing particular QQI portfolio requirements.

- Gains in any of the **broader dimension of literacy and numeracy** which the learner needs to work on in order to achieve their goals. These may include independence, confidence and other elements of competence.

Some of these *broader dimensions* relate back to the definitions and concepts of literacy and numeracy mentioned in Section 1 above. They may include, among others:

Figure 3: Some broader dimensions of literacy and numeracy

Independence

Use critical judgement

Literacy/numeracy confidence

Fluency

Perform in unfamiliar settings
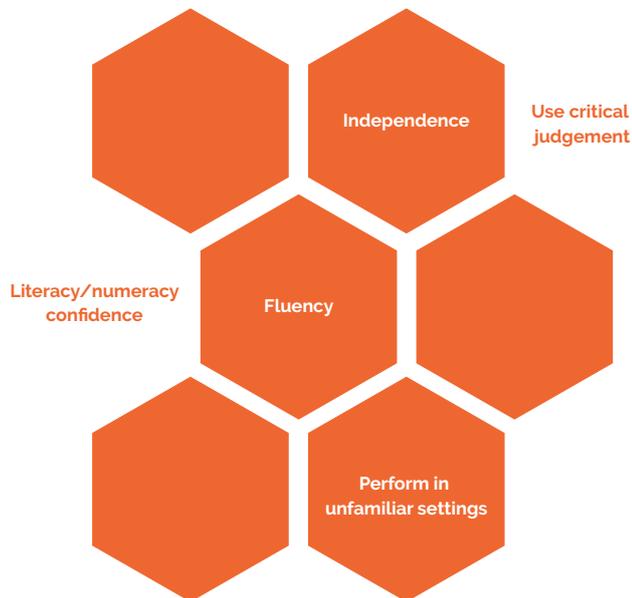
Sometimes, these broader dimensions make the difference between being able to use the technical knowledge and skills effectively in real-life situations, or not. Very often the learner's difficulty is not only in the technicalities – and sometimes, not at all in the technicalities of literary or numeracy – but in their ability to mobilise these broader dimensions in the way that they are needed. Here are some situations that illustrate this:

- A Level 3 Communications student needs to write a letter for his QQI portfolio but finds it difficult to correct errors in the various drafts and complete a final draft without help from the tutor. He needs to work on **independence**.

- A newly promoted supervisor working in retail needs to manage and keep records of work rosters and time sheets for the whole staff. She cannot handle the calculations when there is a crowded meeting and everyone is watching, although she can manage this when she is alone. She needs to work on **literacy confidence.**

- A learner hoping to advance to FET provision at Level 4 finds it difficult to write quickly enough to take notes during class. She needs to work on **fluency and speed**.

- A learner has no problem budgeting and handling money at home but finds it difficult to check change in the supermarket. He needs to work on using numbers **in different settings.**

In all of these situations, the person may be able to use their knowledge and skills in a controlled environment – writing or doing calculations at home or in class – but not under the conditions where they really need to apply them. For those people, the most important progress to make is not in learning more complex or difficult writing or numeracy skills – **but in being able to use the skills they already have, under a broader range of circumstances.**

Figure 4: Vertical progress on technical knowledge and skills

Write a report

Write a letter

Write a postcard

Vertical Progress: towards more complex knowledge and skill

For many literacy and numeracy learners, the progress they really need to make is not vertical, or not *only* vertical, as in figure 4 above – which describes more difficult reading, writing or number work – but also, horizontal.

Figure 5: Horizontal progress on the broader dimensions

Confidently

only when no one is watching → in public

Independently

only with tutor's help → with no help

Quickly

takes 30 minutes → takes 5 minutes

Same level of knowledge and skill, broader dimensions of application
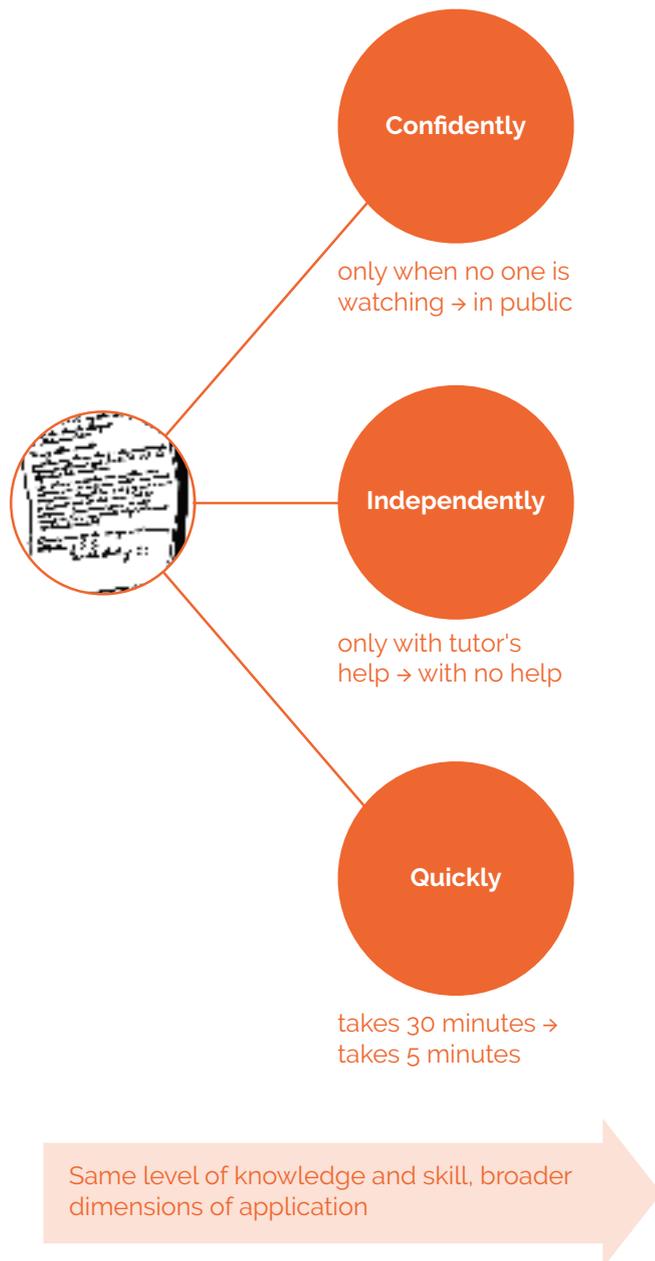
There are as many combinations of technical skills and broader dimensions as there are learners, so it is not possible, or even necessary, to try to assess everything. But if the learner needs to improve on a particular dimension in order to reach their goal, then that aspect of literacy or numeracy is assessed. The guiding principle may be stated as follows:

Any dimension of literacy or numeracy the person needs in order to achieve their goal is addressed during the teaching and learning process – and is also assessed.

Choosing assessment methods to track progress

All methods of assessment have pros and cons. Some, such as standardised tests, are useful for getting an overview of learners' technical knowledge and skills, but tell us nothing about how they perform on broader dimensions such as confidence or fluency. Others, including performance tasks and creative homework, are more contextualised and give an indication of how the learner manages in a real-life situation but can take a long time to prepare. The choice of assessment method depends on which dimensions the tutor and learner want to probe at that time.

The *Overview of Assessment Methods* table in the Toolkit, item 12, describes a range of useful assessment methods, their pros, cons and the best uses of each one.

Here is an 8-step strategy for choosing a Performance Task for ongoing assessment:

1. Look back at Individual Learning Plan and notice the broad goals and Learning Outcomes set out in numbers 4 and 5. What are the main elements that currently need to be tracked? Technical knowledge or skill? Broader dimension(s)?

2. Make a list of those elements to be assessed.

3. Discuss with the learner and modify list as needed.

4. Decide whether to use a formal or informal approach – set up a task or activity, or 'catch' the learner making progress or identifying a difficulty.

5. Choose a method that will probe the dimensions chosen for assessment: a specific task such as a matching exercise or cloze for spelling; or a creative homework task for performance in different settings.

6. Source or prepare materials. Check the Toolkit, centre resources and materials donated by colleagues.

7. Conduct assessment, using Individual Progress Tracking Form (section 4 below) as a lens for marking and/or observation. The Observation Schedule for Performance Tasks, Toolkit item 24, may also be useful.

8. Record the result agreed with the learner on the Individual Progress Tracking Form. Include date.

3.2 Conducting systematic, ongoing assessment of progress

Purpose

To check the learner's progress.

To identify areas of the programme which need to be adjusted.

Questions addressed

- Where is the learner making progress?

- What learning goals has the learner reached?

- Where are they stuck?

- What obstacles have they met and what, if anything, needs to be changed in the methods, materials or content addressed?

Outcomes and Actions

- If the learner makes progress towards achieving a learning goal by reaching one of the benchmarks of progress, the tutor and learner record this on the Individual Progress Tracking Form in Section 4 below.

- If the learner's experience identifies an area of need not previously identified, they can update the Individual Learner Plan.

- If the tracking reveals a lack of progress in a particular area, the tutor and learner discuss this and explore new ways of approaching the topic or skill, e.g. by using different materials or methods.

Overview of strategy

- Observation of learner's work on ongoing basis.

- Observation and marking learners' performance on performance tasks.

Time scale

Assessment to track progress happens continuously throughout the teaching and learning process. Much of the time, on the level of fine detail, this is communicated through personal feedback between tutor and learner. From time to time it is important

to take a conscious look at areas identified as being very important, or where the learner has a particular difficulty.

Tracking small steps of progress

Learners often make progress in smaller steps than those described by NFQ/ QQI levels 1, 2 and 3, where the distances between the levels can take a year or more to achieve. To ensure that the teaching process is on the right path and to keep up the learner's motivation and morale, progress needs to be tracked much more often and in smaller chunks.

To support tracking in more finely graded steps, tutors and learners together can decide to aim for particular milestones – their definitions of progress – to be achieved within a given time period, and identify how the learner will demonstrate this.

- These milestones can be entered into the ILP at the planning stage, or when goals change.

- Progress towards these milestones is entered on the Individual Progress Tracking Form in Section 4.

The Toolkit item 8, *Devising Progress Scales,* suggests a method for creating signposts that facilitates finely grained, on-going assessment.

Record-keeping is an important part of the inter-related processes of teaching, learning and assessment. Information arising from the informal assessment involved in giving day-to-day feedback is not usually recorded. However, the results of systematic ongoing assessment are recorded from time to time, so that learners and tutors can track progress on the dimensions of literacy and numeracy that the learner wants to improve.

Recording tools used to support record-keeping are an important resource. In order to ensure a standard approach to placing and progress tracking countrywide, all ETBs use the following **three recording tools**:

- Individual Learner Plan.

- Individual Learner Progress Tracking Form.

- Group Progress Form.

Section 4:
Recording results to keep track of progress

4.1 What to record and how often?

Not everything the learner is working on needs to be, or should be, recorded. Too much detail is overwhelming and difficult to interpret, so there may be no need to note learner's progress in areas that are not important or relevant to their wider goals.

Using the eight-step negotiation process described in Section 3 above, tutors and learners together decide *which dimensions of learning count as progress for them at that time,* and make a conscious decision to monitor those. This narrows the field and makes it easier to record just enough information to show advances the learner has made or where they might be stuck.

Tutors and learners might decide to review and record progress

- At natural transitions or milestones, when the learner completes a task required for a QQI portfolio, or comes closer to achieving a learning goal;

- At specified intervals, the frequency determined by the learning situation, but at least once a term.

Assessment does not always have to happen as part of a specially-designed task. Sometimes, learners demonstrate evidence of real progress in the normal course of their day-to-day work, or in something they did in their life outside the literacy service, without being consciously aware of it. If tutors 'catch' the person taking a significant step forward, they can point it out, discuss it and make a note, using the recording tools provided at the end of this section. In this way assessment, and the recording of progress, can be easily woven into the process of teaching and learning.

4.2 Individual Learner Plan (ILP)

4.2.1 Description
An Individual Learner Plan is opened for every learner in the adult literacy service. The ILP

- Is a working document designed to support teaching and learning.

- Records only information that directly relates to the individual's learning.

- Contains no administrative data, apart from basic contact details for the learner.

- Sets out the person's long-term and short-term goals, as negotiated.

- Describes the person's starting level, strengths and learning needs in relevant areas.

- Includes a draft plan of work negotiated with the learner, aligned with QQI levels.

- Includes technical knowledge and skill and also, broader dimensions of learning.

- May be revisited and updated as the learner's goals and needs change over time.

The ILP is the property of the individual learner. It is filled in by the tutor with, or on behalf of, the learner and is stored securely in the adult literacy centre. The information recorded in the ILP may be shared with other literacy practitioners on a need-to-know basis, and otherwise only with the learner's consent.

4.2.2 Using the Individual Learner Plan

1. Managers and tutors open an Individual Learner Plan during, or shortly after, the first meeting with the new learner. Questions 1 and 2 of the ILP can be completed, at least in draft form, at that stage. Other sections are completed at a later meeting or during the first few sessions with the tutor. Questions 1 – 2 of the ILP are supported by the guidelines on *Initial Interview Procedures* (Toolkit, item 3) and the *Initial Interview Topic Prompt List* (Toolkit, item 4). These questions explore the person's reasons for approaching the literacy service and their previous experience of learning. Answers to these topics can be noted down as they arise naturally in conversation with the learner.

2. Long- and short-term goals (questions 3 and 4) and learning outcomes (question 5) may be explored and recorded during the first session. Alternatively, the ALO or tutor can prepare suggestions after the first meeting and discuss these with the learner later.

3. Learners who need help in clarifying their long-term goals could work through the sample session on *Connecting Life Goals with Learning Goals* (Toolkit, item 5). The ALO or tutor discusses these topics with the learner and records answers on the ILP under question 3.

4. Practitioners use learners' long-term goals as a starting point for discussing short-term goals and expressing these in the form of learning outcomes. Toolkit item 6, *Writing Learning Outcomes,* provides a sample activity which helps the learner to understand the process; Toolkit item 7 provides background for the ALO or tutor, who then records answers on the ILP under questions 4 and 5.

5. Learning outcomes recorded under question 5, column (a) are aligned with an NFQ/QQI level. For example, beside the vertical heading "QQI Level" insert: Reading, L 2: "I want to be able to write birthday cards."

6. The learner is asked to judge how well they can handle that task at the moment, using a 4-point scale. The ALO or tutor or learner ticks the relevant cell in number 5, column (b), in pencil.

7. This self-assessment is verified or corrected by the learner's performance on literacy or numeracy tasks. Sample tasks are supplied in the Toolkit for reading, writing and numeracy at QQI Levels 1, 2 and 3. These provide a model for managers and tutors to create tasks tailored to the local context.

8. The ALO or tutor and learner discuss the learner's current level in relation to the learning outcomes defined and insert the agreed rating in number 5, column (b). This is part of the initial base-line from which later progress will be tracked.

9. Number 6 contains a brief description of the tasks which the learner completed, e.g. "Read and answered questions on a 10-line prose passage about Katie Taylor – Reading, Level 2."

10. Number 7 addresses the broader dimensions of literacy and numeracy. Broader dimensions are not confined to independence, fluency and setting. They may include: working under pressure, or in public, or where there are many distractions etc. Insert these under 'other'. It

can be difficult to identify these goals during the first meeting, and may only become clear after the learner has been studying for a short time.

11. Every ILP includes some, but not necessarily all, of the broader dimensions mentioned. Only those relevant to the learner's long-term goals are recorded.

4.3 Individual Progress Tracking Form

4.3.1 Description

The Individual Progress Tracking Form allow learners and tutors together to monitor the learner's progress over time. It connects directly to the goals set out in the Individual Learner Plan and includes:

- Initial goals expressed as learning outcomes, aligned to QQI levels.

- Three review sections to track progress on goals over time.

- Progress expressed as achievement in technical knowledge and skills.

- Progress expressed as improvement in broader dimensions of learning.

- A final summary of the learner's progress and achievement.

Like the ILP, the Individual Progress Tracking Form is a personal document designed to support teaching and learning, and belongs to the individual learner. Its contents may be shared with other literacy practitioners on a need-to-know basis, and otherwise, only with the learner's consent.

4.3.2 Using the Individual Progress Tracking Form

1. The first entry on the Individual Progress Tracking Form, Question 1, column (a) is transferred from the ILP. Learning outcomes agreed with the learner are recorded alongside the relevant QQI level.

2. The agreed ratings entered on the ILP for each learning outcome are entered in column (b). This is the base-line from which later progress is tracked.

3. The goals agreed for the broader dimensions as recorded on the ILP are inserted under

question 3, columns (a) and (b). Only those broader dimensions relevant to the learner are included.

4. Learner's progress on each relevant dimension – technical knowledge and skill and also, broader dimensions – are recorded at specified intervals in columns (c), (d) and (e), along with the date.

5. A final summary of the learner's progress is made when they are:

- Moving from one-to-one learning to a group.

- Moving from one group to another.

- Leaving the literacy service.

6. Progress is summarised using three separate notations:

- The % of learning outcomes achieved.

- The achievement of relevant broader dimensions (yes/no only).

- Progress from one QQI level to a higher level, when the learner has achieved all learning outcomes on one specified level and all the relevant broader dimensions, and is now ready to work on new learning outcomes at a higher level.

4.4 Summary of Group Progress Form

The Summary of Group Progress Form shows the progress and achievements of a group of learners or a cohort of one-to-one learners over a specified period of time. It summarises progress in terms of:

- Individual learners' achievements, shown as names or initials.

- Achievement of learning goals and outcomes.

- Improvements on broader dimensions of learning.

- Movement in performance from one QQI level to a higher level.

- A final group summary of progress in numerical format.

The Group Progress Tracking Form is populated by the Final Summary of learner's progress at the end of each ILP. This summarises progress of whole groups in numerical terms without identifying individuals. This generates data that can usefully be shared for reporting purposes.

The Summary of Group Progress Form is the property of the adult literacy centre. Its purpose is to support tutors and managers in monitoring the outcomes of the service. As it contains information about several people, it is not available for inspection by any individual learner. The contents may be shared amongst managers and staff on a need-to-know basis within the individual centre.

4.5 Conclusion

This ongoing development of support materials will ensure that assessment of literacy and numeracy never becomes a static set of procedures, but is a dynamic process that changes to accommodate emerging influences and needs over time.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNER PLAN

Name	
Contact number (mobile, landline)	

1. My motivation: my immediate reason for coming to the adult literacy service

2. My previous experience of learning

Formal: school, training, awards, other	**Informal:** work in community, home, other

3. My long-term goals, if known: employment, family, community work, study, other

4. My short-term learning goals identified: tasks in reading, writing, numeracy, other

5. Learning Outcomes I have decided to work on: reading, writing, numeracy, other						
	a) I want to be able to:		b) I can do this now…			
			Not yet	**A bit**	**Mostly**	**Yes**
QQI Level -------------	1					
	2					
	3					
	4					
	5					
	6					

6. Initial assessment performance tasks: tasks I carried out to generate evidence for 5 b)

Task QQI Level	Task 1: Task 2:

7. Broader Dimensions: independence, fluency, setting, other

I want to be able to carry out literacy/numeracy tasks…

	Independence: without help		I can do this now…			
Learning Outcome			**Not yet**	**A bit**	**Mostly**	**Yes**
	1					
	2					
	3					
Learning Outcome	**Fluency:** easily, with no hesitations		**Not yet**	**A bit**	**Mostly**	**Yes**
	1					
	2					
	3					
Learning Outcome	**Setting:** anywhere		**Not yet**	**A bit**	**Mostly**	**Yes**
	1					
	2					
	3					
Learning Outcme	**Other**: e.g. with learning awareness, confidence etc		**Not yet**	**A bit**	**Mostly**	**Yes**
	1					
	2					
	3					

8. Final Agreed Levels and General Notes

Reading:

Writing:

Numeracy:

Learner's signature _____ Date of ILP Draft 1 _____

Literacy worker's signature _____ Date of ILP Draft 2 _____

Updated 1: _____
(initialled and dated by learner and literacy worker)

Updated 2: _____
(initialled and dated by learner and literacy worker)

Updated 3: _____
(initialled and dated by learner and literacy worker)

INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS TRACKING FORM

Name

Contact number (mobile, landline)

1. Learning Outcomes I decided to work on: reading, writing, numeracy, other

a) I want to be able to:

b) ILP: I can do this...
Date _____

	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes

c) Review 1: I can do this
Date _____

	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes

d) Review 2: I can do this
Date _____

	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes

e) Review 3 : I can do this
Date _____

	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes

QQI Level 1

1
2
3
4
5
6

QQI Level 2

1
2
3
4
5
6

QQI Level 3

1
2
3
4
5
6

2. Broader Dimensions: Independence, fluency, setting, other

	Learning Outcome	b) ILP: I can do this... Date_____				c) Review 1: I can do this Date_____				d) Review 2: I can do this Date_____				e) Review 3: I can do this Date_____			
		Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
Independence: without help a) I want to be able to carry out this/these literacy/numeracy tasks...																	
Fluency: easily, with no hesitations a) I want to be able to carry out this/these literacy/numeracy tasks...																	
Setting: anywhere all want to be able to carry out this/these literacy/numeracy tasks...																	
Other: e.g. with learning awareness, confidence, under specific conditions etc																	

SUMMARY OF GROUP PROGRESS FORM

Date _____ ETB _____ Centre _____

Reading: Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 2	Level 2 L3	Level 1 L3	No change in level
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
Totals												

Writing: Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 – 2	Level 2 – L3	Level 1 – L3	No change in level
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												

7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
Totals						

Other: Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 – 2	Level 2 – L3	Level 1 – L3	No change in level
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												
Totals												

Final Progress Summary	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 – 2	Level 2 – L3	Level 1 – L3	No change in level	**Totals**
Reading													
Writing													
Numeracy													
Other													
Totals													

GROUP PROGRESS SUMMARY FORM

Number of learners in group:

Final Progress Summary	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 – 2	Level 2 – L3	Level 1 – L3	No change in level	Totals
Reading													
Writing													
Numeracy													
Other													
Totals													

Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy
Toolkit

Contents

Photos of Katie Taylor and Bray Cliff Walk courtesy of Barbara Flynn Photography

Introduction

This Toolkit accompanies the Handbook of National Guidelines for assessing adult literacy and numeracy in adult literacy centres. The assessment processes described in the Handbook are supported by materials contained in this Toolkit.

**Section 1:
Support Materials**

Information about useful topics and instructions on how to carry out key processes as part of initial and ongoing assessment.

**Section 2:
Sample Tasks**

Reading, writing and number tasks at QQI Levels 1, 2 and 3.

**Section 3:
Optional Sample Recording Tools**

Optional Sample Recording Tools: checklists and templates to support detailed elements of literacy and numeracy work on an ongoing basis.

The Guidelines Handbook uses the above icons to indicate when one or more items in these support materials may be used, and where these are located in the Toolkit.

Section 1:
Support Materials

1.   National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, QQI modules Levels 1, 2, 3
2.   NFQ Level Descriptors Levels 1,2,3
3.   Initial interview format and procedures
4.   Initial Interview topic prompt list
5.   Connecting life goals with learning goals
6.   Writing learning objectives: learner
7.   Writing learning objectives: tutor
8.   Devising learning progress scales
9.   Scaffolding
10. Assessment for Learning
11. Assessment Methods: Overview

1. National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, Current QQI Levels 1, 2, 3 relevant to learners in ETB adult literacy centres[1]

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Reading	(R1.1) Recognise some familiar words independently including some that are commonly used and personally relevant (R1.2) Interpret some common symbols and signs in familiar contexts (R1.3) Demonstrate awareness of text conventions, print material and the alphabet, e.g. reading from left to right, top to bottom, concept of a sentence, brand names and logos on print materials, recognising cues and clues, seeking the amount payable on a bill (R1.4) Make sense of simple personally relevant sentences containing familiar words (R1.5) Use word identification strategies, e.g. context of words, sight sounds, word endings (R6) Identify the nature of familiar documents, e.g. bills, junk mail, instructions	(R2.1) Read familiar words that are commonly used and personally relevant, e.g. read a list of items relating to a personal interest/sport/hobby (R2.2) Use simple rules and text conventions that support meaning, e.g. punctuation, common abbreviations (R2.3) Interpret different forms of writing and text, including social sight signs and symbols, e.g. common formats of bills, menus, forms, timetables, road and other signs, simple food preparation instructions, short piece of personally relevant writing (R2.4) Find key information from different forms of writing, e.g. locating factual information in forms/bills, time and dates of appointments (R2.5) Use reading strategies, e.g. clues context, sound, prediction and decoding	(R3.1) Outline a limited range of reading techniques to include scanning, skimming (R3.2) Read a limited range of different texts, including work-related, personal and social or community life material, for a variety of purposes, to include identification of bias, genre, key features, learning context, entertainment (R3.3) Use a limited range of reading techniques to locate specific information in reference materials and short pieces of text, to include scanning, skimming and reading for more detailed understanding (R3.4) Extract the main facts, ideas and opinions from simple written material, to include media articles, information pamphlets, fiction
Writing	(W1.1) Write some familiar words for different purposes, e.g. own name and address (W1.2) Transcribe simple information in specific order, e.g. phone number, days of the week (W1.3) Write for different personal and socially relevant audiences, e.g. personal shopping list/reminder, sending a card/postcard, sending a text message, competition entry (W1.4) Use some rules of writing appropriately, e.g. use of capital letters to start a sentence, write a sentence correctly	(W2.1) Write notes and messages needed for simple tasks, e.g. addressing an envelope, writing a cheque (W2.2) Write, including drafting, at least five sentences so that they convey meaning or information, e.g. to a friend arranging a meeting or giving directions (W2.3) Use the rules of writing appropriately, e.g. spelling familiar words accurately, checking the spelling of less familiar words, using capitals and full stops (W2.4) Use a range of different forms of writing to suit purpose and audience, e.g. instructions involving three steps, a short journal entry on an event or experience	(W3.1) Use drafting, proof reading, spelling and sentence structure that is fit for purpose to include simple instructions, personal and formal correspondence (W3.2) Write to support learning to include note and message taking, expressive writing, and learning aids such as learning journal or mind-maps (W3.3) Interact with others through a limited range of current electronic and social networking technologies taking appropriate consideration of the benefits and risks of such technologies

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Listening and Speaking	(LS1.1) Listen to obtain information, e.g. weather forecast, talking clock, traffic report (LS1.2) Follow clear succinct instructions in familiar contexts (LS1.3) Explore ideas and new vocabulary that is relevant and appropriate to a personal situation, orally e.g. planning a holiday or social event (LS1.4) Interact appropriately in a narrow range of formal and informal social situations, e.g. in relation to greeting, leaving, seeking information/assistance from an employer/doctor/family member/friend (LS1.5) Express opinions, facts and feelings in response to familiar and/or personal situation, e.g. using speech, gesture or signing as appropriate (LS1.6) Communicate about the past, present and future activities	(LS2.1) Listen to obtain information relating to more than one option, e.g. using a speaking timetable to get a train arrival and departure time and ticket prices (LS2.2) Ask questions to obtain information, e.g. to check dates/prices/other facts, face to face and by telephone (LS2.3) Follow a series of spoken instructions, e.g. top up a mobile telephone, follow directions to a familiar place (LS2.4) Express opinions, facts and feelings appropriately, e.g. expressing an opinion on a television programme within a small group, give directions, leave a voice-mail message (LS2.5) Practical formal and informal communications, e.g. an interview or parent teacher meeting, and chatting while out with friends	(LN3.1) Interpret common signs, symbols and non-verbal messages to include traffic and road signs, hazard signs, care labels (LN3.2) Identify the principal factors affecting everyday interpersonal communication, to include effective listening and speaking, body language, social, physical, relational, mood/state of mind, purpose, speech, genre, status (LN3.3) Use non-verbal signals and visual aids to convey different messages (LN3.4) Initiate a conversation in different settings to include active listening skills whilst face to face and on the phone, using small talk or ice-breakers, expressing personal opinions, feelings, facts and disagreement (LN3.5) Narrate observations, events, experience, feedback and procedures using appropriate vocabulary within a small group, to include a story or anecdote, arts or media related issue, a situation of enquiry, local event, conflict or personal concern (LN3.6) Use questioning techniques for a range of formal or informal purposes, to include learning, and matters of fact, inference, interpretation and fiction (LN3.7) Use the vocabulary appropriate to a range of public contexts, to include personal health care, working life, financial transactions
Non-Verbal Comm-unication	(NVC1.1) Use appropriate non-verbal behaviour to secure and maintain the attention of another (NVC1.2) Communicate an idea/request non-verbally (NVC1.3) Respond to body language. e.g. facial expression, gesture (NVC1.4) Respond to common place signs and symbols, e.g. exit, no entry, hazard symbols (NVC1.5) Sequence images/symbols associated with a familiar activity and or process, e.g. loading a washing machine, turning on a mobile phone/microwave, using a public pay phone, car parking station, vending machine, looking at a short cartoon strip, supermarket express checkouts, mixing a food product such as soup/baby's bottle	(NVC2.1) Identify a range of non-verbal communications methods, e.g. facial expression, tones of voice, symbols, clothing, colours to signal mood/appropriate action (NVC2.2) Use appropriate non-verbal behaviour in communication a simple idea. e.g. disappointment or joy, tone of voice to seek/assistance/complain (NVC2.3) Relay a response or request non-verbally, e.g. hitching a lift, signalling a phone call (NVC2.4) Respond to non-verbal signal and signs encountered in daily life, e.g. road signs, traffic signs, hazardous materials (NVC2.5) Follow the sequence of non-verbal instructions or directions for a frequent activity, e.g. using household equipment with three or more operations, putting a battery in a toy, finding safety exits/following fire-drill	

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Computer Skills L1 and L2 **Computer Literacy L3**	(CS1.1) Identify significant component parts of a computer, e.g. mouse, monitor, keyboard, printer (CS1.2) Use a mouse/joystick/input device for simple functions, e.g. to click, double click, click and drag, use different pointer shapes (CS1.3) Use a software package, e.g. a game, educational/personal software (CS1.4) Enter short text/graphics with appropriate input device (CS1.5) Name possible uses for selected software package	(CS2.1) Turn a personal computer on and off safely (CS2.2) Use frequently-used keys appropriately, e.g. enter, space bar, upper and lower case, delete (CS2.3) Use a software package, involving opening a package, entering and manipulating text/image/data, save to file, print and exit safely (CS2.4) Identify common information/symbols (CS2.5) Access websites on the internet (CS2.6) Name some benefits of electronically stored information packages and the internet	(CL3.1) Outline how Information Technology affects everyday life to include social networking, e-commerce, eGovernment and e-Learning (CL3.2) Explain commonplace Information Technology concepts and terminology relating to computer types, computer hardware, application software, and the internet (CL3.3) Describe the health, safety and personal hygiene considerations of working with computers (CL3.4) Describe information security considerations including password protection, viruses, and provision of personal details (CL3.5) Outline the functions of the main hardware elements of a computer including input, output and storage devices (CL3.6) Operate computer hardware by performing all required steps including connecting all required devices, and powering up and shutting down equipment appropriately (CL3.7) Use a range of keyboard capabilities including text entry, numeric data entry, function keys, application keys, multifunction keys, symbols, cursor control, caps lock, and num lock (CL3.8) Use a computer application to create a file by performing all required steps including accessing the application, entering data using the keyboard and mouse, printing the file, and storing the file appropriately for subsequent retrieval (CL3.9) Apply relevant environmental impact reduction, health, safety and personal hygiene procedures when working in an ICT environment

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Quantity and Number L1 and L2 **Application of Number L3**	(QN1.1) Name one and two digit whole numbers from 0-10 (QN1.2) Recognise the relationship between numerical value and groups of objects, up to and including 10 (QN1.3) Record one and two digit numbers (QN1.4) Recognise the language of mathematics in everyday situations using elementary language, e.g. greater than, less than, bigger than, farther than (QN1.5) Apply number bonding between 0 and 10	(QN2.1) Recognise numbers up to 100 (QN2.2) Recognise the relationship between 100 and common large numbers for example, 1,000, 100,000, 1 billion (QN2.3) Know place value in relation to units, tens, hundreds (QN2.4) Add two digit whole numbers that total less than 100 in the context of an everyday situation (QN2.5) Subtract two digit whole numbers that require number bonding up to 10 in the context of an everyday situation (QN2.6) Use the plus, minus and equals signs and operations (QN2.7) Estimate quantities to the nearest value in broad terms, e.g. to the nearest quantity in 10s or 100s as appropriate	(AN3.1) Explain the concepts of natural numbers (N), integers (Z) and real numbers (R) (AN3.2) Demonstrate equivalence between common simple fractions, decimals and percentages by conversion (AN3.3) Use a calculator to perform operations requiring functions such as +, -, ×,?, memory keys and the clear key (AN3.4) Give approximations by using strategies including significant figures and rounding off large natural numbers (AN3.5) Demonstrate accuracy of calculation by applying the principal mathematical functions i.e. +, -,/,* natural numbers (N) and integers (Z), common simple fractions, and decimal numbers to two places of decimal (AN3.6) Calculate solutions to real life quantitative problems by applying the appropriate mathematical techniques to a variety of everyday situations and discussing the results to include budgets, costings, time, quantity
Pattern & Relationship L1 and L2 **Algebra in Mathematics L3**	(PR1.1) Recognise elementary patterns, e.g. linear, regular visual, auditory or numerical patterns (PR1.2) Sort elementary patterns (PR1.3) Make a pattern, e.g. a sequence of images, symbols or sounds with two variables (different colour, same shape etc) (PR1.4) Recall a sequence associated with everyday life, e.g. mobile/other telephone number, PIN	(PR2.1) Identify a range of regular/linear and irregular/non-linear patterns, e.g. musical rhythms and phrases, in the natural and built environment, heart beats (PR2.2) Identify number patterns, e.g. increases in steps of two (PR2.3) Use number to describe pattern e.g. clapping out a rhythm, visual descriptions- two yellows, one red (PR2.4) Design a simple pattern with a limited range of variables	(AM3.1) Describe familiar real life situations in algebraic form (AM3.2) Simplify basic algebraic expressions by applying the principal mathematical functions i.e. addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, to algebraic expressions of 1 or 2 variables (AM3.3) Solve basic algebraic equations of 1 variable, by using the variable to solve mathematical problems where the solution is N

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Shape & Space L1 and L2	(SS1.2) Recognise shapes and forms in everyday life, e.g. circles, rectangles, triangles and squares, cubes, spheres and cuboids (SS1.2) Identify key characteristics of shapes and forms, e.g. number of sides, corners and curves (SS1.3) Use the language of measurement in relation to shape and form, e.g. longer, shorter, wider, narrower	(SS2.1) Name common shapes and forms in everyday life, e.g. circles, rectangles, cubes, cylinders and spheres (SS2.2) Describe the properties of common 2D shapes and 3D forms, e.g. number of faces, edges, area, volume (SS2.3) Recognise the relationship between area and volume (SS2.4) Sort 2D and 3D shapes and forms in relation to size	(MC3.1) Describe shape and space constructs using language appropriate to shape and space to include square, rectangle, circle, cylinder, angles, bisect, radius, parallel, perpendicular (MC3.2) Draw everyday objects to scale using a range of mathematical instruments (MC2.3) Calculate the area of a square, rectangle, triangle and circle by applying the correct formula and giving the answer in the correct form (MC3.4) Calculate the volume of a cylinder by applying the correct formula and giving the answer in the correct form
Measurement & Capacity in Mathematics L3			(MC3.5) Understand simple scaled drawings by working out real distance, location, and direction (MC3.6) Demonstrate metric measurement skills by using the correct measurement instrument, and vocabulary appropriate to the measurement, to accurately measure length/distance, capacity, weight, time

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Data Handling L1 and L2 and L3 Mathematics	(DH1.1) Identify the use of data in everyday life, e.g. the numbers of people who want tea/coffee (DH1.2) Gather data with one criteria following clear instructions (DH1.3) Sort data using one criteria, e.g. grouping counters indicating preferences for tea (DH1.4) Communicate information relating to data, e.g. of not more than two variables	(DH2.1) Identify uses of data in everyday life, e.g. price comparisons, surveys (DH2.2) Identify basic approaches to data collection, e.g. record sheets, tally system, audio-visual records (DH2.3) Interpret basic data of two criteria, e.g. more/less of one class than another, bigger/smaller etc (DH2.4) Construct basic representations to communicate data with two criteria, e.g. pictograms, bar charts, tally records (DH2.5) Interpret basic representations, e.g. pictograms/bar-charts	(DH3.1) Describe the presence of data in everyday situations (DH3.2) Conduct a simple survey using a variety of data collection methods (DH3.3) Display data using appropriate classifications on bar charts or pie charts (DH3.4) Describe findings, to include interpretation of results, and suggesting reasons for findings
Problem Solving L1 **Quantitative Problem Solving L2** **Problem Solving in Mathematics L3**	(PS1.1) Organise information in relation to an everyday simple problem, e.g. grouping counters to quantify number of place settings and people in a room (PS1.2) Identify options and consequences in relation to a problem (PS1.3) Solve a problem with support, e.g. fixed amount of money and options for expenditure between a small group	(QS2.1) Identify quantitative elements in a range of everyday circumstances, e.g. daily budget, planning an outing – including distances, dates, times and costs (QS2.2) Be aware of approaches that can be used to solve quantitative problems, e.g. estimation, modelling and flow charts (QS2.3) Use mathematical terms and symbols to represent problems (QS2.4) Find a solution to a real life quantitative problem (QS2.5) Evaluate the solution obtained for the problem	(PS3.1) Describe everyday situations in terms of quantitative descriptions (PS3.2) Calculate solutions to real life quantitative problems by applying appropriate mathematical techniques (PS3.3) Describe how a quantitative solution to a problem may be applied in a limited range of contexts

2.National Qualifications Framework, Level Descriptors, Levels 1, 2, 3. [2]

Strand L1	Sub-strand L1	Nature of Learning L1	Strand L2	Sub-strand L2	Nature of Learning L2	Strand L3	Sub-strand L3	Nature of Learning L3
Knowledge	Breadth	Elementary Knowledge	Knowledge	Breadth	Knowledge narrow in range	Knowledge	Breadth	Moderately broad range of knowledge in a limited range of personal, social, general and specific concepts
	Kind	Recognition/recall		Kind	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension		Kind	Mainly concrete understanding of personal, social and general and specific concepts and a limited comprehension of the relationships between them
Skill	Range	Demo practical skills; directed activity using basic skills	Skill	Range	Limited range of basic practical skills; the use of relevant tools	Skill	Range	limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools used in personal, social, general and specific situations
	Selectivity	Repetitive and predictable processes		Selectivity	Sequence of routine tasks given clear direction		Selectivity	limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable personal, social, general and specific problems experienced in domestic and public situations
Competence	Context	Closely defined, highly structured contexts	Competence	Context	Limited range of predictable and structured contexts	Competence	Context	Personal, social, general and specific skills in a limited range of contexts to include predictable domestic and public situations
	Role	Limited range.		Role	Range of roles under direction		Role	Good communication, team working and computer application skills under direction and with limited autonomy in familiar situations
	Learning to Learn	Sequence learning task; access & use range of learning resources		Learning to Learn	Disciplined manner in a well structured and supervised learning environment		Learning to Learn	Personal learning experiences within a managed environment
	Insight	Begin to demo awareness of independent role		Insight	Awareness of independent role for self		Insight	Some responsibility for own behaviour within managed contexts

3. Initial Interview Procedures

The Initial Interview

Information gathered at the initial interview helps the tutor and student to plan a programme of work.

Introduce yourself and the service. Explain the purpose of this meeting. Invite the prospective student to say something about themselves. During the interview, notice the person's level of comfort/anxiety about learning. Gauge their current motivation and commitment. Discover something about their awareness of the learning process and their own learning preferences. Invite the person to discuss their feelings about returning to learning. Encourage and motivate them.

Learning Goals

Find out the person's general life goals. Find out why s/he has come to the literacy service. Discover how clear s/he is about his/her own learning and life goals. Direct the discussion towards finding out what the person would like to achieve or gain from participating in the classes. Find out if there are any areas of particular importance or if they have a general interest in improving their skills.

Sample questions:

- What made you come now? Has there been any change in your life that has given you the impetus to work on this?
- What would you like to gain by coming here?
- Do you want to work on something specific? Or is it for general learning?

Previous experience of learning, formal and informal

Find out about the person's formal and informal learning experiences. Get factual information, including: age and stage of learning school, exams taken and qualifications gained. Get a sense of any special strengths or problems to be taken into account.

Find out whether s/he has been involved in any recent learning activities. Focus on a positive learning experience and discuss how it worked, and why it worked well; what was helpful and how we might create a similar learning environment.

Sample questions:

- How did you get on in school? Were there any things you really enjoyed?
- At what stage did you finish school? What did you do after that?
- Would x (insert tasks or skills the person has mentioned as being of interest or a difficulty) have been easy or difficult for you in school?
- Have you returned to learning of any sort since you left school?
- Have you been involved in any activities – not a formal course – that have helped you to develop new skills?

Present skills and future goals

Get a general idea of the person's own impression of their literacy needs in reading, writing, numeracy, IT.

Get a general idea of the kind of literacy work that will help the person to meet their life goals. Invite the person to expand on specific topics and provide examples from daily life.

Use the prompt list below to keep a note of the person's answers.

Sample questions:

- Do you read/write/use numbers much at home, at work, anywhere else?
- Do you flick through a magazine/brochure? Would you read a newspaper or a book?
- How do you get on with handling money, working out budgets, calculating how long a journey will take, how to change the amounts in a recipe, measuring a room for decorating?
- How do you get on with the usual daily tasks like paying bills, dealing with official letters, sending greeting cards?
- How do you manage if you have difficulty with a task?
- What tasks would you like help with?
- Do you wear glasses e.g. for reading or distance?
- Do you have access to a computer/laptop/tablet at home?

If the prospective learner is willing, consider using the Goal Setting activity (item five below) to explore their goals. Alternatively, ask their tutor to work through this early on in their programme of work.

Verify the person's existing literacy/numeracy skills and needs by asking him/her to carry out a small number of literacy or numeracy tasks. (See Section Two below). The Goal Setting Activity could be used here.

4. Initial Interview Topic Prompt List

Reading Task	cannot do	can do with help	can do at home	can do independently
Signs (following signs)				
Forms				
Advertisements/Leaflets				
Newspapers/Magazines				
Texts				
Emails				
Books				
ATM instructions				
Touch Screens (Luas, supermarket, cinema)				
Food Labels				
Calendar (days, months etc)				
Writing Task				
Personal letter				
Formal letter				
Messages (telephone, shopping)				
Greeting cards				
Emails				
Texts				
Spelling				
Punctuation				
Handwriting				
Numerical Task				
24 hour clock				
Handling money				
Mathematical symbols				
Addition				
Subtraction				
Multiplication				
Division				
Percentages				
Fractions				
ATM machines				

5. Connecting Life Goals with Learning Goals: Activity for Learner

What is a goal?[3]

A goal is something to aim for, something you hope to achieve in the future. It could be connected to learning – to get a qualification. It could be about working life – to get a job, or go up the ladder in the job you've got. It could be about your home life – to take more control of your finances. It could be about taking part in your community.

Some people come to the ETB with a clear idea of what they want to get out of their study. Other learners begin with no real goal in mind. Both approaches are fine. People sometimes start off with one goal which changes when they make progress. Part of the work we do at the beginning will be helping you to decide what your goals are. This will make sure that

- You get the most out of your study.
- We help to plan the right programme of work for you.
- You can keep track of how you are getting on.
- You have a reason to keep coming.

> *The work you will do in the ETB will depend on your Goal*

Setting Long-term Goals.

Here is an example of some long-term goals some people have when they come to the ETB. You might share some or none of these. Your goals might be completely different. Which of these, if any, are your goals?

Long-term Goal	Yes	No
1. I want to get a job.	☐	☐
2. I want to do better in the job I have.	☐	☐
3. I want to get a QQI award.	☐	☐
4. I want to help my children with their homework.	☐	☐
5. I want to manage my money better.	☐	☐
6. I want to do things better that involve number tasks.	☐	☐
7. I want to stop asking other people to help me with things that involve reading or writing or number tasks.	☐	☐
8. I want to feel more relaxed when I have to read/write/do number tasks.	☐	☐

Other? Add one of your own.

_____

[3]   The contents of this page are adapted from a goal-setting worksheet supplied by Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework, Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education.

In the ETB, deciding your long-term goals will show us what you need to learn on a day-to-day basis. Below are four types of long-term goals:

- Employment: get a job or improve my job.
- Learning: do another study or training course.
- Personal: manage personal and family tasks for myself.
- Community: get more involved in local activities.

Which of these long-term goals are most important for you at the moment? You might think of more than one.

_____

_____

Tasks

Tasks are practical activities that help us to reach our long-term goals. The following tasks are important for many long-term goals. Here are a few examples. Tick (✓) any tasks that interest you.

I want to be able to:

1. Count money and check my change.   ☐

2. Fill out forms.   ☐

3. Read messages and notes.   ☐

4. Write letters.   ☐

5. Find information in a newspaper, magazine or textbook. ☐

6. Make appointments.   ☐

7. Read maps.   ☐

8. Take telephone messages.   ☐

9. Read written instructions.   ☐

10. Send emails.   ☐

Write down three other tasks you would like to learn to do.

_____

_____

_____

6. Writing Learning Outcomes: Activity for Learner

Your Goals and Your Learning

Your long-term goals are what you want to get out of your learning experience in the ETB.

Your short-term goals are the steps you need to take to arrive at your long-term goal.

Short-term goals say exactly what you want to get out of your learning. They are *learning outcomes*.

- Long-term goal: I want to stop asking other people to help me with things that involve reading or writing or number tasks.
- Learning Outcome: I want to be able to read messages and notes.

You and your tutor together will work out which learning outcomes will help you to achieve your long-term goal. Then, you or your tutor will make a note of those learning outcomes on your Individual Learner Plan.

Learning outcomes must be SMART. This means that they are:

Specific	says exactly what you want to be able to do
Measureable	you can see when you are making progress
Achievable	there is a good chance you will achieve this with the time scale
Realistic	it makes sense for the long-term goal you want to work on
Time-defined	there is a date by which time you can probably reach your goal

Write two SMART learning outcomes of your own here:
I want to be able to...

_____

_____

7. Writing Learning Outcomes: Guidelines for Tutor

The purpose of learning outcomes is to provide a clear statement of the intended result of a learning experience. They can be stated in broad terms, for example to describe an entire programme or a large section of it; or they may express very specific elements of a session in fine detail. One definition describes learning outcomes as a

> *"set of knowledge, skills and/or competences and learning attainments an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal."*[4]

The learning outcomes approach to education and training has had a decisive influence on how curriculums and qualifications are described, representing a profound shift of focus from inputs – the amount of time and other resources allocated to a learning experience – to outputs, that is, the end result of the experience. Earliest versions of learning outcomes used in skills training were often criticised on the grounds that they were too reductionist and atomistic to describe a holistic approach to education. However, during the last two decades, the concept of learning outcomes, how they are constructed and used, has evolved. Comparative studies[5] have examined different ways in which learning outcomes express curriculums and qualifications in modern education and training systems. The concept has developed significantly to include not only demonstrable skills but underlying knowledge and attitudes, too, with a strong emphasis on the integration of dimensions relevant to the context. All of this is consistent with the definitions of literacy and numeracy presented in Section 1 of the Guidelines Handbook. Therefore, well-constructed learning outcomes can be consistent with, and support, adult education and adult literacy work.

One of the most significant and useful applications of learning outcomes is in supporting assessment. QQI awards are expressed as learning outcomes, which in turn describe the three levels used at the placing stage of initial assessment and also, for assessing learners' progress.

However, QQI learning outcomes were designed to support accreditation and therefore do not always exactly correspond to the specific goals which learners want to address, or at least, not at the level of detail needed to track progress on a day-to-day basis. For this reason, it is important for tutors and learners together to devise their own learning outcomes, as the need arises. The learner goal-setting activities above provide a springboard for discussion and clarifies the concept and the main features of a useful learning outcome. Note that the short-term purpose of such learning outcomes is to support teaching and learning by adopting a fine-tuned approach to initial assessment and later on, to the tracking of progress.

---

4   Cedefop (2008c). Terminology of European education and training policy:a selection of 100 key terms. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Available from Internet: http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/ Glossary.csp [cited 22.07.2010] .
5   CEDEFOP (2016) "Application of Learning Outcomes Approaches Across Europe: A Comparative Study." Luxembourg: Publications Office.http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3074

One familiar approach to drafting learning outcomes uses the acronym SMART to describe the essential features. Learning outcomes should be:

Specific: identify one action only and refer to an action or behaviour.

Measurable: express an action where progress can be quantified *or* described – not only measured.

Achievable: within the learner's capabilities.

Realistic: within the boundaries of the current situation.

Time-bound: within an estimated time frame for achieving the goal.

Learning outcomes can be created to focus on broad or on specific content. When drawing up learning outcomes for a particular topic, check:

- What knowledge is needed?
- Which observable skill(s) will be demonstrated?
- Which underlying attitudes, wider dimensions, are needed?

Very detailed outcomes may highlight knowledge or skill or attitude, as sometimes it may be necessary to focus on just one element to highlight a key area. However, a learning outcome that describes true competence contains elements of all three of these dimensions. Note the difference between:

 (i) Describes the lay-out of a personal letter.
    Knowledge – format of letter.

 (ii) Writes a personal letter containing three legible paragraphs.
    Knowledge – format; Skill – writing.

 (iii) Writes a personal letter, with careful attention to spelling and without help
    from a dictionary or the tutor.
    Knowledge – letter format; Skill – writing; Attitude – attention to detail; independence.

These questions ensure that the learning outcome describes fully achieved competence. However, more specific learning outcomes can describe earlier stages in the learning journey that are useful for tracking progress (see below, *Devising Learning Progress Scales*).

- Learning outcomes describe observable behaviour. This does not mean that all learning is reduced to what can be seen. It does mean that when assessing the learner's progress on any area – including knowledge – we depend on the learner's observable behaviour to judge what they know or understand. Therefore, learning outcomes that include 'knowledge' and 'understanding' need to be expressed in terms of what the learner would actually do, to demonstrate what they have learned. In the letter example above, for the tutor to judge if the learner 'knows' the format of a letter, they would have to ask the learner to explain it (get them to 'describe') or perhaps correct a completed letter.
- Certain terms, such as 'know', 'understand', 'appreciate', 'realise' lack clarity and should therefore be avoided in writing learning outcomes. When knowledge and understanding are central to a learning outcome, ask: what could the learner do, to show that they 'know', 'understand', 'realise'? Then, use that term to build the learning outcome.
- Learning outcomes are therefore constructed around *action verbs.*
- There should be only one action verb in each learning outcome. Separate actions need separate learning outcomes.

These few tips ensure that learners and tutors express the person's learning goals in a way that is straightforward, transparent and easy to assess.

8. Devising Progress Scales

Tutors and learners often use the literacy and numeracy learning outcomes in QQI reading, writing and mathematics modules at Levels 1, 2 and 3 to assess learners' progress on an ongoing basis. However, these broadly-stated levels were designed for the purpose of accreditation. Although they provide a useful benchmark of long-term progress, tutors and learners sometimes need more finely-tuned outcomes, to keep track of learners' achievements on a day-to-day basis.

By devising their own Progress Scales, tutors and learners can collaborate on defining progress in small chunks and express short-term objectives which the learner can work towards. Progress Scales can be designed to capture advances in learning which may be vertical, horizontal, or both.

Vertical progress refers to ever-increasing levels of difficulty. This could involve more complex texts or more lengthy writing demands or solving more complicated numerical problems.

Horizontal progress refers to improvements on broader dimensions of learning, such as independence, fluency and attitudes. Vertical and horizontal progress are both important. It is up to the learner and tutor to decide which aspects to focus on, to achieve the learner's general goals.

Vertical progress

A vertical approach to progress might express the learning outcome 'read from a menu' in terms of the volume and complexity of the reading material:

Reading: increasing level of complexity of reading material	Vertical progress
Order from a full menu, including three courses, wine, teas and coffees.	
Order from a restaurant menu with a 3-course set menu, food only.	
Order from a café menu that includes main courses and desserts.	
Order from a café menu comprising only a range of drinks and small snacks.	
Order a coffee from a coffee-bar menu that shows only teas and coffees.	

Complexity can involve other elements, such as the level of cognitive skills involved. Bloom's taxonomy provides a useful way to think about cognitive complexity:
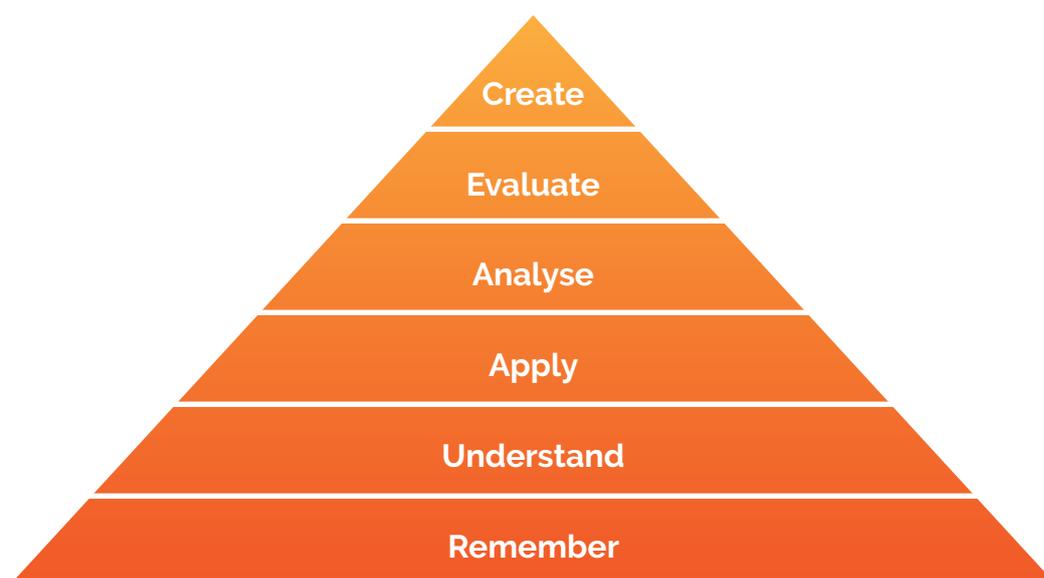
There is a lot of debate about whether Bloom's Taxonomy (cognitive domain) really is hierarchical,

i.e. if we must ascend the pyramid in a linear way, or if some of these stages can occur concurrently or in a different order. Even so, the structure is a useful way to think about progress, particularly to support the development of the higher order thinking that learners need to achieve full independence in carrying out literacy and numeracy tasks. Tutors can explore the different approaches and ways of expressing cognitive development by checking out how these, and other, sources use the concept to express learning outcomes at different levels of complexity, and the specific vocabulary they use to do this:

http://teaching.uncc.edu/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives

http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cognition/bloom.html

https://www.missouristate.edu/assets/fctl/Blooms_Taxonomy_Action_Verbs.pdf

Horizontal progression

This is progress which focuses on the broader dimensions of competence such as independence, fluency and the ability to use the skill in many different settings. In practice, for some literacy and numeracy learners, the progress they need to make may not always be about reading, writing or using numbers at higher levels of difficulty – see vertical progress above. Sometimes, they need to learn to use the skills they already have

- With total independence.
- In a wider range of settings, not just in the learning situation.
- With more ease and fluency, without labouring or hesitating.

From this perspective, horizontal progress in 'reading a menu' could be expressed like this:

Technical Skill: Read from menu of drinks and small snacks - Broad Dimension: Setting/Context

1: In session with tutor				5: In outside cafe

1: In session with tutor	2: In role play with peers	3: Practise in a friend's house	4: In coffee bar in the ETB centre	5: In outside cafe
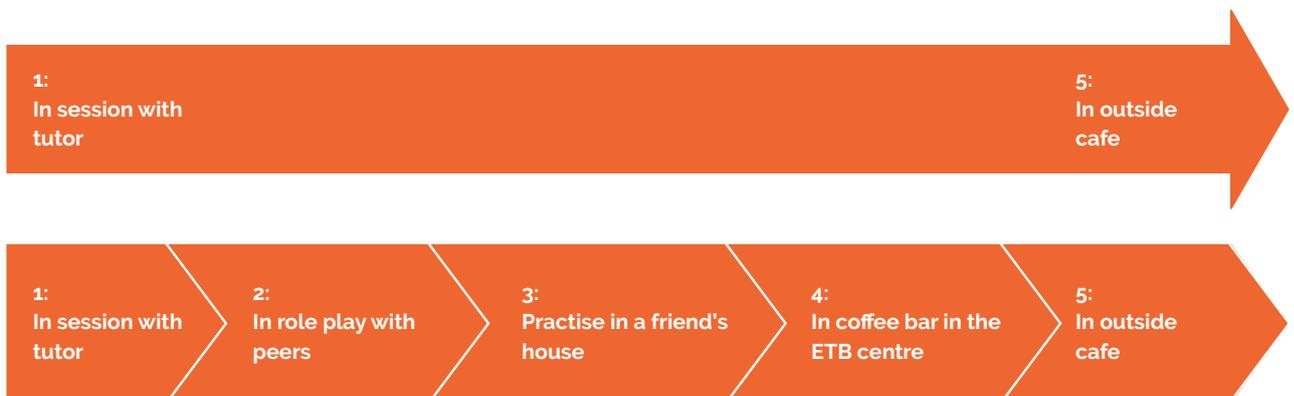
Notice that the technical skill – reading from a menu of drinks and small snacks – is the same throughout. The signposts of progress are defined in terms of the *setting* in which the person will be able to read the menu. At first, they might only be able to do that in a very structured and supportive context, where there are no distractions and no-one is watching – in the session, with the tutor. If their goal is to be able to navigate a menu like this in any café, they will need to work up to that in small steps. Here, three interim steps of progress are defined: reading the menu with another person in the group as part of a role play; then in a friend's house, which would be a good homework task to report back on; then, in a coffee bar in or close to the ETB centre, where the learner might know most people; and finally, the goal – reading the menu in any outside café.

It is essential that the dimension of learning – independence, fluency, setting or other – should be identified by the learner, with the tutor's help; and that the steps of progress be devised and agreed by the learner and tutor together, depending on what the learner needs and wants to be able to do.

Creating Progress Scales

A Progress Scale is simply a tool designed to track the learner's progress, which defines the agreed steps or signposts of progress. It may express this in terms of increasing complexity or difficulty (vertical progression), or in terms of broader dimensions of progress (independence, setting, fluency, other), or both. The Progress Scale can identify finely grained chunks of learning in exactly those areas where the learner needs to focus their attention. The process of developing and using Progress Scales in this way has many benefits, as it

- Motivates the learner, showing small steps of progress not captured elsewhere.
- Gives tutors and learner important information about advances.
- Lets them identify specific areas where the learner might be stuck.
- Provides direction for adjusting programme planning and for shaping sessions.
- Can give ideas for homework activities that explore different settings and contexts.
- Provides a vehicle for the person to engage with their own learning.

Method for devising Progress Scales

1. Identify a specific area where the learner wants to make progress.
2. Decide which technical aspect of reading, writing, number to focus on.
3. Decide whether progress on level of difficulty is important (vertical) or a broader dimension (horizontal), or both.
4. Identify a starting point and a desired end-point for each element (see blue arrows above).
5. Judge a time scale within which you and the learner think the progress is achievable.
6. Identify at least two interim signposts of progress in technical knowledge and skills.
7. Identify relevant broader dimensions and at least two interim signposts of progress.
8. Write the signposts of progress into a table like the one above (for vertical progress) or the arrow (for horizontal progress.) Alternatively, you might prefer to devise your own way of recording this.

It is important to relate this process back to a goal or a learning outcome in the *Individual Learner Plan (ILP).* (See the Guidelines Handbook for a description of the ILP and its uses, plus a blank template). That way, the learner knows that tracking this aspect of their learning on a day-to-day basis is bringing them closer to meeting one of their broader goals.

> Note that this topic, *Devising Progress Scales,* does not address *how to assess* progress towards these finely-tuned signposts of progress, only how to *define and structure* them.
>
> All methods of assessment have pros and cons; some are useful for probing certain dimensions of learning, and not so useful for others. The table in Item twelve below gives a general description of a variety of assessment strategies, the resources needed for each, and their uses.

9. Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a teaching strategy which involves making a finely-tuned assessment of the learner's competence in performing a specific task or demonstrating a skill, and providing just the right amount of help to support them in developing independent competence. It is therefore relevant in the context of ongoing assessment, during the teaching and learning process.

The concept of scaffolding emerged from the work of the Russian cognitive psychologist, Lev Vygostky. Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development is interesting for literacy practitioners because he puts language development and social interaction at the centre of intellectual development. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is especially useful to illuminate what happens during the teaching and learning process. The ZPD is the gap between what a person can do with help, and what they can do without it. The purpose of teaching and learning is to close that gap, supporting the person as they move towards full independence.

Although Vygotsky did not use the term himself, the scaffolding technique has become associated with helping learners to work through the ZPD. Assessment, in this context, is not written down or recorded. Rather, it involves informal but highly specific, on-the-spot observation and judgements, condensed into finely grained feedback that enriches the social interaction between teacher and learner. It involves giving just enough carefully targeted help when the learner needs it, but not so much as to stifle their emerging independence.

Practical strategies to support scaffolding

- Focus the learner's attention on the most relevant and crucial aspects of the task or skill. What these are, will depend on what the learner is trying to achieve – hence the importance of having goals and learning outcomes.
- Break the task down into manageable chunks.
- Draw the learner's attention to patterns or structures.
- Remind the learner of similar skills they have already acquired and identify the links.
- Pace the amount of help and the timing of the help: if the person finds a stage easy, avoid giving help where it is not needed; if they find it difficult, step in.
- If the learner is initially hesitant, avoid jumping in with help – wait a few seconds.
- Use verbal cues and prompts – but…
- Avoid lengthy verbal explanations or demonstration – pause and let the learner work.
- Avoid giving feedback on every aspect of the task – focus on the critical elements.
- Ask the learner to verbalise what they are doing and why.

When supporting learners in moving through their ZPD in literacy and especially in numeracy, it is important to distinguish between *understanding* and *learning*. A person may understand a procedure or concept without having engaged in the conscious activity of internalising, for example, spellings or mathematical procedures. To assess the person's learning process, check whether they:

- Break the task down into small chunks.
- Rehearse, i.e. frequently repeat, key elements that need to be memorised.
- Can reproduce key features or elements from memory.
- Summarise key features of the task.
- Predict what might come next.
- Correct their own mistakes.

The strategies and questions listed above can probe the fine detail of learning and help people with different ZPDs to move towards full independence in performing their chosen tasks or skills.

10. Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning (AfL) is a highly structured approach to formative assessment which is based on the idea that assessment can have a positive, as well as a negative, impact on the process and outcomes of teaching and learning. One important research project which synthesised over 250 other studies, mostly of AfL in schools,[6] confirmed that this conscious, systematic use of formative assessment can improve the outcomes of learning, as well as enhancing learners' motivation and self-esteem. The AfL approach uses assessment to support

"the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there."[7]

Literacy and numeracy practitioners will recognise many of the principles and techniques of this evidence-based approach to assessment as being consistent with good practice in adult education.

Assessment for Learning may be carried out:

- On a day-to-day basis, giving specific and finely tuned feedback to learners.
- Periodically, as part of a progress review.
- Transitionally, when the learner reaches a bridge to another learning experience.

The key principles of Assessment for Learning

- Put learning at the centre of the assessment process.
- Involve learners in their own assessments.
- Set clear goals and criteria for success.
- Track progress in relation to goals and criteria.
- Give immediate feedback to improve learners' progress.
- Use feedback to strengthen the teaching strategy.
- Involve learners in reflecting on their own learning.

Practical assessment strategies used to support teaching and learning include:

- Carefully structured questioning techniques.
- Learners' self-assessment.
- Learners' peer-assessment.
- Observation of the learner's performance of a real-life task, or on a constructed task which replicates a real-life situation.
- Creating portfolios and learning logs.
- Group work.
- Discussion.
- Project work.

---

6   Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning. Assessment in Education 5(1) pp. 7-71.
7   Assessment Reform Group (2002) "Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles: Research-based principles to guide classroom practice,"Nuffield Foundation, ," http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/assessment-reform-group

Dialogue is central to the practical implementation of these principles and strategies, involving learners in negotiating their own learning goals and signposts of progress. Feedback to learners is based on concrete evidence and shapes both the teaching and learning process by skilful use of the scaffolding strategy described above.

Although most of the research into the outcomes of AfL was conducted in the context of teaching and learning in schools, there is scope to expand its use in adult education. Literacy and numeracy practitioners may find that AfL expands their toolkit of strategies for ongoing assessment of literacy and numeracy in the context of adult education.

Useful Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Assessment, Initial and Ongoing

Informal
Question and answer
Specific tasks: eg
calculations, worksheets, quizzes
Role play
Self assessment
Peer assessment
Dialogue/discussion
Creative homework tasks

Formal
Performance tasks
Exams: written
Tests: computer-based
Multiple Choice Items
Standardised Tests

Formal and Informal
Observation
Practical demonstration
Learning journal: written or
image-based
Project
Case study
Blog entry

Informal strategies: used in day-to-day teaching and learning as part of interaction between tutor and learner.

Formal strategies: used for specific assessment events organised for the purpose of assessment; outside regular teaching and learning process.

Formal and informal: strategies that can be used in both contexts, depending on purpose and type of planning.

12 Assessment Strategies and their Uses

Method	Resources needed	Pros	Cons	Methods best used to assess these dimensions ✓					
				Knowledge (facts, procedures)	Understanding	Specific Skills	Independence	Different settings	Other Broader Dimensions
Performance Task Learner carries out pre-planned complex task that probes a wide range of skills and broader dimensions of learning. Tutor plans task in consultation with learner, provides materials, structure and facilitates the learner working on the task.	• Stimulus or instructions; • Relevant materials on instructions on where to source these • Agreed criteria; • Schedule for marking.	Good for wider dimensions Probes knowledge and skills in context	Time consuming to administer Needs advance planning to achieve objectivity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ As planned for.
Standardised test Learner completes computer or paper-based test, timed, under exam conditions. Tutor sources test; supervises test; processes marking	• Standardised test • Training to administer test or trained staff • Premises	Quick and easy to administer Results delivered instantly, no marking Results clear and unambiguous	May not assess writing Multiple choice vulnerable to guesswork Does not work for wider dimensions or writing Out of context;	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Exams (paper or e-test): • **Multiple Choice** • **Written questions** • **Open answers** Learner completes computer or paper-based test, timed, under exam conditions. Tutor sources test; supervises test; processes marking	• Exam questions/ paper • Marking scheme; • Trained markers; • Technical resources.	Easy to deliver and administer Covers a lot of ground in short time Open questions allow scope for learner independence	Multiple choice vulnerable to guesswork Does not work for wider dimensions Out of context	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

Method	Resources needed	Pros	Cons	Knowledge (facts, procedures)	Understanding	Specific Skills	Independence	Different settings	Other Broader Dimensions
Practical Demonstration • **Skill** • **Task** • **Discussion** • **Presentation** • **Interview** Learner performs specified task. Tutor observes learner's performance, marks against agreed criteria.	• Demonstration stimulus or instructions • Agreed criteria • Observation schedule for marking	Good for getting in depth insight into very specific topics and tasks	Some people may not respond well to situation Skills may be demonstrated out of context	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Project Learner carries out research into agreed topic; produces evidence of learning in form of outcomes or report. Tutor devises project brief in consultation with learner, helps to source materials and facilitates.	• Demonstration stimulus or instructions • Agreed criteria • Observation schedule for marking			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Case study A specific type of project. Learner examines a supplied scenario involving relevant topic and skills. Explores supplied questions and themes and reports back on them, verbally or in writing. Tutor sources/creates case study and structures learners' tasks.	• Demonstration stimulus (the case) • Headings or questions to explore • Criteria for answers • Answer sheet			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning Journal Learner keeps a personal record of topics covered and learning achieved with regular entries in a journal (in writing or as images). Tutor sources materials, provides structure.	• Headings or questions to explore	Good for cooperation, communication and reflection	Learner selects own entries so concrete info on specific knowledge and skills may be limited	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

Method	Materials	Benefits	Limitations						
Specific tasks, structured: · Questionnaires · Worksheets · **Supplied problems** — Learner carries out specific tasks related to particular themes or skills. Tutor sources/creates activity.	· Stimulus material · Answer sheets	Good for getting in depth insight into very specific topics and tasks	Skills are assessed out of context	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Role Play, structured — Learner carries out actions according to supplied role, followed by discussion; Tutor plans and facilitates.	· Stimulus material – role descriptions and instructions	A good way to see if knowledge and skills have been internalised	Some people may not respond well to situation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Creative Homework Task — Learner and tutor agree on task based on session work to expand performance beyond learning context.	· Topics and skills for exploration, based on work carried out in session; support materials; feedback questions	Good for consolidating learning and for carrying out tasks in other settings	Some people may not respond well to doing tasks outside group	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Self-assessment — Learner reflects on own learning, verbally and/or in writing. Tutor facilitates, may provide headings or structure.	· Headings or questions to explore	Promotes self-reflection and awareness of own learning	Learners may over- or under-estimate skill – need to check	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Peer-assessment — Learner reflects on learning of another learner, verbally and/or in writing. Tutor facilitates, may provide headings or structure.	· Headings or questions to explore	Promotes self-reflection and awareness of own learning. Helps to internalise understanding	Learners may over- or under-estimate skill – need to check	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Question and Answer — Regular interaction between tutor and learner. Tutor may structure questions in specific ways to elicit particular range of answers.				✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓

Section 2:
Sample Tasks

13. Introducing the Tasks: Process and Script, all levels

Introduction

I have a small piece of reading/writing/number work for you to do. The idea is to give us a sense of how you are with the kind of tasks that might come up in daily life.

Getting agreement and handling reluctance

Is that OK? Would you be willing to do that now? It will only take a few minutes.

If the person agrees:

I'll be making a few notes while you're working, to remind me of how you're getting on, so that we can talk about it when you've finished. OK?

If the person says 'yes', continue with the activity.

If the person is nervous or reluctant

This isn't a test and you don't get a mark, so there's no pressure – we just need to get a general idea of where you are in your reading/writing/numeracy, so that we can plan your programme together and decide which group or one-to-one tutor would work best for you.

If the person does not want to carry out the task:

No problem, we don't have to do this right now. We will have to work up to it at some point, so that we can plan your programme. But we can do that later on, the next time you come in to meet me.

Make a firm appointment for a time when the tasks can be carried out.

Carrying out the task

Follow the process as described in the Activity Introduction for the task.

When the person has finished:

Great, that gives us really useful information.

How did that feel? How do you think you got on yourself?

Leave a few minutes for the person to say something about the experience, if they want to. If they have nothing to say, summarise one or two points from your observation.

Giving feedback

What I noticed was…*insert one positive item of feedback and, if some difficulty arose and if the person is open to it, mention one thing they might want to work on.*

Extension activity

If the person found the activity very easy:

That was great. You obviously have no problem at all with that type of task. Can we try another one that's a bit more difficult?

Repeat the process with a task from the next highest level.

Wrapping up

How does all that sound? This helps to give us a general overview of how we can work with you to improve your reading/writing/numeracy in the way you need. Your tutor will get an even better idea.

14. Level 1 Reading Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task: Reading - word recognition of common words typical of grocery shopping. Level: 1

Resource: Shopping list of words and icons.

Introduction

Check the person's understanding of the icons. Cover the word list, showing only the list of icons. Point to each one and ask what word the icon represents. Go through the whole list. Make sure that the person's understanding of the icon is exactly the same as the listed word eg 'tea', not 'coffee'.

Task:

Ask the person to carry out one or more of the following tasks, starting with 1 and continuing with the others.

1. Point to each icon, one by one. Ask the person to point to the correct word, as you point to the picture.
2. Cover the icons with a piece of paper. Ask the person to read aloud the words on the shopping list.
3. Matching: ask the person to draw a line between each word and its icon.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this reading task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: recognises words				
Fluency: reads without hesitation				
Independence: reads without help				
Other:				

Shopping

Read the shopping list. Tick ✓ the words you know. Then draw a line from the word to its icon.

| cake | apple | tea | hot dog | chicken | wine |

Find the Missing Letter

1. Read aloud the letters you see on the table.
2. Now, read them again.

a		c		e
f		h	i	j
	l		n	o
	q		s	
u	v		x	
z				

15. Level 2 Reading Tasks

Activity Introduction,

Task 1: Reading – a short prose passage about familiar people, places and events. Level: 2.

Resource: short prose passage and accompanying photograph.

Introduction

Ask the person if they recognise the person in the photograph, (Katie Taylor) if they have heard of her and if they know what she is famous for.

Task:

1. Ask the person to read the text silently. Then: invite the person to tell you
    *   Where this woman is from.
    *   When the photograph was taken.
    *   At what international event she won the gold medal.
    *   Where that international event took place.

2. Ask the person to read the text aloud.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this reading task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: Comprehension – correctly answers content questions Technical – handles bsv/phonics/word attack				
Fluency: reads without hesitation				
Independence: reads without help				
Other:				

Katie Taylor

Katie Taylor is a boxer.

She is a very good boxer.

She lives in Bray.

In July, 2012, Katie went to London.

She boxed in the Olympics.

She won a gold medal.

It was a great day for her.

Activity Introduction,

Task 2: Reading – a short prose passage about a familiar place. Level: 2.

Resource: short prose passage and accompanying photograph of Bray Cliff Walk.

Introduction

Ask the person if they recognise the place in the photograph, if they have ever been there and what they know about it.

Task:

1. Ask the person to read the text silently. Then: invite the person to tell you

    - The starting and finishing point for the Cliff Walk.
    - How long it takes to do the walk.
    - What wildlife you might see on the way.
    - What monument will you see at the top.

2. Ask the person to read the text aloud.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this reading task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: Comprehension – correctly answers content questions Technical – handles bsv/phonics/word attack				
Fluency: reads without hesitation				
Independence: reads without help				
Other:				

Bray Cliff Walk

The cliff walk is from Bray to Greystones.

It is about five miles long.

It takes about one-and-a-half hours to walk.

Along the way you might see birds, dolphins and seals.

The walk is around Bray Head.

The cross at the top was built in 1950.

16. Level 3 Reading Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task 1: Reading – extract practical 'how to' information from written instructions. Level: 3.

Resource: set of instructions on how to make an international telephone call, with comprehension task.

Introduction

Ask the person what they think is the purpose of this text and if they notice anything in the layout and expression which is different from continuous text.

Task:

Ask the person to read the text silently. Then invite the person to

- Give you two examples of an international access code, from the text.
- Give you two examples of an area code, from the text.
- Explain how you can take account of the time difference before making an international call.

Ask the person to read the text silently and tick the True or False answers.

Correct the True/False task by asking the person to read aloud the phrase or phrases that supplied the answer.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this reading task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: Comprehension – correctly answers content questions Technical – handles bsv/phonics/word attack				
Fluency: reads without hesitation				
Independence: reads without help				
Other:				

How to Make an International Telephone Call.

Numbers to dial:
Access code + area code + local number
Country + City/town + local number

Example 1

In Great Britain, town of Burnley, local phone number is 524 6110.
Access code, GB:0044; area code, Burnley:1282; local number: 524 6110.
The number to dial from Ireland is: 0044 1282 524 6110.

Example 2

In Germany, city of Berlin, local phone number is 752 746.
Access code, Germany:0049; area code, Berlin:30; local number:752 746.
The number to dial from Ireland is: 0049 30 752 746.

TIPS

1. The international access code from Ireland always begins with '00'.
2. Some countries do not have area codes.
3. Write down the full number before you dial.
4. Check the local time of the country before you dial.
5. Do not pause for more than 2 or 3 seconds between numbers when you are dialling.
6. You might not hear a tone for 30 seconds or more after you have finished dialling.
7. Check the local time of the country before you dial.

Tick the correct answer: ✓	True	False
1. The access code for Germany is 0039.	☐	☐
2. The access code from Ireland always begins '00'.	☐	☐
3. All countries have area codes.	☐	☐
4. You hear the tone immediately after dialling.	☐	☐

Activity Introduction

Task 2: Reading from a newspaper article about two burglaries in the locality. Level: 3.

Resource: full newspaper article, 250 words, accompanied by photograph.

Introduction

Ask the person to glance over the text without reading it closely. Then ask: what kind of writing this is, where it came from and what they think the content deals with.

Task:

1. Ask the person to read the text silently. Then invite the person to tell you
    - What the Gardaí are investigating.
    - How thieves entered the house in Ballymahon.
    - How they entered the house in Longford.

2. Invite the person to identify, and read aloud, the sections or phrases in the text which reveal
    - What the thieves stole from the house in Ballymahon.
    - At what time the theft there took place.
    - What the thieves stole in Longford.
    - At what time that theft took place.
    - How to help the gardaí.

3. Ask the person to tell you what is meant by the following phrases or words, in this context:

    "The latter..."   "Gardaí are satisfied..."   "Thieves gained access to..."

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this reading task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: Comprehension – correctly answers content questions				
Technical – handles bsv/phonics/word attack				
Vocabulary – correctly explains meanings				
Fluency: reads without hesitation				
Independence: reads without help				
Other:				

Garda probe into break-ins

Gardaí have launched an investigation into the circumstances behind two separate burglaries in Longford and Ballymahon. The latter, which took place last Friday, occurred in the Moyvale area of Ballymahon. Gardaí are satisfied the incident unfolded some time between 4.15 pm and 5.30 pm when thieves gained access to a private house by prising open a front door. Once inside, the culprits snatched the contents, namely a sum of money, from a patchwork leather purse before making off. It's not known at this stage how the thieves made their getaway. As Gardaí look into the incident, they have appealed for anyone who noticed anything suspicious in the vicinity of Moyvale last Friday to come forward.

Gardaí are equally anxious to speak to members of the public who witnessed a separate break-in at a Longford town housing estate less than 24 hours later to make contact with them. Thieves gained access to Edgeworth Hall in Prospect Woods by forcing open a rear window. Gardaí have so far managed to establish that the incident took place between 8.40 am and 3pm last Saturday. Among the items stolen were a 40" Panasonic television and a 36" Samsung television. Anyone who may have been offered these items for sale or who may have witnessed either of the incidents is asked to contact Longford Gardaí at (043) 3350570.

Activity Introduction

Reading from a book on a familiar topic of childhood memories. Level: 3.

Resource: Extract, 150 words, from Patrick Kavanagh The Green Fool (1938)

Introduction

Ask the person to glance over the text without reading it closely. Then ask: what kind of writing this is, where it came from and the name of the author.

Task:

1. Ask the person to read the text silently. Then invite the person to tell you
    - In what kind of area Jack's house was located.
    - The number of people who lived in the house.
    - The name of the locality.
    - Whether the land there was better or worse than land in Meath or Louth.
2. Invite the person to identify, and read aloud, the sections or phrases in the text which reveal
    - That the people of the area were careful with money
    - That the house had no upstairs storey.
    - That the kitchen was always clean and tidy.
    - That Jack was a bachelor.
3. Ask the person to tell you what is meant by the following phrases or words, in this context:

    "Any young fellow with a fair good appetite would **put out of sight** the dinner that was put before a whole household."

    "She talked like one who lived a while in **society houses**, and this was true."

    "She was far too polite for **a rank kitchen**…"

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this reading task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: Comprehension – correctly answers content questions Technical – handles bsv/phonics/word attack Vocabulary – correctly explains meanings				
Fluency: reads without hesitation				
Independence: reads without help				
Other:				

From *The Green Fool*

Patrick Kavanagh

Jack O'Brien's house was a long slated one-storied building on the side of a rushy hill. The land around was poor but the wits of the people were sharper on that account. If a Meath man or even a Louth man were asked to live on land like this he would die from shock. The natives of Ballytrain and neighbourhood were very thrifty clean folks. Any young fellow with a fair good appetite would put out of sight the dinner that was put before a whole household.

Jack O'Brien had an oldish sharp-boned sister living with him, he was never married. The sister's name was Maggy. She talked like one who lived a while in society houses, and this was true. She was far too polite for a rank kitchen I thought, and her kitchen was far too orderly for hungry cats to hope.

Patrick Kavanagh *The Green Fool* (1938)

17. Level 1 Writing Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task 1: Writing – making a list of common words typical of grocery shopping. Level: 1

Resource: Picture of post-it note and icons depicting groceries.

Introduction

Check the person's understanding of the icons. Point to each one and ask what word the icon represents. Go through the whole list. Clarify the person's understanding of the icon and agree on one word per icon e.g. 'steak' or 'meat'; 'burger' or 'hamburger'.

Task:

1. Ask the person what other items they would include in their weekly shopping list. Choose two or three and add a small drawing of those to the post-it picture, or invite the person to do this. Ask the person to number each of the icons. Then, list the numbers on a separate page.
2. Point to each icon, one by one. Ask the person to write the correct word beside the relevant number, as you point to the picture. Work through the whole list.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: writes words correctly				
Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

Make a Shopping List
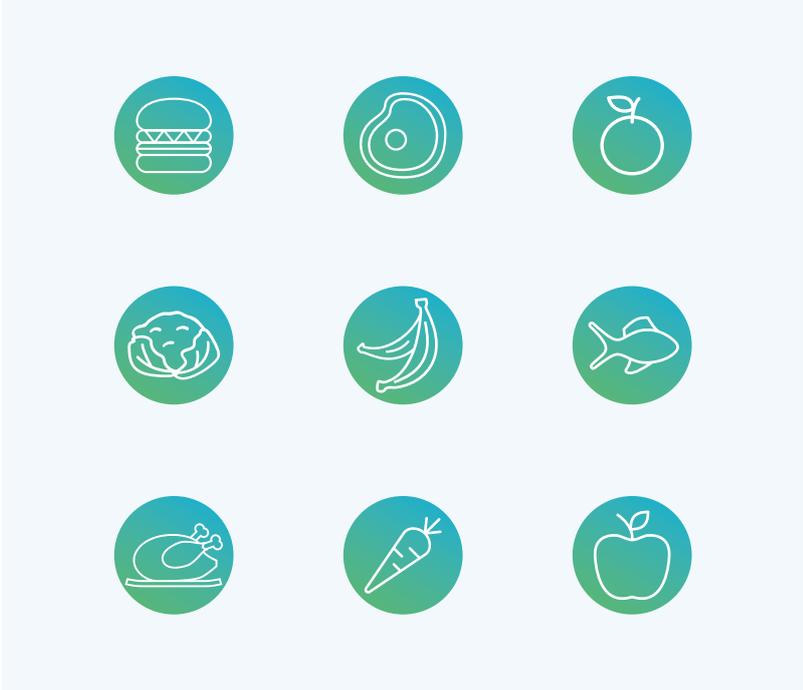
Activity Introduction

Task 2: Write names and addresses: copying and self-generated. Level: 1

Resource: Basic form showing a supplied address and a blank form for person's own name and address.

Introduction

Discuss with the person the various situations where we write down our own name and address and those of other people and organisations. Show the supplied form.

Task:

1.   Indicate the address of the Citizens Information Board. Ask the person to copy it exactly to the space provided.
2.   Indicate the basic form for name, address and telephone number. Ask the person to fill in the form.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

| |
| |

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes

Knowledge/Skill: writes letters/words correctly
            layout followed
            capitals and punctuation correct				

Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

Write Addresses

1. Copy this address:

Citizens Information Board
43 Townsend Street
Dublin 2
D02 VK65

Tel: 0761 079000

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Write your own name, address and telephone number:

Name

_____

Address

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity Introduction

Task 3: Writing – fill in a basic structured form with personal details and date. Level: 1

Resource: Sample form and blank form.

Introduction

Read through the sample form and instructions and check that the person knows how to complete their own blank form. Key points: one letter or number per box; leave one space empty between words; format of date; surname and first name distinction.

Task:

Ask the person to fill in the blank form with their own personal details and today's date.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: name and address correct / date correct				
Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

Fill in Forms

Forms with Boxes

When filling in a form with boxes:

- Write only ONE letter or ONE number in each box.
- Leave an empty box between words.
- Write surname first.

Surname:

| H | I | G | G | I | N | S | | | | | | | | | | |

First name:

| M | I | C | H | A | E | L | | D. | | | | | | | | |

Address:

Á	R	A	S		A	N		U	A	C	H	T	A	R	Á	I	N
P	H	O	E	N	I	X		P	A	R	K						
D	U	B	L	I	N		8										
I	R	E	L	A	N	D											

Date:

| 1 | 5 | | J | U | L | Y | | 2 | 0 | 1 | 7 | | | | | |

Now, fill in your own details-

Surname:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

First name:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Address:

Date:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

18. Level 2 Writing Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task 1: Writing a postcard. Level: 2

Resource: Blank postcard template.

Introduction

Show the person the postcard template. Discuss whether they ever send postcards and what the purpose is. Look at the photographs and invite them to talk about what it depicts.

Task:

1. Invite the person to describe the different elements of a postcard, i.e. greeting, message and address.
2. Ask the person to write a postcard to a friend with all the usual elements.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: writes greeting and message layout followed address correct handwriting legible				
Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

Write a Holiday Postcard to a Friend

Use some of these words

weather	enjoyed	visited	beach	activities
hotel	friends	nightlife	journey	food

Include a name and address for your friend
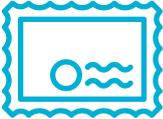
Activity Introduction

Task 2: Writing – fill in a long, structured form, including a variety of personal contact details about self and others. Level: 2

Resource: Blank form.

Introduction

Show the person the blank form. Discuss the context of the form, explain that it is a sample form for a patient presenting to hospital. Discuss the type of information requested and possible reasons for that e.g. allergies, marital status, next of kin etc.

Task:

Invite the person to fill in the blank form with all the required information. If they do not know the address for their doctor or next of kin, ask them to make up an address.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: name and addresses correct all requested info included				
Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN BLOCK CAPITALS AND COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS

PERSONAL DETAILS

TITLE	MR MRS MISS MS DR (Please circle)
SURNAME	
FIRST NAME	
ADDRESS	
EMAIL	
MOBILE NUMBER	
DATE OF BIRTH	
AGE	
GENDER	
COUNTRY OF BIRTH	
MARITAL STATUS	SINGLE MARRIED WIDOWED DIVORCED SEPARATED (Please circle)
ALLERGIES	

NEXT OF KIN

TITLE	
SURNAME	
FIRST NAME	
RELATIONSHIP TO PATIENT	
ADDRESS	
MOBILE NUMBER	
Office use only	

DOCTOR

FULL NAME OF DOCTOR	
ADDRESS	
TELEPHONE	
FAX NUMBER	

19. Level 3 Writing Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task 1: Letter writing Task. Level: 3

Resource: Letter template with topics.

Introduction

Show the person the letter writing template. Discuss the range of topics with them, checking if any appeals to them or if there is some other subject they could write about.

Task:

Ask the person to write a short letter of ten or twelve lines, including all the usual elements.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes

Knowledge/Skill: writes coherent content
    sentence structure correct
    spelling and grammar correct
    format correct
    handwriting legible				

Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

Write a Letter to a Friend

Write an informal letter to a friend telling her/him EITHER

- about your recent holiday.

OR

- about the new learning you have embarked on in the ETB.

Include three paragraphs: introduction/greeting; main content; signing off.

Include your own address and the date.

Use the correct format for a letter.

Activity Introduction

Task 2: Free writing Task. Level: 3

Resource: Writing template with topics.

Introduction

Show the person the writing template. Discuss the range of topics with them, checking if any appeals to them or if there is some other subject they could write about.

Task:

Ask the person to write ten or twelve lines, including all the usual elements.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this writing task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes

Knowledge/Skill: writes coherent content
             sentence structure correct
             spelling and grammar correct
             handwriting legible				

Fluency: writes without hesitation				
Independence: writes without help				
Other:				

Free Writing

Write a paragraph (ten to twelve lines) about one of these:

- My house.
- My hobby.
- My last holiday.
- My favourite TV programme.

Or, choose your own idea to write about.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. Level 1 Numeracy Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task 1: Number recognition: word, number and visual cue. Level: 1

Resource: Handout showing numbers 1 – 10 as words and numbers.

Introduction

Show the person the handout of the numbers showing icons of numbers from 1 – 10 and the words and numbers. Check whether the person recognises the contents of the three columns as numbers in numbers, words and pictures.

Task:

1. Looking at the handout, point out that the numbers, words and pictures are not correctly matched.
2. Point to the first word, ten. As the person to show the number ten. Then draw a line from the word to the number. Repeat the process to connect the number with the relevant icon.
3. Invite the person to do the same with all the other numbers: connect the word, number and icon for each. If the person hesitates, ask them to do them one by one, as you talk them through it.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: recognises words 1–10 recognises numbers 1–10 correctly connects with icons				
Fluency: recognition without hesitation				
Independence: recognition without help				
Other:				

Recognising Numbers

ten		8
five		4
four		0
one		10
eight		7
seven		5
zero		2
six		9
three		6
two		3
nine		1

Activity Introduction

Task 2: Money – recognition of coins, notes and numbers 1 to 100 and their practical uses. Level: 1

Resource: Picture of notes and coins.

Introduction

Show the person the picture of the notes and the coins. Discuss with them how familiar they are, and their everyday uses.

Task:

1. Looking at the notes, ask the person to tell you which notes are used:
   - Every day.
   - Quite often, e.g. to pay for weekly shopping.
   - Just occasionally.
   - Rarely.

   Ask if there is any note they have never actually seen.

2. Looking at the coins, ask the person to tell you which are:
   - Used most often.
   - Used least.
   - Are being phased out.

3. Ask the person to tell you which coins or notes they would use to pay for:
   - A coffee.
   - A parking meter.
   - A round of drinks in a pub or a meal in a restaurant.
   - A new television.
   - Bus fare.
   - A supermarket trolley.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: recognises notes and uses				
recognises coins and uses				
recognises numbers 1 to 50				
recognises numbers 100s				
Fluency: identifies money and number uses without hesitation				
Independence: identifies money and number uses without help				
Other:				

Using Coins and Notes

Do you recognise these euro notes?

Do you recognise these euro coins?

21. Level 2 Numeracy Tasks

Activity Introduction

Task: Use of number in money, length, time and volume; plus problem-solving, recognition of operation. Level: 2

Resource: Worksheet with number calculations and word problems.

Introduction

Show the person the worksheet. Ask the person to look at Section A. Check for comprehension. Then ask them to look at Section B. Check for comprehension. If the person can read the problems without difficulty, leave them to do them on their own. If they find the reading difficult, read the problems aloud to them, one by one. Leave a pause between each question to give them time to work out the answer.

Task:

1. Discuss the activities involved in Section A: in the first four questions, making a specific calculation, using all three strategies mentioned: in head, with pen and paper and checking with a calculator. Give the person a few minutes to do these four questions using all three strategies.
2. Discuss the activities involved in Section B: as well as the calculation, they have to read the problem and decide which calculation to do. If they have no difficulty reading the questions, leave a few minutes for them to do all five questions on their own. Ask them to work out the answers on pen and paper. If they find the reading difficult, work through each question one by one, pausing for them to work out the answers on paper.
3. Invite them to check their answers to questions 4 – 8, using a calculator.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this task.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	Yes
Knowledge/Skill: carries out operation correctly uses calculator correctly identifies operation required				
Fluency: carries out operation without hesitation				
Independence: carries out operation with no help				
Other:				

Real life number tasks 1

A. Calculations

Work out these problems using three different methods: in your head; with pen and paper; checking answer with a calculator. Write in answer in the correct column.

Problem	In your head	with pen and paper	checked with calculator
1. €60 - €34 =			
2. €52 - €31 =			
3. €73 - €35 =			

B. Solving Problems

4. You buy a new outfit costing €72 and pay for it with €90 in cash.
   (a) What is the sum you need to do?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

5. Your food shopping comes to €46. You have a food budget this week of €65.
   (a) What is the sum you need to do to work out how much you have left?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

6. There is a bus due at 45 minutes past the hour. It is now 8:17am.
   (a) What is the sum you need to do to work out how long you will have to wait?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

7. Children have to be 92 cm tall to ride on the High Flyer fairground ride. Frankie is 78 cm tall.
   (a) What is the sum you need to do to work out how many cm he needs to grow to go on the High Flyer?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

8. According to this Yorkshire pudding recipe, you need 140 ml of liquid. The recipe suggests 75ml of semi-skimmed milk and to make up the rest with water.
   (a) What sum do you need to do, to work out how much water you should put in?
   (b) What is the answer?

Real life number tasks 2

A. Calculations

Work out these problems using three different methods: in your head; with pen and paper; checking answer with a calculator.

Problem	In your head	with pen and paper	checked with calculator

1. 59 + 83 =
2. 71 + 17 =
3. 33 + 41 =

B. Solving Problems

4. Question 1:

   A dress in the sale costs €34. I also want a jacket that costs €18.

   What is the total cost?

   (a) What is the sum you need to do?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

5. I need to get my bike repaired. It costs €65. I also need to get a filling at the dentist's. This will cost €27. I only have €90. Can I afford both?

   (a) What is the sum you need to do to work out the answer?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

6. I can take 23 kilograms (kg) onto the plane. My big case weighs 15kg. My computer bag weighs 7kg. Can I take both on board?

   (a) What is the sum you need to do to work out the answer?
   (b) Using pen and paper, work out the answer.

22. Level 3 Numeracy Tasks

Task 1 Numeracy Level 3

Activity Introduction

Task: Calculation of electricity bill and VAT due; number operations; problem recognition.

Resource: Electricity bill and questions.

Introduction

Show the person the bill. Check whether they recognise it. Identify the different sections.

Task:

Invite the person to carry out the calculations set out in numbers 1 – 4.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	Yes
Knowledge/Skill: identifies operations required; carries out operations correctly				
Fluency: carries out operation without hesitation				
Independence: carries out operation with no help				
Other:				

Task 1 Calculating Electricity Bill charges

Further Education and Training Service

Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board

Invoice Number:

Account Number:

Date of Issue:

General Enquiries
1850 40 40 70

Emergency Electricity
1850 372 999

the generation of the electricity supplied to all of our customers results in 31% less CO₂ emissions per MWh than the average customer on the island of Ireland.

Fuel details overleaf.

Summary of Payments since last statement

Description	Date	Amount €
Balance forward		130.80
Amount due before this bill		130.80

Details of Electricity Charges:

Description	Units	MIC	Rate	Amount €
Commercial General 24hr	527.00		0.1462	77.05
Standing Charge P5	31.00		0.2696	11.48
PSO Levy	1.00	15	4.7700	4.77
VAT			13.5%	12.59
Total costs for this period				93.29
Total VAT				12.59
Total charges for this period				105.87
Total Amount Outstanding				236.67

TOTAL DUE   € 236.67

Electricity Billing Period	Payment Method	Payment Due Date
16/07/2012 to 16/08/2012		30/08/2012

REMITTANCE ADVICE

Skills Checklist Level 3 Communications

1. Assuming every month has the same costs, work out the annual gross charge.
2. Calculate the annual charge ex VAT.
3. How much VAT is paid per annum?
4. If you can deduct half of the VAT from the bill every month, how much will the annual bill be?

Task 1 Numeracy Level 3

Activity Introduction

Task: Working out the cost of a restaurant bill; number operations (division, %); problem recognition.

Resource: Stimulus worksheet.

Introduction

Show the person the worksheet. Check whether they understand all sections of the task.

Task:

Invite the person to work on the task.

Recording

Use the General Notes space and the Task Observation Schedule to keep a note of how the person manages this task. You may decide to fill this in either during or after your session. Be guided by the person's response to your making notes. If there is any aspect of the person's work that might need particular attention, add it under 'other'.

General Notes

Task Observation Schedule ✓

	not at all	to some extent	mostly	yes
Knowledge/Skill: identifies operations required; carries out operations correctly				
Fluency: carries out operation without hesitation				
Independence: carries out operation with no help				
Other:				

Task 2 Numeracy Level 3

Rich Task: You are out to dinner with four friends.
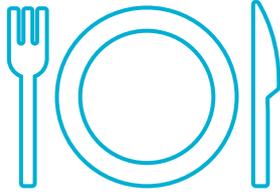
The bill comes to €145 in total.

1. If you and your four friends split the bill, how much does each person have to pay for dinner?
2. If you decide to leave a tip of 15% of the total, how much will be added to the bill?

3. If everyone shares all costs equally, how much will each person pay, including tip?

Section 3:
Sample Recording Tools and Screening Tools

23. Observation Schedule for Performance Tasks

Using the Performance Task Observation Schedule

The observation schedules on the next two pages are optional support tools which ALOs and tutors can use to make quick notes of how learners or prospective learners manage the various literacy and numeracy tasks which provide information about their level, progress and learning needs. One or both can be used for both initial and ongoing assessment and provide a quick notation that minimises the need to make extensive handwritten notes in front of the learner.

Many ALOs and tutors may prefer to make handwritten notes instead of using observation checklists, but might still find the headings useful as general categories for their own notes.

These are *informal recording tools*, designed for use with ALOs, tutors and learners to provide a memory aid and a vehicle for discussion with the learner. Observation schedules completed over a period of time and gathered together can be a useful resource in carrying out periodic reviews of progress, for those ALOs and tutors who decide to use them.

For Initial Assessment

1. Once the learner has agreed to work on a small number of literacy and numeracy tasks, let them know that you will be making notes. Show them the observation schedule as you write in their name, your own name and the date. Explain that the reason for keeping notes is so that you can look back on how they get on when you are thinking about what their learning programme and Individual Learner Plan could include.
2. Write in the task: e.g. "working out a restaurant bill", "reading from a newspaper article".
3. Each task will probe at least one learning outcome and probably more. Write the main learning outcomes under those headings.
4. While the person is working, observe how they are approaching the task. Are they doing it
   - Easily, with no hesitation?
   - Without looking for help?

   Make a note of their competence on these two dimensions by placing a tick✓ in the column.
5. If any other dimension of learning emerges that seems important, insert it under 'other'.
6. Jot down any general observations under the heading 'notes'.
7. When they have finished, check and correct their work. Discuss this with them. Then insert a rating into the 'knowledge and skill' row. This refers to how well the person carried out the technical aspects of the task.

For Ongoing Assessment

You can use either of these observation schedules to note down the key features of learners' performance on tasks carried out as part of their regular learning programme, homework, special activities or projects. Use the Performance Task Observation Schedule in the same way as for Initial Assessment, with the additional possibility of observing how far the learner can carry out the task and demonstrate the learning outcomes in different settings, for example as part of a homework activity or during a group activity outside the centre.

PERFORMANCE TASK OBSERVATION SCHEDULE						
Learner's Name						
Assessor's Name			**Date**			
Task			**Competence Demonstrated**			
			Not at all	To some extent	Mostly	Yes
Level						
Learning Outcome		Knowledge/Skill:				
		Fluency: without hesitation				
		Independence: with no help				
		Context: in settings needed				
		Other (insert):				
Notes						
Learning Outcome		Knowledge/Skill:				
		Fluency: without hesitation				
		Independence: with no help				
		Context: in settings needed				
		Other (insert):				
Notes						

PERFORMANCE TASK OBSERVATION SCHEDULE						
Learning Outcome	Knowledge/Skill:					
	Fluency: without hesitation					
	Independence: with no help					
	Context: in settings needed					
	Other (insert)					
Notes						

24. Observation Schedule to Support Writing

WRITING OBSERVATION SCHEDULE (KNOWLEDGE/SKILL)					
Learner's Name					
Assessor's Name		**Date**			
Task		**Competence Demonstrated**			
		Not at all	To some extent	Mostly	Yes
Level					
Learning Outcome (s)	Punctuation				
	Spelling				
	Word Order				
	Sequencing				
	Verb Form/Tense				
	Subject/Verb Agreement				
	Articles				
	Pronouns				
	Prepositions				
	Conjunctions				
	Vocabulary				
	Paragraphing				
	Handwriting				
	Coherence				

Notes

25. Daily Session Plan Template

Aims of session		Date	
Topic/Content/Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessment Activities*	

Evaluations/Outcomes (positives, challenges and adaptations)

*May sometimes be the same or similar to teaching and learning activities.

26. Sample Pre-programme Apprenticeship Task, Carpentry

Read the following advertisement and answer the questions that follow.

Apprentice Carpenter

- Date Listed 18/06/2017
- Location: Kildare, Leinster
- Advertised by Private Contractor
- Job Type: Part-Time

Apprentice carpenter required for small construction firm based in Kildare with work throughout Dublin. This is a great opportunity for someone wishing to start out. We are willing to take on recent school leavers or those with construction experience. You must have a genuine wish to be a carpenter. The nature of carpentry works will be varied & include site works, renovations, extensions & new builds including both domestic & commercial works. Full comprehensive training & support will be provided. Although experience is not essential you must have a basic knowledge of both hand & power tools. You must have a good attitude, willingness & ability to learn, along with a genuine interest in carpentry & in becoming a skilled craftsman. Full driving licence & own transport is a must - please confirm same when applying. Please email CV to **instantbuildingsolutions@gmail.com**

The following must be included in your application:

- confirm that you have a full driver's licence & own transport
- all relevant experience.

A. True or False?

	True	False
1. Only people with extensive construction experience need apply.	☐	☐
2. The successful applicant will use their own vehicle for work.	☐	☐
3. The company carries out works only in domestic settings.	☐	☐
4. Most of the company's work is in Co. Kildare.	☐	☐
5. The successful applicant will be familiar with the use of power tools.	☐	☐
6. The position will include extensive on-the-job training.	☐	☐
7. This is a full-time position.	☐	☐
8. To apply, send a handwritten letter and a CV.	☐	☐

B. Write your answers to the following questions in the space provided.

1. What type of carpentry will the successful applicant learn?

_____

2. What personal qualities and skills are the company looking for?

_____

3. In your opinion, why are those skills and qualities so important for the firm?

_____

C. Answer the following questions.

1. Multiply 185.60 by 37.   _____

2. An item costs €65 with a 30% discount. What is the new price?   _____

3. Add 1056 and 5670.   _____

4. What is the boiling point of water in degrees Celsius?   _____

5. Divide 650 by 25.   _____

6. How many meters are there in a kilometre?   _____

7. Convert 2000 watts to kilowatts.   _____

8. Write this number in digits:
    eight hundred and ninety-six thousand, seven hundred and eight.   _____

9. Round the following to the nearest 100:   103.50 _____ 196 _____ 149 _____

10. What is the average of these numbers?   3, 4, 3, 2, 2.   _____

11. How many degrees are there in: a circle? _____ a triangle? _____

12. Scale up these ratios: 2:4   4_____   8_____   12_____

13. Solve this ratio problem: 5:x = 20:80   _____

14. Find the area of this room: _____

3m
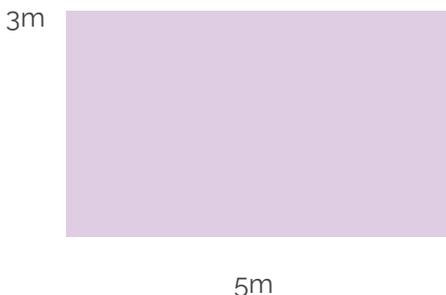
5m   area: _____

27. Sample Pre-Programme Screening Strategy for FET

Some ETBs have developed interactive strategies for identifying the literacy and numeracy needs of prospective entrants to the Further Education and Training system.

Purpose

To identify Further Education and Training applicants who need support in handling the literacy/numeracy demands of their programme.

Context

During the Further Education and Training programme enrolments. This may be as part of an Open Day, group interview or one-to-one interview, according to the enrolment process in individual ETBs.

Target Group

Applicants to all FET programmes.

Questions addressed

Does the learner have gaps or difficulties in literacy or numeracy that would make it difficult for them to engage with their chosen FET provision, e.g. following content, using materials and resources?

Outcomes and Actions

- No difficulty identified – proceed with enrolment on FET provision of choice.
- Significant gaps or difficulties identified – draw up support plan, to include contact with literacy service; see Recording Tools Section 4, Individual Learner Plan
- Serious gaps or difficulties identified – refer to taster course or literacy service.

Overview of Strategy

Initial pre-programme screening is carried out in the context of an individual or group session. This may be

- A single Induction Session.
- Part of a wider FET Induction Programme.

See Sample Session below.

Assessment methods include:

- Observation of discussions in pairs and/or groups.
- Assessment Tasks in reading, writing, numeracy and IT.

Assessment Tasks may be:

- Generic tasks aligned to the QQI level of the learner's chosen programme.
- Specific tasks, constructed around their particular programme.

See the Sample Tasks section of the Toolkit for assessment tasks.

Time Scale: Pre-programme screening session, 1.5 hours.

Draft pre-programme screening session

A session like this could fit into an Induction Programme or an Open Day.

1: Introductions	Time

i. Welcomes
 	
  Overview of purpose of this session(s):
  • To introduce you to ETB and the FET service;
  • To assess your learning readiness and possible learning needs in order to determine support requirements and good fit for the programme.
ii. Paired Activity
  • Which FET opportunitydo you expect to take up?
  • Why did you choose this FET provision?
iii. Report Back
  Each person takes 1 minute to report back on their partner's input
iv. Presentation: the FET/ETB system, the programmes, supports and responsibilities.	

2: Individual Tasks – select tasks to match learner's preference and level. See sample task toolkit for model tasks.	
A: Generic Option 1	
Reading and Writing Task at Level 1, 2 or 3. Numeracy Task at Level 1, 2 or 3.	
B: Generic Option 2	
Computerised skills test, selected from available resources.	
C: Specific Option	
Reading and Writing Task at Level 1, 2 or 3 tailored to specific FET provision. Numeracy Task at Level 1, 2 or 3 tailored to specific FET provision.	
Group Activities	

i. Paired activity:
  • Identify one good learning experience you have had in your life, and one bad one.
  • What made each experience good or bad? Be specific.
ii. Group Activity: join with another pair.
Draw up a list of the factors that contribute to (a) positive and (b) negative learning experiences.	

Using IT: Task	

Using your phone, tablet, laptop or desktop:
  • Access the ETB website and find out….(insert task).
  • Make 3 powerpoint slides summarising conclusions from today's workshop or questions.	

Self-Assessment	
Using the supplied checklist, identify the tasks you can carry out with: No help some support a lot of support	

References and Resources

This Toolkit draws on a wide variety of materials, practical and theoretical, both produced commercially and developed by educational institutions, A selection of the resources used in compiling this Toolkit is listed below. Many of the practical tasks and materials are reproductions or adaptations of resources generously provided by practitioners in the Education and Training Boards:

Cavan and Monaghan ETB
City of Dublin ETB
Cork ETB
Donegal ETB
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB
Galway and Roscommon ETB
Kildare and Wicklow ETB
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB

Kerry ETB
Laois and Offaly ETB
Limerick and Clare ETB
Longford and Westmeath ETB
Louth and Meath ETB
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB
Tipperary ETB
Waterford and Wexford ETB

Framework of Literacy and Numeracy Levels: reproduces QQI Minor Awards, Component Specifications for Levels 1, 2, 3

Reading, Level 1 and Level 2
Writing, Level 1 and Level 2
Listening and Speaking, Level 1 and Level 2
Non-verbal Communication, Level 1 and Level 2
Communications, Level 3
Quantity and Number, Level 1 and Level 2
Application of Number, Level 3
Pattern and Relationship, Level 1 and Level 2
Algebra in Mathematics, Level 3
Shape and Space, Level 1 and Level 2
Measurement and Capacity in Mathematics, Level 3
Data Handling, Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3
Problem Solving, Level 1
Quantitative Problem Solving, Level 2
Problem Solving in Mathematics, Level 3
Computer Skills, Level 1 and Level 2
Computer Literacy, Level 3
https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=awards

Learning Outcomes

CEDEFOP (2016) "Application of Learning Outcomes Approaches Across Europe: A Comparative Study." Luxembourg: Publications Office.http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3074

For extensive research into learning outcomes and their uses, visit: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/custom-search?search=learning+outcomes&op=Search

Bloom, B.S. (Ed.). Engelhart, M.D., Furst, E.J., Hill, W.H., Krathwohl, D.R. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain.* New York: David McKay Co Inc.

Extensive resources on using Bloom's Taxonomy are available from many educational institutions: see, for example:

http://teaching.uncc.edu/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives
http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cognition/bloom.html
https://www.missouristate.edu/assets/fctl/Blooms_Taxonomy_Action_Verbs.pdf

Scaffolding

Wood, David, (1988) "How Children Think and Learn," Oxford: Blackwell.

McLeod, S.A. (2012) "Zone of Proximal Development" www.simlypsychology.org/Zone-of-Proximal-Development.html

Assessment for Learning

Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998). Assessment and Classroom Learning.
Assessment in Education 5(1) pp. 7-71.

Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998), "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment," Phi Delta Kappa, October 1998: http://www.rdc.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/InsideBlackBox.pdf

Assessment Reform Group (2002) "Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles: Research-based principles to guide classroom practice," http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/assessment-reform-group

Computer-based tests, screening and diagnostic:

Learning and assessment materials at Levels 1, 2 and 3.
http://www.writeon.ie/nala/home/student.jsf

BKSB Learning and assessment materials aligned to Levels 1, 2 and 3.

- Quick Check Screener
- Initial Assessment
- Diagnostic Assessment.

https://www.bksb.co.uk/

Performance Task Resources

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework, Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education. http://tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/lbs_oalcf_overview.html

Other Resources

Cedefop (2008). "Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 100 key terms." Luxembourg: Publications Office.
http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Glossary.cspOntario Adult Literacy

ITABE Assessment Pack ETBI http://www.etbi.ie/etbi-services/education-resources/intensive-tuition-in-adult-basic-education-itabe/

Kavanagh, Patrick The Green Fool (First published in 1938 by Michael Joseph Publishers)

NALA (2016) "Brushing Up, 2: Working Towards Maths at Level 2." www.nala.ie

Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education Curriculum Framework Welcome Package Level 2 CESBA , http://tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/lbs_oalcf_overview.html

List of Acronyms

AfL	Assessment for Learning
ALO	Adult Literacy Organiser
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
FARR	Funding Allocations Requests and Reporting
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILP	Individual Learner Plan
ITABE	Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachas Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna

Assessing Adult Literacy
and Numeracy
Research Report

Contents

Section One:
Introduction and Overview

1.1 Project context

The Further Education and Training sector in Ireland provides a wide variety of education and training opportunities for a diverse cohort of learners of all ages with different educational backgrounds, aspirations and needs[1]. The learning opportunities which FET offers have helped many adults to improve their employment prospects or enrich their lives in other important ways.

However, these benefits do not reach all citizens equally and for some people, difficulties with literacy or numeracy can present a real obstacle to learning. Gaps in reading, writing or mathematical skills may hamper learners' progress in working towards qualifications, which in turn puts them at a disadvantage in the job market. Such challenges can also present practical constraints in negotiating daily life and may discourage people from participating in their communities and developing their personal potential.

The Further Education and Training Strategy 2014–2019 has therefore identified Active Inclusion, and within this, the implementation of a national Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy,[2] as a major priority, on the grounds that

> "Active inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society, including having a job."[3]

This is consistent with the EU 2020 strategy,[4] which recommends attuning education and training systems to the needs of learners as individuals, and of the labour market. This means ensuring that all young people and adults acquire the competences required to engage in further learning and in work, most significantly in the areas of communication, especially literacy, and numeracy.[5]

The Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Project documented in this report was launched in October, 2016 with the aim of promoting several elements of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy which is a key component of the Active Inclusion goal of the SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy.[6] The overall aim is to support adult learners in achieving competence in the literacy and numeracy required to participate effectively in learning opportunities, to maximise their personal and social potential and enhance their lives as citizens.

This report documents the research and development process leading up to the production of a set of National Guidelines for initial and ongoing assessment of literacy and numeracy in adult literacy centres. It includes discussions on the policy and theoretical context of the project, an outline of the main features of the Guidelines, and an Implementation Plan.

1.2 Scope and limitations of assessment project

The Active Inclusion strand of the FET Strategy makes a commitment to "promote, develop and encourage literacy and numeracy"[7] through implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, item 10 of which highlights the need to

1   SOLAS (2014) "Further Education Strategy 2014 – 2019," Dublin: SOLAS, p.9.
2   Ibid, p. 100.
3   Ibid, p.19.
4   European Communities (2010) "Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth," Brussels: European Commission.

5   RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) Key Competences for Lifelong Learning http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN and the 2018 revised fraemwork: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf.
6   SOLAS (2014) op. cit., p.100.
7   Further Education and Training Act 2013.

"Develop more reliable and fit-for-purpose screening and assessment systems by conducting research to identify and develop effective screening and assessment instruments to systematically identify the literacy and numeracy problems of those who come into contact with training."[8]

The current project builds on earlier research conducted on this and related topics, in particular a set of preliminary guidelines on initial assessment which were drafted in 2013.[9] The development process documented here includes an analysis of international practice and updated stakeholder consultation.

The final product is a practical Guide to assessing literacy and numeracy in adult education centres. This is contained in a companion document[10] and described in Section Five below.

In clarifying the scope of this project, it is important to note that in Ireland, assessment of adults' literacy and numeracy skills can happen in a variety of situations and contexts, including:

- Within the adult literacy service provided by the Education and Training Boards.

- Within the wider Further Education and Training system, when managers or tutors assess applicants' or existing learners' competences in handling the literacy and numeracy demands of specific FET provision.

- In public service engagement, when front-line staff meet clients face-to-face.

- During engagement with clients of agencies sub-contracted to provide services such as pathways to employment.

Staff in agencies outside the adult literacy service sometimes assess adults' literacy or numeracy abilities, either formally or informally, for a range of different purposes. Often, the outcome of such assessments is a referral to the local ETB adult literacy service.

However, as things stand, with the exception of the first item listed above, there is very little firm data on how literacy and numeracy assessment is carried out in these various contexts.

A set of fully integrated National Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment of adults should support good practice in all of the contexts listed above. The current project fulfils one component of the holistic, integrated Guidelines needed, addressing only assessment carried out within adult literacy centres. More research is needed to clarify the detail of current assessment practice, protocols and supports used by staff in other agencies and learning contexts.

By limiting the scope of this project to assessment in adult literacy centres, future research and development can draw on the findings of this project. This bottom-up development strategy therefore provides a basis for future work on assessment in the other contexts mentioned.

It is also significant that the Terms of Reference for this project specify initial and ongoing assessment of adult literacy and numeracy, and not summative assessments leading to awards. As procedures for this last purpose are already overseen by QQI, these Guidelines do not focus directly on assessment for accreditation. However, all elements of the procedures and supports provided connect explicitly to the National Framework of Qualifications and to the Level 1, 2 and 3 QQI modules which are relevant to literacy and numeracy. It will become clear that systematic use of the assessment methods and procedures set out in the Guidelines will enhance learners' ability to achieve their goals, including accreditation.

1.3 Research Methodology

The development of the Guidelines and Toolkit is underpinned by a process of qualitative research that comprised both field work and desk research. This explored a range of questions, in part drawn from the project Terms of Reference:

- What are the systemic features of a fit-for-purpose strategy for literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres?

- What supports, methods and materials are required to implement these?

- What are the likely challenges that will be met in the Irish context and how can these be resolved?

---

8   SOLAS (2014) op. cit. p. 100.
9   Kett, M. (2013) "Guidelines on Initial Assessment of Adult Literacy," Dublin, Department of Education and Skills.
10   SOLAS/ETBI (March 2018) "Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy in adult literacy centres: a Handbook of National Guidelines," Dublin: SOLAS/ETBI.

Desk research comprised analysis of three inter-related paths of enquiry:

- Irish and European policy context, current and recent.

- International best practice in English-speaking countries: UK, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the US.

- Conceptual basis for recommended approach to literacy and numeracy assessment.

The findings of the desk research generated topics for further investigation. These were probed during the field work stage of the research, which involved in-depth consultation with adult literacy practitioners in ETBs.

Field work was carried out through face-to-face, focus group meetings and involved representatives of all ETBs in the country. The consultation set out to explore:

- Current assessment practices in individual ETBs, and the supports and materials currently being used to support these.

- Benefits and challenges of assessment of adult literacy and numeracy and possible solutions.

- Practitioners' priorities, preferred range, scope and content of national guidelines.

Between November 2016 and May 2017, 16 face-to-face focus group meetings were held throughout the country. A total of 123 practitioners participated in these meetings, including Adult Literacy Organisers, Resource Workers and Programme coordinators and some tutors. The size of focus groups varied according to the ETB, the largest meeting involving twenty participants and the smallest, three. Focus group meetings were facilitated by the researcher and involved in-depth discussion of a list of topics supplied in advance in the form of an interview schedule shown in Appendix 1, which the participants were invited to modify before each meeting. Those attending the meetings were asked in advance to bring copies of the materials they use to support assessment and most of them did.

1.4 Project outputs and structure of this report

In addition to this final project report, the outputs of the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Project comprise:

- A handbook of National Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres.

- A practical Toolkit containing resources which support the methods set out in the Guidelines handbook.

These two companion documents are practical tools, designed for hands-on use by adult literacy practitioners and therefore contain only minimal background information on the rationale and theory underpinning the methods and processes described in the Guidelines. Those topics, including the findings of the consultation process, analysis of international practice and conceptual rationale, are the main focus of this report.

This Final Project Report is structured around six sections, including this Introduction. Section Two outlines the European and Irish policy context and Section Three summarises the findings from the review of international best practice. The consultation process is reported in Section Four, followed in Section Five by a summary of the Guidelines contained in the full Guidelines Handbook. Section Six identifies the range of supports needed to put the Guidelines into practice, including an Implementation Plan which proposes a range of measures through which the Guidelines can be disseminated and refined. Readers with a practical interest in how the Guidelines operate in practice should read this report alongside the two companion documents: the Guidelines Handbook and the accompanying Toolkit of resources.

Section Two:
Literature review: policy and concept

2.1 Policy context, Europe and Ireland

The evolution of education, training and employment policy during the last two decades in Europe and Ireland has increasingly focused on the literacy and numeracy skills of adults and, most recently, on assessment of those skills. Two contributing strands of influence may be identified: the impact of findings from international research, which provided empirical evidence of low levels of literacy and numeracy skills amongst a large share of the adult population; and a growing awareness of the relationship between low skills, unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

2.1.1 National and international research

Since the mid-1960s, international comparative data on the literacy and numeracy skills of children were made available in the form of results from early standardised tests which were the precursors to modern surveys such as PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). However, before the publication of the first results from the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1995[11] no comparable data existed for the adult population. The fact that few countries conducted national surveys of adult skills meant that there was little or no statistical information available on adult literacy or numeracy to inform policy.

In Ireland, this information deficit was mitigated in the early days by representations from education practitioners and advocacy groups, in particular the National Adult Literacy Agency, (NALA) who revealed that large numbers of the student cohort were grappling with literacy and numeracy difficulties. Although the scale of the problem had not yet been quantified, this was acknowledged

in the earliest official statement of national adult education policy, the 1973 Murphy Report[12] and signalled again in the Kenny Report[13] eleven years later.

Internationally, the publication of the OECD IALS results between 1995 and 2000, representing three waves of research in 23 jurisdictions[14], provided empirical evidence that a large share of the adult population in many countries had low levels of basic skills:[15]

> "…in all but three of the countries participating in IALS, over 40 percent of the population is assessed to possess document literacy skills which place them in the two lowest levels of proficiency."[16]

These findings had a major impact on education policy in several countries. In Ireland, they brought adult literacy and numeracy centre stage.[17] The IALS results for Ireland revealed that one in four Irish adults – about half a million people – "have problems with even the simplest literacy task… only one sixth scored at the highest literacy level."[18] Results for numeracy, which IALS expressed as "quantitative literacy", were no better, with Ireland coming second last in the OECD country group surveyed for both literacy and numeracy.

11   OECD/Statistics Canada (1995) "Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the first international Adult Literacy Survey," Paris: OECD.

12   Murphy Report (1973) "Committee on Adult Education: Adult Education in Ireland," Stationery Office, Dublin.
13   Commission on Adult Education in Ireland (1984) "Lifelong Learning Report of the Commission on Adult Education," Dublin: Stationery Office (The Kenny Report).
14   As opposed to countries: e.g. N. Ireland and Great Britain were researched separately; similarly Switzerland French & German/Italian and Belgium/Flanders.
15   OECD Directorate for Education (2009) "International Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Surveys in the OECD Region," OECD working Paper No. 26," Paris: OECD.
16   OECD (2009) op. cit., p.12.
17   An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (2000) "Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education," Dublin: Stationery Office p.86.
18   OECD (1995) "IALS, Results for Ireland" Dublin: ERC pp. 32 – 40. https://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/International%20 Adult%20Literacy%20Survey%20-%20results%20for%20Ireland_0_1.pdf

During the following decade, the policy commitments to improve adult literacy and numeracy in Ireland, set out in the first ever National Adult Literacy Programme,[19] were supported by very significant increases in funding under the National Development Plan (NDP). This resourced a wide variety of pilot initiatives and measures, including innovative delivery methods and also programmes developed by NALA and the IVEA[20] on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, which integrated assessment with teaching and learning.[21]

During the same period, EU economic and employment policy identified the need for upskilling of the adult population as an essential strategy for achieving Europe-wide economic growth. These priorities, in particular the need to address basic skills gaps, gathered momentum in the wake of the economic crisis of 2008, which, according to the first major recovery strategy[22], "wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed structural weaknesses in Europe's economy." The Europe 2020 initiative framed the planned recovery in terms of "growth" and also, "social cohesion:"

> "We need a strategy to help us come out stronger from the crisis and turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Europe 2020 sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century. Europe 2020 puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth."[23]

This major policy initiative explicitly foregrounds the relationship between employment, skills and poverty and most significantly, predicts the negative impact which low levels of basic skills in the adult population will have on European employment patterns into the future:

> "About 80 million people have low or basic skills, but lifelong learning benefits mostly the more educated. By 2020, 16 million more jobs will require high qualifications, while the demand for low skills will drop by 12 million jobs."[24]

In the years since the publication of Europe 2020, almost every major European policy statement on employment and on the economy has foregrounded skills as a driver of economic recovery. More recently, in 2016 the New Skills Agenda for Europe emphasised the wider economic, social and personal consequences of low levels of basic skills in the adult population and the need for urgent action to tackle the problem:[25]

> "70 million Europeans lack adequate reading and writing skills, and even more have poor numeracy and digital skills, putting them at risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion… Inclusive labour markets should draw on the skills and talents of all, including the low-skilled and other vulnerable groups."

A major component of the New Skills Agenda for Europe is to improve the quality and relevance of skills formation. Within that, a Skills Guarantee explicitly provided for "a skills assessment, enabling low-qualified adults to identify their existing skills and their upskilling needs."[26]

The Skills Guarantee has been updated by a new flagship initiative, Upskilling Pathways, which reinforces and expands the focus on assessment. Upskilling Pathways[27] is structured around three inter-related building blocks:

> "…skills assessment; provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer; and validation and recognition of skills acquired."

The overall aim is to assist adults "with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences" to

> "(a) acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence; and/or

19   Op. cit., An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (2000), pp 86 – 90.
20   IVEA- Umbrella body for the Vocational Education Committees and the forerunner of the ETBI.
21   MLJ (Mapping the Learning Journey) https://www.nala.ie/resources/mapping-learning-journey
 ITABE (Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education) http://www.etbi.ie/etbi-services/education-resources/intensive-tuition-in-adult-basic-education-itabe/
22   Europea 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.
Brussels, 3.3.2010 COM(2010) 2020 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION http://ec.europa.eu/archives/growthandjobs_2009/pdf/complet_en.pdf
23   Op.cit, COM (2010), p 2.

24   Op.cit, COM(2010), p. 16.
25   A new Skills Agenda for Europe COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness (SWD(2016) 195 final).
26   Ibid. p 5.
27   Council Recommendation of 19 December on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (201/16/C 484/01).

(b) acquire a wider set of skills, knowledge and competences, relevant for the labour market and active participation in society."

It is worth noting that the most recent EU policy statements have elaborated their assessment components in some detail. Drawing on the background research which supported the Skills Guarantee,[28] Upskilling Pathways proposes an approach to assessment which includes a skills audit for adults in the priority target groups. The information gathered as part of this assessment process forms the basis of an individualised learning plan, which in turn generates an offer of education and training designed to meet the needs identified in the assessment process. The Upskilling Pathways model therefore recognises skills assessment, delivery and accreditation as discrete, if inter-related, components of a comprehensive initiative required to support adults in improving their competence in literacy and numeracy.

On both a policy and an operational level, one of the most influential European initiatives, which is referenced in most of the economic and employment policy of the last decade, was developed in the early 2000s and established by EU legislation in 2006. The EU Key Competences framework[29] identified eight key competences deemed essential for Member States as part of their lifelong learning strategies, including their strategies for achieving universal literacy. In the Key Competences published in 2006 literacy is incorporated into Communication in the Mother Tongue, which is defined as

> "the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure."[30]

On the 17th January 2018 the European Commission published a review of the key competences for

Lifelong Learning[31], which greatly strengthens the focus on focus on basic skills (literacy, languages and basic digital skills). Mathematical competence is

> "the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Building on a sound mastery of numeracy, the emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge."

Recently revised in a new format that foregrounds literacy as a key competence, much of the work on Key Competences in recent years has focused on assessment. Many measures proposed are relevant to the present phase of developing adult assessment guidelines for Ireland, such as: the importance of defining the scope of the assessment domain, its relevant constructs and the proposed interpretations of results; the potential of "Assessment for Learning" in developing intended learning outcomes; the creation of assessment criteria to judge individual progress; the specification of learning outcomes to facilitate assessment;[32] the uses and benefits of formative assessment;[33] and the potential for educators to develop their assessment practices themselves.[34] Key aspects of these elements have been incorporated into the Guidelines described in Section Five below and supported by the Handbook and accompanying Toolkit.

According to the most up-to-date European policy statements, the scale of the literacy and numeracy problem throughout Europe and the attendant consequences remain very significant. One of the key goals of Upskilling Pathways is to address the fact that

> "20 to 25 % of European adults aged 16 to 65 with low levels of proficiency in those skills are less likely to take part in learning or to participate fully in the digitally driven economy and society. They face a higher risk of unemployment, a higher incidence of poverty and social exclusion, higher health risks and a lower life expectancy, while their children face higher risks of educational underachievement. (Literacy, Numeracy and Problem-solving in Technology-rich Environments)."[35]

28   ANNEX I Tackling low skills: The Skills Guarantee Accompanying the document Communication from the Commisison to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions A NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness [COM(2016) 381 final].

29   RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) Key Competences for Lifelong Learning http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN

30   Ibid.

31   Ibid. And the 2018 revised framework: https://ec.europa/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf

32   European Commission (November,2012) "Education and Training 2020 Work programme Thematic Working Group 'Assessment of Key Competences': Literature review, Glossary and examples." Brussels: European Commssion, p 10.

33   ibid, p. 25.

34   European Commission (November,2012), op. cit., p 29.

35   Council Recommendation of 19 December. op. cit.

2.1.2 Practical insights from policy evolution

In Ireland, data from PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies), which reported on research carried out between August 2011 and March 2012,[36] indicated a continuing need for support in the adult population, placing Ireland 17th out of 24 participating countries in reading: 17.9% of respondents in Ireland are at or below Level 1, compared to an average of 16.7% in participating countries. In numeracy, over one quarter (25.6%) of adults in Ireland score at or below Level 1, substantially worse than the international average of 20% (20.2%) across participating countries. At the other end of the numeracy proficiency scale, just 36.3% of adults in Ireland are at Levels 3, 4 and 5, compared to 46.8% on average across participating countries. Ireland's ranking on adult literacy and numeracy is therefore significantly below the international average. As well as this, the Irish cohort performed poorly on a new domain, *Problem-solving in Technology-rich Environments*, which the OECD deems necessary for fully participating in the labour market, education and training, social and civic life. The introduction of this new domain illustrates how the concept of literacy changes over time in response to global developments, including technological advances.

The implementation of the assessment component of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy strategy within the Active Inclusion measure of the FET Strategy therefore signals a commitment to create a practical response to the support needs highlighted by European policy and findings from international research. The Guidelines and Toolkit accompanying this report supply part of that response.

The development of the Guidelines has drawn on significant policy and operational literacy and numeracy initiatives provided by the Department of Education and Skills, including the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy.[37] Although that important document focuses mainly on literacy and numeracy in compulsory education, from early childhood through to senior cycle, it also highlights the need for coordination with measures supporting vocational and higher education. Many of its recommendations are consistent with good adult education practice and indicate potential for continuity between the ethos and, in certain areas, practical approaches, to literacy and numeracy assessment across sectors and levels.

Areas of common ground include: emphasis on meaningful use of learning outcomes for planning and assessment; the need to support the development of mastery, or competence;[38] the potential uses of assessment by teachers to monitor progress and inform their own practice;[39] the need for a variety of assessment methods; and to confirm self-assessment using additional approaches; and the use of Assessment *for* Learning[40], as well as Assessment *of* Learning strategies, to support teaching and learning.

The review of this Strategy, published in 2017,[41] contains additional findings and recommendations relevant to the development of adult literacy and numeracy assessment Guidelines. It specifically mentions the use of assessment to "support better quality teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy for individual students,"[42] and places special emphasis on formative assessment[43] and goal-setting.

National Guidelines for Youthreach and Community Training Centres, which bridge the contexts of compulsory schooling and further education, have been developed by DES National Educational Psychological Service and, among other things, highlight the usefulness of tutor observation as an important method of assessment which provides in depth, qualitative information about the type of mistakes people make. Many of the themes already mentioned also recur here, such as: the practical uses of formative assessment to monitor progress and most significantly, the need for systematic record-keeping to support formative assessment:

> "An important part of formative assessment is the recording and dating of data. Teachers need a system for recording their observations as soon as possible after they have noticed something."[44]

38   DES (2011) op. cit., p. 45.
39   Ibid p 74.
40   A highly developed, systematic approach to formative assessment whose goal is to support teaching and learning. See Assessment Reform Group (2002) "Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles: Research-based principles to guide classroom practice," Nuffield Foundation," http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/assessment-reform-group.
41   Department of Education and Skills (2017) "National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011 – 2020, Interim Review: 2011 – 2016 New Targets: 2017 – 2020" Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.
42   Ibid p 46.
43   Ibid p 61.
44   National Educational Psychological Service (2013) Developing Basis Literacy and Numeracy Skills in Youthreach and Community Training Centres: Guidelines for Staff 2013," Dublin NEPS, p. 51.

36   An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh Central Statistics Office" PIAAC 2012 Results for Ireland," Dublin Stationery Office, p. 3.
37   Department of Education and Skills (2011) "The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Learning Among Young People 2011 – 2020," Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

The national recording instruments provided in the Guidelines Handbook (see Appendices below) and the optional Observation Schedules included in the Toolkit, are designed to support this important function.

Similar themes are found in the Department of Education and Science Adult Literacy Programme Operational Guidelines, which recommend: the need for systematic and structured initial assessment; the use of learning outcomes at QQI levels 1, 2 and 3 as a reference framework for assessment; the need to complement learners' self-assessment; and the development of an Individual Learner Plan, based on information gathered as part of initial assessment.[45] Practical guidelines and especially, statements of ethos and general principles are included in key documents from NALA developed in consultation with sector stakeholders.[46]

The commitment to research and develop screening and assessment instruments contained in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy[47] is therefore a starting point from which to translate into action many of the measures recommended

in both European and Irish policy. The Guidelines and Toolkit accompanying this report are in partial fulfilment of those recommendations, within the limits explained in Section 1.2 above.

2.2 Review of conceptual dimension

One of the first questions to consider in developing adult literacy and numeracy assessment tools is: what exactly should be assessed?

2.2.1 What to assess

To answer this, it is necessary to unpack some of the most widely-used definitions of the concepts of 'literacy' and 'numeracy' and identify any common ground.

Literacy and numeracy

'Literacy' and 'numeracy' are complex concepts that can be understood in different ways by different people, depending on the context and the purpose. Definitions currently used by authoritative sources are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Literacy	Numeracy
Literacy...the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts in order to participate in society, achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential.[1]	Numeracy...the ability to access, use, interpret and communicate mathematical information and ideas in order to engage in and manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in adult life.[2]
Literacy: the provision of basic education, including reading, writing and numeracy skills, and ICT for adults who wish to improve their literacy and numeracy competencies to enhance their participation in personal, social and economic life.[3]	...encompasses the ability to use mathematical understanding and skills to solve problems and to meet the demands of day-to-day living in complex social settings. It means being able to: estimate, predict and calculate, identify patterns, trends and relationships, gather, interpret and represent data express ideas mathematically engage in problem solving, using investigation and reasoning skills use digital technology to develop numeracy skills and understanding. [4]

1   OECD (2016) "Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills," OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris p. 38.
2   OECD (2016) "Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills," OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris p. 48.
3   Department of Education and Skills Adult Literacy Programme "Operational Guidelines for Providers 2013."
4   Department of Education and Skills (2017) "Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011-2020): Interim Review 2011-2016; New Targets 2017-2020".

45   Department of Education and Skills Adult Literacy Programme Operational Guidelines for Providers 2013 p. 7 – 8.
46   E.g. NALA (2011) "Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Practice," Dublin: NALA.
47   SOLAS (2014) op. cit. p. 100.

The above definitions reveal that the concepts share several common features. Literacy and numeracy are both:

- Multi-faceted concepts, comprising many inter-related strands.

- Composed, in part, of technical knowledge and skills.

- Composed, in part, of personal and social dimensions.

- Highly contextualised, that is, focussed on effective application of knowledge and skills in different situations.

The multi-dimensional composition of both literacy and numeracy has practical implications for decisions about what should be assessed at any given stage of the teaching and learning process. If effective application of technical knowledge and skills is the ultimate goal of the teaching process, then it follows that at some point, qualitative dimensions of the concepts – the personal, social and contextual components mentioned above – also should be assessed.

That is not to say that all of these components of literacy and numeracy should be assessed at every stage. However, it does highlight the significance of broader dimensions of literacy and numeracy involved in achieving true competence, that is, the ability to use a technical skill as and when it is needed.

2.2.2 Concept of competence

The definitions summarised in Table 1 and the features they share are consistent with the modern concept of 'competence' which has underpinned European developments in curriculum and assessment for the last two decades. The Council of Europe defines 'competence' as:

> "the ability of individuals to act in a self-organised way[48] by deploying a combination of knowledge, skills, and personal and social capabilities appropriate to each context and relevant to each situation."

As this concept of 'competence' highlights the learner's ability to apply their learning as and when they need, it is a useful lens through which to consider the essential features of proficiency

in literacy and numeracy – what it means to say that a person 'can' handle the reading, writing and number demands of a job, specific FET provision or literacy and numeracy in their daily lives.

The Council of Europe definition conceptualises 'competence' as multi-dimensional, comprising knowledge, skill, and personal and social behaviour, selected and integrated as needed to meet the requirements of different contexts. It is worth noting that all of the EU tools, including the European Qualifications Framework, EC VET framework, the Dublin Descriptors and others, are underpinned by a similar concept of 'competence'.

One of the most important of these, which is very relevant to literacy and numeracy, is the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning mentioned earlier. This reference framework is underpinned by an over-arching concept of competence defined as "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, appropriate to the context."[49] Its overall purpose is to support lifelong learning by defining the competences people need for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. This definition of 'competence' set out in the 2006 Recommendation, as well as the accompanying definitions of each of the eight key competences identified, therefore support the view that 'competence' cannot be expressed solely in terms of knowledge and skill, but must integrate these elements with the personal, social and attitudinal dimensions needed in each specific situation.

2.2.3 Practical implications of assessing 'competence'

This approach to conceptualising 'literacy' and 'numeracy' in terms of competence has implications for the teaching and learning process, and also, for assessment. If teaching literacy and numeracy involves not only technical knowledge and skills – 'the three rs' – but also, whatever qualitative dimensions the learner will need to use a skill as and when they need it, then the logical conclusion is that all relevant dimensions of literacy or numeracy also need to be assessed.

The choice of which dimensions should be taught, and assessed, depends on the learner and the situation. A learner-centred strategy focuses on those components that make the difference between being able to use a technical skill

48   Council of Europe (2010) Council Conclusions on Competences supporting lifelong learning and the new skills for new jobs initiative, May 10th 2010.

49   European Commission Education and Culture DG (2007) Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: European Reference Framework page 3. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/educ-training_en.html

effectively in the real-life situation, or not. Evidence gathered from international practice and from the practitioner consultation process, reported in Sections Three and Four below, indicates that these dimensions may include independence, fluency, speed, use of skill in unfamiliar contexts, confidence and others. The following specific situations suggest which elements of competence learners may need to tackle under specific circumstances:

- A Level 3 Communications student needs to write a letter for his QQI portfolio but finds it difficult to correct errors in the various drafts and complete a final draft without outside help. He needs to work on **independence**.

- A newly promoted supervisor working in retail needs to manage and keep records of work rosters and time sheets for the whole staff. She cannot manage this during a crowded meeting when everyone is watching. She needs to work on **literacy confidence.**

- A learner hoping to advance to FET provision at Level 4 finds it difficult to write quickly enough to take notes during class. She needs to work on **fluency and speed**.

- A learner has no problem budgeting and handling money but finds it difficult to check change in the supermarket. He needs to work on using numbers **under pressure in public.**

For the purpose of clarifying what to assess, the examples quoted above illustrate that very often, the learner's literary or numeracy difficulty is not only in the technicalities of reading, writing or using number– and sometimes, not at all in those technicalities – but in their ability to mobilise these broader dimensions as needed.

2.2.4 Vertical and horizontal progress

In all of these situations listed above, the person may be able to handle the knowledge and skills in a controlled environment – writing or doing calculations at home or in class – but not under the conditions where they really need to apply them. For those people, the most important progress to make is not in learning more complex or difficult writing or numeracy skills – but in being able to use the skills they already have, under a wider range of circumstances.

For many literacy and numeracy learners, the progress they really need to make is therefore not vertical, or not only vertical – describing more difficult reading, writing or number work – but also, horizontal.

The multifaceted concept of literacy and numeracy outlined above, and the possibility that progress may be horizontal as well as vertical, suggest that whatever component of literacy or numeracy the person needs in order to achieve their goal should be addressed during the teaching and learning process – and also, assessed.

Consultation with practitioners reveals that assessment of these broader dimensions is already taking place on a day-to-day basis. For the most part, this is occurring informally, as part of the communication and feedback between tutor and student. A small number of ETBs have developed systems to identify, assess and record the results systematically, which allows them to track the learner's journey from the beginning, to full competence, and identify different milestones along the way.

This is encouraging. Experience of some ETB practitioners, and from some examples from the international literature, provide evidence that the complexities of assessing and recording qualitative outcomes of learning can certainly be overcome. Although it is difficult to measure independence, fluency and other broader dimensions, it is certainly possible to describe them. Furthermore, it is possible and indeed, necessary, to express progress on these aspects of literacy and numeracy in terms of observable behaviour. Specially constructed recording instruments, such as observation schedules and tracking forms, samples of which are provided in the Toolkit, can support this process.

Section Three:
Literature review: international practice

3.1 Overview of international review

The information examined in this section was gathered in the course of desk research carried out from October to December 2016 and comprises:

- An in-depth analysis of selected examples of initial and ongoing assessment of literacy and numeracy in Australia, Canada, England, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the US.

- A review of a small number of commercially produced computerised assessments.

Countries were selected for analysis on the basis of the following criteria:

- Their adult literacy and numeracy assessment system and tools are in current use.

- They are in English.

- They are used as part of a national or, in the case of Canada, province-wide system.

- Information and access to tools were readily available.

A wide variety of documentation and other materials was analysed including: web-sites, research reports available through the national web-sites, module descriptors, assessment briefs, handbooks of assessment tasks, templates used to record programmes and assessment of progress and achievements and practice in a variety of online tests.

The first stage of the desk research yielded the following categories for analysis:

- The purpose and scope of assessment tools and processes.

- The content assessed.

- Role of national framework, if any, and brief description of this.

- Assessments methods and procedures.

- Recording of assessment results.

- Support resources.

This analytical framework provided a structure both for exploring and reporting on the findings. The study begins by exploring the range of purposes which assessment can serve and how these can influence teaching, learning and the practical impact on learners' lives. It goes on to describe and analyse the main features of the assessment tools and processes identified in the different systems examined. This is followed by an overview of the ways in which outcomes are reported. The findings then generated insights into the main features of a fit-for-purpose assessment tool, to complement the results of the policy and conceptual analysis. This review also suggested questions for the field work stage of the research, which is reported on in the next section.

Details gathered from each of the systems analysed are recorded in the format of templates or country fiches which are available for background reading as an e-file.

3.2. Purpose and scope of assessment

Assessment may be carried out for several different purposes. These include:

- Formative assessment: informs the process of teaching and learning with the goal of improving the learner's experience.

- Diagnostic: identifies strengths and weaknesses in detail; may be carried out at an early stage in the process and/or during the teaching.

- Summative: sums up the learner's achievement, often the form of a grade, mark or a detailed profile and is often used for accreditation purposes.

Within these broad distinctions, other, more refined categories of assessment support different stages and more specific purposes such as[50]

- *Alerting:* identifying the existence of a general learning need; also known as 'screening'.

- *Placing*: identifying the broad level at which a learner is working.

- *Diagnostic:* identifying specific areas of strength, weakness, learning needs.

- *Formative:* supporting and managing the process of learning and teaching.

- *Summative:* recognising or accrediting learner achievement.

- *Evaluation:* identifying the strengths and weaknesses of learning processes or programmes.

Initial Assessment

The first three of these purposes – alerting/screening, placing and diagnostic – may all be considered part of the initial assessment process, each being implemented at different stages and with distinct, if related purposes. Initial assessment is therefore not a once-off event but rather, a process that takes place over time. Initial assessment may involve different methods and tools, or similar methods and tools used in different ways.

Formative Assessment

The term can be understood in different ways and is often taken to refer simply to assessment which is carried out informally during the teaching and learning process. However, a more systematic approach defines this concept as

> "… the frequent, interactive assessment of student understanding and progress to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately."[51]

Whether informal or systematic, formative assessment is always an on-going process rooted within the teaching and learning situation.

3.3 Content: What is Assessed?

Broadly speaking, adult literacy and numeracy tools and processes provide information about learners' technical skills and knowledge in

- Reading.

- Writing.

- Use of number.

Within these broad headings, the skills expressed in more detail are similar across all the systems examined, with variations in emphasis and expression.

3.3.1 Technical knowledge and skills

All of the systems examined for this study align their initial and on going assessment of literacy and numeracy with national (or, in the case of Ontario, province-wide) frameworks of progression:

- Australia, Core Skills Framework, five levels.

- Canada Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF), three levels.

- England Functional Skills, three levels.

- New Zealand, Learning Progressions, six levels.

- Northern Ireland, Essential Skills, five levels.

- Scotland, Core Skills, five levels.

- The US National Reporting System, eight levels, of which four or five are relevant to literacy and numeracy.

Table 2 below summarises the structure and the broad headings each contains. All of these frameworks of competence comprise a small number of general literacy and numeracy categories, the more detailed descriptors within these being expressed at different levels.

50 Scottish Executive (2004) "An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland," Edinburgh: Learning Connections Scotland pp 21 – 23. [updated 2014].
51 Looney, J. (2008), "Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Adults," Paris: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, page 1.

Table 2: Progression Frameworks

Australia • Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) = national adult LLN standards • Framework Pre-Level 1 Supplement	Reading	Writing	Numeracy	Oral Communication	Learning	5 Levels of performance, can be used in 3 Domains personal/community; workplace/employment; ed/training; **Plus** 4 performance variables that may influence a person's performance at any time: support, context, task complexity, text complexity
Canada • Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)	Find and Use Information	Communicate Ideas and Information	Understand and Use Numbers	Use Digital Technology	Manage Learning	Also Engage with Others. 6 competencies, context free but taught and assessed in context of tasks and task bundles. Level Indicators at 3 Levels Tasks and task groups that bundle together
England • Functional Skills Framework	Reading	Writing	Mathematics	Speaking, Listening and Communication		Entry Levels 1, 2, 3
New Zealand • Learning Progressions	Read with Understanding	Write to Communicate;	Listen and Speak to Communicate	Make Sense of Numbers to Solve Problems	Measure and Interpret Space and Shape	Also, Reason Statistically All Learning Progressions: 6 Levels 4 strands
Northern Ireland • Essential Skills	Read	Writing	Numeracy	Speaking	Listening	5 levels: Entry Level 1, 2, 3 Essential Skills Levels 1 and 2
Scotland • Core Skills Framework • Literacy and Numeracy Levels are derived from this FWork at SCQF Levels 3, 4, 5.	Communication	Numeracy	ICT	Working With Others	Problem Solving.	5 levels, aligned to Levels 2 – 6 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Nationals Units in literacy and numeracy qualifications are at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5. External framework, internally assessed in centre. Also embedded in other programmes.
US • National Reporting System (NRS) Educational Functioning Levels	Reading	Writing	Numeracy	Listening		EFLs span Levels 1 – 8. CASAS levels A – E correspond to EFLs 1 – 5. Reading and Numeracy go from A – D; Listening from A – C; Writing ? New.

Although all of the frameworks listed above were designed for summative and/or evaluation purposes, they provide a significant resource for both initial and ongoing assessment of literacy and numeracy. They do this in two ways. Firstly, they function as benchmarks for capturing learners' baseline level of skill and knowledge and therefore support initial assessment; and secondly, they provide signposts of achievement which give an indication of the learner's progress, thereby facilitating ongoing assessment.

3.3.2 Broader dimensions of literacy and numeracy

In addition to specifying levels of knowledge and skills, some of the systems analysed also support assessment of broader dimensions of literacy and numeracy which are similar to the qualitative dimensions of literacy and numeracy explored in Section 2.2.1 above and conceptualised as 'competence' in Section 2.2.2. For example:

- The Australian Core Skills Framework: specifies four performance variables that may influence a person's skills performance, defined as: support, context, task complexity, text complexity.

- In Canada, the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework is context-free but is taught and assessed in the context of tasks and task bundles.

Although not all of the other frameworks examined formally incorporate additional, qualitative dimensions of literacy and numeracy into their structure, they do all make reference to them and emphasise their importance in supporting the development of skills' application and facilitating learners in achieving their goals.

The concept of competence

In this context, it may be useful to revisit the concept of competence introduced in Section 2.2.2 above. Modern definitions of competence stress the multi-faceted dimensions of the concept, which encompass not only knowledge and skill, but also, the qualitative aspects of performance which are needed to apply knowledge and skills in the context of real life. The definition from the Council of Europe, already mentioned, captures the key features of the concept:

"Competence designates the ability of individuals to act in a self-organised way[52] by deploying a combination of knowledge, skills, and personal and social capabilities appropriate to each context and relevant to each situation."

These 'personal and social capabilities' may include features such as independence, aspects of context, independence, confidence, self-esteem, ability to cope with different contexts, to adapt critical thinking. Other dimensions may come into play, depending on the nature of the task and the situation.

The support materials for the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework take a clear position on the significance of these dimensions, and promotes the rationale that everything the learner must do in order to accomplish their literacy or numeracy goals, ought to be assessed. The Australian Core Skills Framework also provides concrete support for this position in the framework structure. As Table 2 above shows, this includes performance variables such as 'support' and 'context' as well as 'task complexity' and 'text complexity'. Practical assessment tools provided include a progression matrix that expresses these 'performance' variables at six levels, consistent with the six levels that describe the knowledge and skills.

Assessing these, and other broader dimensions of learning and performance, represents a shift away from assessing only technical skills, and towards assessing competence and application: that is, how well the learner can actually use their literacy or numeracy skills in ways that impact on their learning and on their employment prospects.

That said, for the most part, the international assessment practices examined for this study focus on the traditional dimensions of technical skills and knowledge. Even so, it is worth noting that in a few cases, such as those just described, there is indeed a move towards contextualising the assessment of knowledge and skills assessed in real-life tasks.

---

52   Council Conclusions May 10 2010, op. cit.

3.4 Assessment methods and processes

Within the different methodologies used to assess initial and ongoing literacy and numeracy, a variety of structure, content, item type and learner responses is required. It is possible to identify six overarching categories of assessment methods and approaches that recur across the systems analysed.[53]

These are:

   i.   Face-to-face interview/Dialogue.

   ii.   Observation.

   iii. Practical Tasks.

   iv.   Computerised Tests.

   v.   Paper-based Tests.

   vi.   Combination of two or more of the above.

3.4.1 Interview/Dialogue

An OECD study on assessment[54] highlights the significance of dialogue in building a relationship between learner and educator, especially at the start of the learning journey. Dialogue in the form of a short interview, which is generally informal but covers a pre-determined set of topics, is a significant feature of several of the systems examined. Some of the support documentation stresses the need to create a relaxed atmosphere while the assessor elicits the information needed in order to negotiate a programme of work with the learner that will bring them closer to their goal.

The interview is generally supported by a list of questions, topics or a checklist. These questions range from aspects of previous experience of learning and education, to naming specific tasks and asking the learner if they are comfortable with carrying them out. Some countries supply a script which suggests how the assessor might phrase key questions.

3.4.2 Observation

In some cases, the assessor invites the learner to carry out a structured task that is related to their goals or to their work situation. This could involve reading from a leaflet or filling in a registration form. Sometimes, a more complex task is presented or,

if the individual seems open to the idea, they might be asked to read aloud from a supplied text.

Observation of how well they carry out this task yields information about whether or not the learner really does need help with literacy or numeracy. It also gives a preliminary indication of a general, approximate level which allows the assessor to judge what type and level of programme or learning experience would be most appropriate for the learner. A very detailed profile of learning needs is not usually generated as a result of the initial interview, but rather, emerges in the early stages of work with the tutor. However, it does provide an initial indication of the learner's specific areas of strength and weakness.

This method is used in several systems often, but not exclusively, at the initial assessment stage, as structured discussions sometimes complement the formative assessment processes carried out later.

3.4.3 Task-based Assessment

Task-based assessment contextualises the process by structuring items or questions around an authentic situation or a learning experience. The assessor may correct the learner's work during or after an assessment event or else observe the learner's performance and use it as an opportunity to offer feedback tailored exactly to the learner's strengths and needs. This process may be constructed around a paper-based task or could use of computerised activities or tests as a stimulus. An even more contextualised approach builds the assessment around a practical event, such as a visit to the supermarket, which provides opportunities for the learner to put their literacy knowledge and skills into practice in an authentic situation.

There are many advantages to the performance task method for carrying out both initial and ongoing assessment. This approach provides an opportunity to connect the individual learner's goals with activities which can be specially selected to reveal the detail of particular dimensions of literacy or numeracy competence in which the learner is already strong, and where they need to improve. After the initial assessment stage, authentic assessment tasks can usefully be built around real events in the learner's life.

The task-based approach to literacy and numeracy assessment therefore generates objective, verifiable evidence of a learner's achievements both in technical knowledge and skills and also, in the broader, qualitative dimensions of competence

---

53   The Toolkit includes a table that summarises the main uses, advantages and disadvantages of all the assessment methods described in this section.
54   Looney, J. (2008), op. cit.

involved in real application of knowledge and skills. This allows the tutor and learner together to build up a multi-faceted profile that moves the assessment on from a blanket, aggregated level, to greater depth.

The main disadvantage of task-based assessment is the need for advance preparation of resources, which places significant demands on the assessor's time. Some of the international systems reviewed for this study resolve this issue by providing guidelines, assessment packs and sample tasks which assessors or tutors can access for use with their learners.

> In Ontario, the literacy and numeracy assessment system has adopted a highly developed approach to the task-based method. Tasks are purposeful activities that bundle skills, knowledge, and behaviours in unique ways; in their successful demonstration, tasks show practitioners and learners how learning can be transferred to activities in work, family, and community contexts. An entire suite of resources is supplied by the central administration body to support the design, implementation and tracking of learners' progress.

Many of these and other resources are worth studying. However, it is important to connect task-based assessments to the context within which the learner is studying. The materials referenced may therefore be considered as useful models of how assessment tasks could be constructed and supported, rather than samples for off-the-shelf use.

3.4.4 Computerised Tests

The range of computerised tests examined in the course of this research share many common features. All employ different user interfaces for the learner and the assessor and administrator. The most complex of these is in New Zealand, a highly computerised, mandatory system which triggers funding in addition to supporting learning. This includes several possible user interfaces depending on whether the individual accessing the system is a learner, tutor, a manager with general access or a system administrator with full access.

From the perspective of the learner, computerised assessments require standard behaviour patterns. Having logged in using a supplied username and password, the learner navigates the system according to instructions provided on the introductory or welcome screen. This identifies the

different buttons, access to help and shows how to scroll down and insert answers. Some systems, such as the Northern Ireland Initial Assessment for Literacy and Numeracy in Essential Skills, provide an extensive video demonstration to orientate the learner before actually taking the test.

In relation to the content, all the computerised assessments examined for this study addressed technical knowledge and skills. These are all aligned to the content of the relevant national frameworks, summarised in Table 2 above. Some computerised assessments focus almost wholly on decontextualized skills, whereas others embed the reading, writing or numeracy task in a specific situation. Computerised tests may be used for the purpose of alerting or screening, to identify a general need for support intervention.

These computerised tests include:

- The Australian screening test for the Core Skills Profile for Adults. Despite the use of the term 'screening,' this is really a placing assessment which identifies whether the learner has a difficulty but also, identifies a level and directs the learner to a particular stage of learning.

- The Pearson tests, used by EdExel in England, and also the Northern Ireland assessments, express many of the numeracy items in the form of word problems for numeracy; and for literacy, include mock authentic materials, such as flyers and advertisements.

- At the opposite extreme, the skills probed by the US CASA reading test are almost entirely decontextualized.

Whether or not items are presented in context, the range of learner responses required is rather similar and fairly limited in all of them: forced response to multiple choice items, insert word or phrase, identify odd one out, sequencing, matching. Learner input includes: click correct box, correct part of text, highlight errors in spelling and punctuation, drag and drop correct answers. Stimulus materials include on-screen leaflets, flyers, timetables, charts, matching exercises, continues prose. In general, the type of questions asked and the type of learner responses required by computerised tests are very similar to those found in paper-based tests.

One feature that distinguishes computer from paper versions is the interactive potential. Some tests adjust later items in response to the learner's answers on the early questions: thus, a series of correct answers generates successively more difficult questions. Other computerised tests probe similar content in similar ways.

A well-constructed test with an interesting user interface can motivate learners, provided that they are accustomed to using computers. In addition, the test activity sometimes provides instant feedback for learners, who can press a button at the end and see their results immediately. Presentation of results is clear and unambiguous, often shown as a grade or mark. Some products, such as the BKSB suite of assessments, also supply a printout of an in-depth diagnostic profile that links to topics and resources where improvement is needed. Tutors can find that computerised assessments are quick and easy to administer, once they have undergone appropriate training to operate the system. Most attractively, the technology saves time by eliminating the need for marking. Reporting occurs instantly, quickly and easily. Results are therefore quantitative, or readily translated into quantifiable grades and levels which are easily aggregated for system-wide reporting purposes.

As against these benefits, computerised literacy and numeracy tests have disadvantages that are difficult to overcome.

No assessment of writing

Firstly, for the most part, computerised tests usually do not assess writing. This was noted in the high-level EU report:

> "Writing has… received much less attention at international policy level than reading. This is largely a product of the lack of assessment instruments capable of quantifying how well children and young people write in an international comparative perspective.[55]

In almost all the systems examined where a computerised test was included, the writing dimension is either corrected by the tutor, or not assessed at all.

That said, technological advances have brought computer-based assessment of writing within reach, under certain conditions. The Australian

system includes an adult online writing assessment comprising a set of pre-allocated writing tasks, where candidates type responses. An Automated Essay Scoring system (AES) provides three types of electronic reports. However, the use of such systems is not yet widespread, possibly because of the need for special software and also, because they are very costly.

There is a body of literature on this which could be probed further.

Context and broader dimensions not probed

While some of the tests examined were constructed to assess some higher-order cognitive skills, such as the ability to make inferences, the broader contextual dimensions of literacy and numeracy are not easily identified by the computer-based texts in current use.

Vulnerable to guesswork

The nature of learner responses, which usually require choosing a correct answer from a range of supplied answers, and occasionally generating one independently, makes it possible for a learner to achieve a score or create a profile that is not an accurate indication of their true abilities.

Cost/Resourcing

This includes equipment, initial set up or purchase costs and ongoing renewal of licencing agreements. A UK study[56] which compared the resource inputs required for computerised tests against those needed for paper-based tests concluded that when the cost of equipment and staff training were taken into account, the benefits of computerised tests were less than expected; and in some cases, the paper-based tests were more economical and time-efficient than similar computerised tools.

55   EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy: (September, 2012) "Final Report, September 2012," Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union High level group, p 23.

56   Brooks, G. et al. (December 2014) Evaluation of English and Maths Pathfinder Pilots," London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

3.4.5 Paper-based Tests

The content and format of paper-based assessments cover the same ground, and are presented in much the same format, as computerised tests. The two main differences are the medium for reading and responding; and the adaptive nature of some computerised tests where later items are adjusted to the learner's success rate on the earlier ones. Examples include:

- US, CASA, Literacy and Numeracy Tests.

- Northern Ireland, Essential Skills Literacy and Numeracy Tests.

3.4.6 Combination

Most systems carry out both initial and ongoing assessment using a combination of two or more of the methods described above.

> In Scotland, the initial assessment is carried out by a combination of paper-based tasks, dialogue, structured tasks and computer test. These processes are supported by a wide range of materials including a template of an Individual Learner Plan, tasks chosen for appropriate context e.g. in a job centre, 'Thinking Ahead Screening Tool' includes a planning form focused on job interests, plus a small number of contextualised numeracy tasks.

3.5 Resources and supports for assessment

The assessment methods described above are supported by a range of resources which vary according to the system. These include:

Handbooks and Guides

This is the most widely-used resource throughout all systems analysed. Examples include:

- Edexcel Initial Assessment Tool (IAT) for computerised assessment: Initial Assessment Tool Deliverer's Guide plus accompanying marking schemes.

- Australia: The ACSF assessment tasks user guide explains in detail how to use the tools to conduct an assessment against the ACSF, and how to contextualise the assessment tasks.

Recording templates, including Individual Learner Plan

These are blank forms constructed to record assessment results at important stages in the assessment process. These may support either initial or ongoing assessment. Examples include:

> In Ontario, the Learning Plan Template: this shows the learner's goals, goal-related milestones and list of tasks and competencies which the learner needs to follow to meet their goal, along with relevant delivery methods.

Sample Assessment Tasks/Resource Bank

The Australian bank of ACSF assessment tasks has been developed for assessors who are experienced LLN practitioners and have a working knowledge of the ACSF. The bank includes assessment tasks for levels 1-3 of the ACSF, a user guide that describes how to use the tasks and a report form. Each assessment task includes a summary of the ACSF skills covered, notes about industry coverage and contextualisation, instructions for the assessor, a mapping of the ACSF skill indicator and Aspects of Communication covered in the task.

Continuing Professional Development

All of the systems examined are supported by training in the use of assessment instruments and tools. This involves ongoing or periodic staff training in using new methods and materials for assessment, tailored to the content and context.

Framework of Levels

Table 2 above summarises the progression frameworks, that is, the external, national frameworks of levels, used to support teaching, learning and assessment in the countries analysed. In addition to the national frameworks, some of the literature describes how practitioners develop their own local frameworks to support monitoring learners' progress:

> In Scotland, staff participating in one project developed a matrix for one of the reading competences. This identifies progress indicators at more detailed, finely-grained steps than those described by the levels specified in the Core Skills module of Reading.

Section Four:
Stakeholder consultation

4.1 Consultation process

The fieldwork component of the research strategy comprised a series of site visits to all sixteen Education and Training Boards to consult with Adult Literacy Organisers and/or Resource Workers involved in initial or ongoing assessment. This process set out to:

- Clarify the approach to initial and ongoing assessment currently in operation in the adult literacy service in ETBs countrywide.

- Seek practitioners' views on the optimum focus for national guidelines on the assessment of literacy and numeracy in adult literacy centres.

- Identify and report on any other issues that could impact on the development of national guidelines.

The information yielded by this process gives an overview of the general approach, resources, tools and materials currently in use in the literacy service countrywide; and raises other practical matters which impact on the situation on the ground.

4.1.1 Defining components of assessment

As noted earlier, the term 'assessment' is sometimes used to refer to distinct, but inter-related components of the assessment process:

- Content: what is assessed?

- The general approach: the overall shape of the assessment encounter.

- Methods: the learner's and tutor's behaviour which generates results.

- Support tools: materials used during the assessment activity.

- Recording process: how the results of the assessment are recorded, if they are recorded.

- Reporting process: how the results of the assessment are reported at a system level for accountability purposes, if they are reported.

The first five of these items provided a framework for detailed analysis of initial and ongoing assessment practice in the literacy service in all ETBs throughout the country. The sixth, system-level reporting, while not a principal focus of this study, is discussed briefly in the context of the recording of group results, and supported by a tailored item on one of the reporting forms shown in the Appendices.

4.2 Initial assessment

In all ETBs, initial assessment is considered a process that happens over a period of time, rather than a once-off event. The initial assessment process, as well as yielding important concrete information, is also the beginning of the person's learning journey and the opening of a dialogue and a relationship with the educators in the literacy service.

All consultation participants emphasised the need for sensitivity and discretion during the individual's first encounter with the literacy service. For some people, this may be the first time they have ever disclosed that they have a difficulty with literacy or numeracy. Many have had negative past experiences of the education system and of learning. Participants emphasised that the initial meeting must therefore be handled with great care, putting the prospective learner's needs and well-being at the centre of the process. Practitioners' awareness of these factors has a significant impact on how they approach the initial assessment process.

4.2.1 Content: what is assessed?

All ETBs report that at the first meeting, they try, where possible, to identify the learner's goals and also, probe the learner's general reading and

writing or numeracy skills, their strengths as well as difficulties and skills gaps. At this stage, the ALO or Resource Worker makes a preliminary judgement of the individual's level. This almost always refers to the levels specified by the National Qualifications Framework and more specifically, to the QQI reading and writing modules at Levels 1, 2 and 3 that are relevant to literacy and numeracy. Although it is customary to express an individual's ability in terms of a generic level, it is important to note that many people demonstrate different abilities in different sub-skills: for example, the same person may be strong on reading but need help with writing; or, within reading, may have no difficulty with continuous prose but struggle with timetables. It is therefore important for the initial assessment to capture at least the main elements of the 'spiky profile' that make up an individual's strengths and learning needs. In relation to numeracy, ETBs are mixed in the extent to which numeracy is addressed during the initial assessment stage. In a few cases, numeracy assessment is routinely carried out for all learners. However, in many ETBs, numeracy assessment is carried out at the initial phase only on request.

The initial assessment processes often probes other dimensions of learning which complement technical skills and learning goals. There was strong emphasis from all consultation participants on the significance of the learner's attitude towards literacy or numeracy, and toward learning in general. This broader dimension of learning is sometimes expressed as 'attitude' or 'confidence' and was identified as being a key factor in learning which has a strong influence on how well learner makes progress and achieves their goals. During the first meeting, practitioners take special note of this qualitative aspect of the learner's literacy and numeracy. Their judgement may inform their approach to the meeting and the extent of the demands they place on the learner at that time.

Although it is difficult to measure qualitative attributes of learning such as attitude and confidence, it is possible to describe them. There was a significant degree of consistency in the range of observable behaviours which supported practitioners' judgement on such dimensions. These included body language, eye contact, voice, posture, as well as the learner's use of language and their self-reporting of new experiences in literacy, numeracy and learning in general. It should be emphasised that 'confidence', in this context, does not refer to the individual's personality, but rather to an attitude towards learning and how the person relates to carrying out literacy or numeracy tasks. The term is essentially shorthand for a range of

dimensions of performance which, when combined in different ways and in different contexts, result in effective application of knowledge and skill. These comprise particular dimensions of 'competence' as explored in Section 2.2.2 above.

The range of content typically explored during the initial assessment stage therefore includes:

- Technical skills in reading and writing.

- Technical skills in numeracy.

- Learner's initial goals, if these are clear.

- Qualitative dimensions of literacy and numeracy, including attitude or confidence.

Each of these dimensions is revisited below, in the context of ongoing assessment.

4.2.2 General initial assessment strategy

The overall structure of the initial assessment process across all ETBs is broadly similar. Although some ETBs include additional procedures to address different purposes in all cases, literacy and numeracy assessment for newcomers who approach the literacy service is composed of two stages:

1. An informal, but structured meeting

During this interview, which can last for anything between twenty minutes and an hour, the ALO (or less frequently, a Resource Worker) engages in a purposeful and supportive dialogue with the individual. During this conversation the interviewer aims to put the person at ease, give reassurance, provide details of the service and how it works, elicit personal information and possibly, complete a registration form. They also invite the learner to discuss their reasons for coming to the literacy service at that time and what they hope to achieve. Some learners arrive with a clear goal in mind whereas others are uncertain and their learning goals emerge only after some weeks.

This conversation almost always includes an element of self-assessment, when the learner mentions the kind of reading and writing or numeracy tasks they currently perform with ease and their own perception of their difficulties and needs. Often, this self-assessment is supported by prompting from the ALO, either verbal or presented in the form of a checklist of items. This element of self-assessment involves the learner in the assessment process and also often reveals the person's attitude to learning and to their own relationship with literacy or numeracy.

However, it is important to note that practitioners do not rely solely on learners' self-assessment as a valid indicator of their abilities and level of skill. Research, and practitioners' experience, shows the unreliability of learners' own judgements. Self-assessment is therefore complemented by other methods that generate objectively verifiable evidence.

2. Performance task or tasks

In almost all cases, ALOs complement their own initial impressions – and the learner's self-assessment – using other methods. The learner is invited to carry out a task or tasks directly related to the area of literacy or numeracy which he or she intends to work on. This task component of initial assessment may be carried out during the first meeting but in some ETBs, this is carried over to a subsequent meeting. Thus, the initial assessment process could be spread over two or more interviews. In some cases, it might be completed only when the tutor has met and worked with the learner for a few sessions. That said, it is more usual for some form of reading, writing or numeracy task to be included in the first interview, than not. A small number of ALOs report that they prefer not to ask the learner to carry out any initial performance task at all and instead make their assessment on the basis of observation carried out over a period of time with the help of the tutor, once the person has begun their study.

The overall strategy for initial assessment, comprising an informal but structured meeting and performance of a task or tasks, is therefore common to almost all ETBs countrywide. The general content of the initial meeting also tends to cover the same ground and is conducted according to the same learner-centred ethos.

However, when it comes to the range and content of the performance tasks which learners are asked to carry out, and the resources used to support them, there is considerable variety from centre to centre. The methods and resources used are summarised in Section 4.2.4 below.

4.2.3 Purpose of initial assessment

As noted in Section 2 above, initial assessment can perform different functions:[57]

- *Alerting:* identifying the existence of a general learning need; also known as 'screening'.

- *Placing:* identifying the broad level at which a learner should be working.

- *Diagnostic:* identifying specific areas of strength, weakness, learning needs.

To some extent, the initial assessment processes described by the literacy practitioners touched on all three of these purposes, but the most frequently-recurring function at the initial assessment stage was the second. Given that people who approach the adult literacy service have already self-identified as wishing and needing to work on their reading, writing or numeracy, the 'alerting/screening' function, is less relevant. That said, sometimes the initial assessment process concludes that the needs of a particular individual cannot be met by the adult literacy service. This is an important issue with significant practical impact on ETBs and is discussed in Section Six below.

The most frequently-mentioned purpose for initial assessment was a variation on the 'placing' function. This aims to identify the best learning experience and environment for the individual learner. The ALO therefore needs to gather enough information to decide whether the learner will work best with an individual tutor or in a group and at what level, or whether they need some other form of tailored support.

Another important function of the initial assessment process is to determine, insofar as this is possible at this early stage, what the learner hopes to achieve in coming to the literacy service. Some people arrive with very specific learning or life goals. Often these are triggered by a change in personal circumstances or when the person decides to start studying or to look for work. For many learners, however, their motivation is unclear and may emerge later. Helping the learner to set goals and to identify the learning outcomes that will achieve those goals, is a significant aspect of the initial assessment process.

The main purpose of initial assessment is therefore, to place learners in an appropriate learning environment; sometimes, to provide more in-depth information about specific strengths and gaps (though this is usually followed up over time); to identify the learner's goals; and to incorporate all information into an individual or group learning plan.

4.2.4 Methods

Unlike the general initial assessment strategy, which is common across all ETBs, the methods used to generate initial assessment results vary greatly. Broadly, these methods may be grouped under five headings: observation of work over a period of time;

57   Scottish Executive (2004) "An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland," Edinburgh: Learning Connections Scotland pp 21 – 23. [updated 2014].

observation of performance on rich tasks; specific literacy and numeracy tasks; computerised tests; paper-based tests.

Observation: induction

In some centres, the ETB provides an Induction Programme for new learners which may be run with a whole group, or with individual learners. The content of an Induction Programme is generally quite broad and includes orientation into the centre and sometimes, an introduction to key features of the learning process. In this setting, learners carry out literacy or numeracy tasks which arise as a normal part of their introduction to the centre. The ALO or the tutor then observes how well they perform these tasks and examines any writing or calculations they carry out in the process.

Observation: rich tasks

In some ETBs, learners are asked to carry out one or more complex tasks. These are usually based around authentic materials and relate to the person's learning goals. The ALO or tutor observes the learner carrying out the task and assesses the outcome. This process is usually supported by an observation checklist which is sometimes an adapted version of the ITABE checklist, or else is developed at local level by the individual ETBs. These checklists may also provide a structure for the initial interview and act as a recording tool for noting down the results.

A number of ETBs have developed a bank of materials to support the implementation of performance tasks on different topics, at different QQI levels. ALOs can then choose from these, based on their early assessment of what kind of task the learner will be able to handle. This facilitates an individualised approach to the choice of task, without excessively burdening the ALO with materials development.

Specific tasks

The learner is asked to carry out one or more individual reading, writing or numeracy task. This may involve completing a form or a worksheet, filling in part of the centre registration form, reading from authentic or externally developed materials including resources from NALA; reading aloud, from authentic materials or from the Dolch list; and writing from dictation.

Paper-based tests

The learner carries out formally-presented reading, writing or numeracy tests. Sometimes these are extracts from commercially-produced materials, or sourced from educational agencies. Others are based on worksheets or booklets developed in the centre or shared with other centres. Commercially-available tests in current use in some ETBs include: the NEAL Analysis, the Schonell tests, the Marino reading test, the Basic Skills Agency Reading and Numeracy initial assessment tests, the Salford Spelling test and others. Several ETBs have developed their own tests tailored to specific programmes, including apprenticeships, and include them in customised learner booklets.

Computerised tests

The suit of initial and diagnostic computerised tests produced by the UK not-for-profit agency BKSB is currently in use or being piloted in small number of ETB literacy services. This comprises a series of tests covering a range of areas, including reading and numeracy. The basic literacy/numeracy suite comprises: a screening test of five questions; initial assessment tests of up to half an hour, which adjust according to success in answers; diagnostic tests, which identify specific areas of strength and weakness and produce an Individual Learner Plan based on needs. Writing is not included in the computerised element of the test: rather, this is done on paper and marked by the tutor. BKSB also provide a bank of tasks and materials, both computer-based and paper-based, which learners can use either in class or independently, to work on the areas identified as needing attention.

BKSB provide training and support to all staff administering the test and encourage them to observe learners as they carry out the assessment. ETB staff using the tests emphasise that they complement, rather than replace the dialogue with the learner.

4.2.5 Commentary on methods

Notwithstanding the common approach to the overall shape of the initial assessment process and to the initial interview, the above summary illustrates great variety in how the task component of the initial assessment process is carried out in ETBs around the country. The variety of methods and materials ranges from rich, contextualised tasks to decontextualized tests of letters, blends or numerical calculation.

For the most part, with a few exceptions, the task component of initial assessment probes mainly the learner's technical knowledge and skill in literacy and numeracy. Some respondents point out that it may be difficult to judge the broader aspects of literacy and numeracy, such as attitude, independence and others at the initial assessment stage and that these qualitative dimensions might be more easily assessed on an ongoing basis, once the person has started their programme.

One significant feature of almost all of the initial assessment processes described here, is that they are aligned to the NFQ and use Levels 1, 2 and 3 of relevant QQI modules as a framework to define initial levels of knowledge and skill. These levels provide a starting point, a baseline from which the learner's progress may be tracked later. In cases where tools and resources are sourced from outside this country, ETB practitioners have made special efforts to align identified levels with the Irish NFQ framework. For example, some ETBs have developed comparative grids to show the relationship between the Basic Skills Agency initial assessment tests and the Irish NFQ framework. In addition, BKSB, the UK company responsible for the computerised tests described earlier, have created a special framework which identifies their levels in terms of the Irish NFQ. When literacy and numeracy practitioners refer to banks of resources at specific levels, those are almost always related to the QQI specifications.

However, there are a few exceptions to this. Reading and spelling tests generate Reading and Spelling Ages that do not relate to NFQ levels. The Marino test produces a detailed profile of the individual's strengths and weakness in phonic awareness; and reading from the Dolch list gives specific information about the person's basic sight vocabulary.

In the context of initial literacy or numeracy assessment for adults, it should be noted that some of the tools just mentioned are designed for children and are widely administered in schools. Their use in an adult education setting needs to be questioned. Furthermore, some of these tools and resources were developed many years ago, in some cases by agencies which are now defunct.

All this suggests that some of the methods and materials used to generate results in different ETBs could be updated; and that generally, the range of methods and resources could benefit from adhering to a set of quality criteria that describes the main features of fit-for-purpose resources.

4.3 Recording methods and tools

Not surprisingly, the range of methods and tools used to record the information generated during the initial assessment depends to a large extent on how that process was carried out. The range of tools currently used in ETBs is summarised below.

4.3.1 Summary of recording tools

The following list summarises the variety of recording methods and tools used in different ETBs which provide the initial record of the learner's engagement with the service. Most ETBs use a combination of these:

Templates designed by the centre, individual record

These forms allow the assessor, usually the ALO, to note the outcomes of the initial interview and, where appropriate, how the learner managed the tasks carried out during the same phase. Some of these are grid-type tables consistent with the content headings used to structure the initial interview, where the assessor enters a numerical value that represents the learner's ability on specific topics or tasks. Others provide topic headings and space for open answers that describe the outcome of the process. Some centres include the same type of information on the same form, whereas others use two or more different forms to capture the data.

Templates designed by the centre, group record

These are similar in format to those described above, but summarise the information for a whole group.

ITABE checklists, or adapted version

Several ETBs use a version of the ITABE checklist, both as a guide to conducting the initial assessment interview, and as a framework to record the learner's starting level in relation to the NFQ/QQI specifications. These checklists cover specific elements of literacy, oracy, numeracy and ICT. Assessors choose which of these sections to complete, depending on the area on which the learner is working. Each specific element can be entered on a three-point scale. Within this scale, the individual's stage or degree of competence can be captured.

Individual Learner Plan (ILP)

Only a few ETBs use a formal Individual Learner Plan. There are several versions of this document in use, both paper and computerised and although they contain similar information, the format varies from place to place. Content recorded includes learner's personal details such as their learning and life goals, specific skills, strengths and the areas they need to work on in order to meet their goals. This information supports a formal learning programme tailored to the individual's needs and describes the knowledge and skills they will work on, the resources they will use and a time scale within which the plan should be achieved.

Overall, the Individual Learner Plan is less widely used across the ETBs in the country than the other recording tools described here. However, many of the other recording instruments, although not formally designated as an ILP, perform a similar function using alternative formats.

Computer-generated record: profile and/or learning plan

When the initial assessment has been carried out by means of a computerised assessment, the result can be printed off, either as a grade or mark, or as a profile of specific strengths and weaknesses. The BKSB computerised diagnostic assessment also produces an individualised ILP, based on the learner's answers on the test, which identifies the content which the learner needs to work on. This profile also contains links to relevant activities which can be used in class or by the learner independently.

Registration form

All ETBs record learners' individual personal details using a Registration Form which learners complete when they enrol with the ETB. The content included is similar across all ETBs but the format differs somewhat between ETBs and even sometimes between centres within the same ETB. New versions of the Registration Form use some of the headings contained in data management systems in current use, such as Sales Pulse. Increasingly, since the introduction of PLSS, the new SOLAS data management system, registration forms are being developed in some ETBs which follow the same format or an abridged version.

Qualitative notes

In a few centres, ALOs make general, qualitative notes on the information obtained from the initial assessment process. These pages of free writing follow no specific format and are included in, or attached to, the individual's file.

Learner journal/log book

Many ETBs provide learners with a diary, usually referred to as a 'journal' or 'learning log', where learners' goals, class content covered and reflections on learning experiences can be recorded. Although the format varies from place to place, there is a common structure: this includes blank diary pages and sections for summarising learning goals and later, outcomes. In some ETBs, the learning log book is used only with one-to-one learners whereas others use it for learners in the whole service. This document provides a space where the learner's individual achievements, both those which relate to their life goals and unexpected outcomes, can be described.

Customised books or booklets

A small number of ETBs have developed print resources designed to support an entire programme of work. This manual is the property of the learner and contains all of the content to be covered, along with support exercises which the learner fills in. It therefore provides a complete record of the learner's work and by extension, an exact record of their progress on the specific tasks and topics covered in the programme.

4.3.2 Commentary, recording methods and tools

The above summary shows that there is great variety in the range of recording tools used in ETBs to document the results of initial assessment. Overall, these forms and templates provide a structure for information that can be used to plan and monitor the individual's subsequent learning experience. Usually, these documents are kept in an individual and/or class file and handed over to the tutor, who then documents the learner's progress is relation to their base-line knowledge and skills.

In some ETBs, the recording system is streamlined and uniform across all centres in the adult literacy service. In others, different centres use similar, but not identical tools to record assessment results. Almost all ETBs use two or more of the above-mentioned tools at different stages and for different purposes.

National Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres should support ETBs in streamlining administration in the recording of assessment results. It will also be important to ensure that recording tools used for the initial stages of assessment connect with those used to track learners' progress later on.

4.4 Ongoing assessment

4.4.1 Purpose of ongoing assessment

The choice of assessment method and tools is influenced, not only by the content of what is being assessed, but by the goal which it is designed to accomplish. Ongoing assessment of literacy and numeracy may be carried out in order to:

- Provide evidence for accreditation.

- Track the learner's progress in performing specific skills or tasks.

- Track the learner's progress in working towards their life goals.

- Provide information that supports the teaching and learning process.

- Discover if the learner can carry out skills and tasks in real-life situations.

In this context, it may be useful to refer once again to the distinction between assessment *of* learning, which sets out to identify the outcomes of a teaching and learning process; and assessment *for* learning, which is an integral part of the process and is designed to provide information which systematically supports the teaching and learning process.[58]

Consultation feedback from ALOs and tutors confirms that ongoing assessment may be carried out for a range of purposes; and that these purposes are not mutually exclusive. For example, the content probed using assessment methods designed to provide evidence for accreditation sometimes coincides with more personal literacy or numeracy goals not directly related to qualifications. Conversely, practitioners also indicate that additional and complementary processes are sometimes needed to assess qualitative dimensions of literacy and numeracy. Portfolio preparation, which is the QQI assessment strategy for Levels 1, 2 and 3 in literacy and numeracy related modules, may not adequately probe the learner's progress in the broader elements of competence involved in successful skills application in the world outside the centre. (See Section 2.2.2 above)

Once the purpose, or purposes, of the ongoing assessment process has been established, the content, method and recording system can be decided.

4.4.2 Content: what is assessed?

As noted in relation to initial assessment, the question 'what is assessed?' is less straightforward than it first seems. Consultation with literacy and numeracy practitioners revealed that several interrelated aspects of literacy and numeracy work are assessed on an ongoing basis, although certain aspects of these are highlighted at different stages. Ongoing assessment of learners' progress needs to be underpinned by a clear vision of how progress is conceptualised, and needs to relate to agreed benchmarks of success.

Technical skills and knowledge

The main focus of systematic, ongoing assessment in adult literacy centres is progress in achieving specific knowledge and skills. Recording templates examined indicate a significant degree of consistency in which specific elements of literacy and numeracy are monitored. These correspond broadly to the literacy and numeracy learning outcomes of related QQI modules at Levels 1, 2 and 3. ITABE checklists and other frameworks in use include even more detailed tasks and activities as benchmarks of progress. Increasingly, these incorporate aspects of ICT and digital literacy.

Application of skills and knowledge (i.e. 'competence,' including broader dimensions)

Some ETBs have developed systems and support tools that consciously foreground qualitative aspects of effective skills application which may be summed up by the term 'competence' discussed earlier. These dimensions may include: the ability to use the skill and knowledge in different situations, especially in real-life contexts outside the learning situation; independent performance of the skill as it is needed; performing skill under pressure or in a public situation; and others. As discussed earlier, the concept of 'competence' has been defined in one European context as[59] "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context."

The learner's goals

Where possible, the initial assessment process in all ETBs identifies the learner's goals. However, as noted earlier, some people do not have clear aspirations until they have been working on literacy or numeracy for some time. Furthermore, people's goals may change and develop as their skills improve. The extent to which learners achieved their goals is more often included in programme evaluations than as part of individual assessments of progress.

58   http://www.weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf

59   http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:c11090

Distance travelled

Some ETBs monitor the progress learners make in relation to their starting level of knowledge and skill. Clearly, this may overlap with other definitions of progress, in particular knowledge and skills specified in QQI modules. However, learners who do not reach specific outcomes or achieve particular tasks may nevertheless make progress towards those goals in relation to their starting point. In order to monitor smaller stages of progress than those expressed in NFQ /QQI levels, some ETBs have developed tracking forms which define more finely-grained stages of progress.

Transformative life changes

Some people come to the literacy service to accomplish very specific goals. These may be major undertakings, such as finding a job or starting a new education or training programme. Other goals may appear to be small-scale but can have a significant impact on the person's life, such as handling day-to-day tasks or participating in their community. Some of the small-scale goals mentioned included being able to: check change and negotiate correction when there is a mistake; check an electricity bill; fill in own name on a raffle ticket in a social situation; make a speech at an awards ceremony; engage more fully with family members; participate in local sporting or community activities.

Once again, monitoring the learner's progress towards achieving such goals also involves checking their progress on the skills, knowledge and the broader dimensions of application needed to accomplish these tasks. Inclusion of transformative life changes as a benchmark of progress provides an additional dimension to the process of ongoing assessment, and to the recording of the results.

4.4.3 Process: how is ongoing assessment carried out?

Tutors and ALOs report a very wide variety of methods used to track learners' progress on the dimensions listed above. Some informal methods are carried out on a day-to-day basis as part of the natural dialogue and feedback in the teaching and learning situation. Others are more systematic, ranging from observation of tasks which the learner is carrying out as a natural part of their literacy or numeracy work, to highly structured tests. The choice of methods depends on which of the content dimensions listed above is the main focus. They include the following:

Question/answer

Dialogue between the learner and the tutor, and the provision of ongoing, constructive feedback is woven into the fabric of the teaching and learning process.

Observation, general and specific

Tutors gauge learners' progress by observing how well they carry out the activities agreed as part of their work towards achieving their learning goals. This can provide information about improvements or obstacles in the learner's skill, but also on broader dimensions of learning.

Entries in learning journal

Learners make their own notes on what they have covered in sessions, how they are progressing and their general reflections on learning.

Completion of worksheets or manuals

Learners complete supplied tasks practising specific aspects of literacy or numeracy knowledge and skills.

Completion of QQI portfolio tasks

Tasks required for QQI portfolio work often coincide with the literacy or numeracy goals which learners want to address. Successful completion of these tasks by learners working towards accreditation, usually produced on an ongoing basis, is a useful indicator of their ability to perform certain skills under controlled conditions.

Completion of rich, specially-designed tasks

Tutors and learners create activities related to the skills or goals which the learner is working on. These usually combine several different skills and are often built around real-life goals such as drawing up a budget, planning a holiday or cooking a meal. Tutors observe learner's performance, discuss the areas of strength and weakness with the learner and note how well the tasks are carried out.

Tests

Paper-based tests, usually built around the knowledge and skills dimensions of literacy and numeracy, administered at different times in the learning journey, provide a mark or a profile which describes learners' progress.

Computer-based diagnostic tests

Learners answer an extensive set of computer-based items, often multiple choice, which can generate a level, a mark and also, a detailed profile of the learner's progress in specific knowledge and skills related especially to reading and numeracy tasks.

Rich homework tasks

Tutors and learners together agree on real-life tasks which learners perform outside the teaching and learning situation and in an authentic context. The goal is usually to extend the assessment of particular knowledge, skills and the broader dimensions of performance, beyond the work the learner is able to carry out in the centre. Examples include: examining supermarket 'bargains' on offer and making judgements on supplied questions; completing forms in public situations.

4.4.4   Recording methods and tools

Recording tools include forms and templates that document learners' progress and achievement in diverse ways, sometimes in several ways within the same service, for different purposes:

- ITABE framework.

- Other locally developed checklists.

- Individual Learner Plan.

- Learner Log Books.

- Progress Templates, locally developed.

- Computerised reporting systems.

- Database or form related to database structure e.g. Sales Pulse, FAR, PLSS.

- Other commercial products e.g. BSA materials.

Connecting the results of initial and ongoing assessment

Comparison of the recording instruments described in 4.3.1 above and those just listed reveals considerable overlap in the methods and tools used to support monitoring of ongoing progress, and those used for recording learners' base line skills at the initial assessment stage. This is to be expected, as it is necessary to connect the recording of at least some of the results generated at both stages of assessment: for example, a learning goal identified at the initial assessment stage should be included in monitoring and recording of the learner's progress towards

that goal later on. Some ETBs have developed recording tools which create explicit links between the base line and learning goals identified at the start, and learners' progress towards identified goals at later stages. In others, these connections are less explicit.

National Guidelines should support ETBs in recording explicit connections between initial and ongoing assessment. This includes expressing at least some initial goals in terms that allow progress to be tracked and recorded systematically, over time. It is important not to exclude the emergence of unplanned outcomes of learning, which also need to be recorded. However, all the relevant dimensions of literacy and numeracy covered in the teaching and learning programme need to be adequately supported by a robust, transparent and user-friendly set of recording tools.

Aligning assessment results with the NFQ/QQI Levels 1, 2, 3

As things stand, many, though not all of the recording tools in current use align the learner's progress with the QQI literacy and numeracy-related modules at levels 1, 2 and 3. Other records of progress are more general and qualitative. Notes made in the learner log books or in the open question sections of ILPs and other templates, for example, need not be specifically related to any framework of levels. Furthermore, some aspects of progress, such as the achievement of unplanned outcomes, do not fit neatly into a level framework. In such cases, general notes may be the only effective way to record a significant milestone in the learner's progress.

However, consultation feedback indicates that practitioners often have difficulty expressing learners' progress in relation to the NFQ/QQI level framework, as many learners make progress in small stages and over a lengthy period of time. If progression from Level 1 to Level 2 takes a year or more, a six-month review would suggest that the learner has made no progress at all. Consultation feedback indicates that although the use of QQI levels as a broad framework is very widely used and supported, all respondents noted the need for more finely-tuned indicators of progress *within* levels; and that this was needed to support literacy and numeracy assessment for learners following both accredited and non-accredited programmes.

To overcome this problem, some ETBs have created level frameworks that sit within the national structure, but which allow for the tracking of smaller chunks of progress than those currently defined by the QQI/NFQ levels.

Assessing and recording progress on broader dimension of learning (competence)

Consultation participants strongly agreed that learners' progress on the broader dimensions of literacy and numeracy which contribute to effective, real-life application, should be assessed. However, views on how far the results should be recorded, and for what purpose, were mixed. A few ETBs have already developed mechanisms to monitor and record these aspects of competence in detail. Some of these are qualitative, consisting of spaces for open entries on forms that allow for notes on learner's specific achievements. In addition, there are two examples of templates where learners' progress on independence, confidence etc. are recorded using numerical coding systems.

There was general agreement that recording learners' progress and achievements on these broader dimensions is useful for supporting teaching and learning and that it is helpful to have well-structured recording tools that support this process. However, there were mixed views on the wisdom of recording this information for system-level evaluation. Some respondents were keen to see these qualitative dimensions included, not only on local recording tools but on national data collection instruments, to highlight their importance and to raise their status as valuable measures of progress deserving recognition. Other participants were concerned that recording learners' progress on these broader dimensions for system-level reporting would increase bureaucracy and that this in turn could have a negative impact on teaching and learning as well as intruding on learners' privacy.

It is likely that the need to revisit the definitions of progress and achievement in current data collection systems will emerge in the near future. This will provide an opportunity to tease out the practical demands and various implications and potential consequences of different approaches to system-level reporting of broader dimensions of competence. For the moment, it is proposed to resolve the tension between these competing interpretations by supporting the recording of these dimensions in ETBs and individual centres to support teaching and learning, and review the issues surrounding national, system-level reporting in the light of future research.

Section Five:
Guidelines for assessment in adult literacy centres

The process of research and consultation described above provided data on the range of assessment methods and support tools required to implement literacy and numeracy assessment in ETB adult literacy centres. This section synthesises findings from the analysis of policy, concepts, international best practice and consultation contained above, to produce an overview of the main features required of a fit-for-purpose assessment strategy. It also contains a summary of the national Guidelines contained in the handbook of National Guidelines for literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres.

5.1 Purpose of assessment strategy, initial and ongoing

These Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres are designed to support the following purposes:

General aim
The overall, long-term purpose of literacy and numeracy assessment in the adult literacy service is formative: to enhance the teaching and learning process so that learners can achieve their life goals, needs and aspirations. These may include accreditation, employment, progression to further study and other personal life goals.

Initial assessment
The purpose of initial assessment is placing: that is, to determine the learner's starting level and specific strengths and weakness, in order to draw up an Individual Learner Plan and to identify the optimum learning environment where they can work on it.

Ongoing assessment
The purpose of ongoing assessment is formative: to support teaching and learning by tracking the learner's progress on priority areas of literacy or numeracy.

5.2 Overview of features of fit-for purpose assessment systems

The review of European and Irish policy contained in Section Two above includes findings from research in several inter-related fields including education, training, employment and the economy. The conclusions are therefore relevant to educational practice in many contexts, including compulsory education and the community and adult education and training sectors. Sources include the research supporting the European Commission's Skills Guarantee[60] and later, the Council Resolution on Upskilling Pathways; the research into international practice; and stakeholder consultation, many of which recommend similar approaches to implementation of literacy and numeracy assessment. Many of these features listed under 5.2.1 below have been incorporated into the Guidelines described in the companion document and are summarised in 5.3 below.

5.2.1 Features of fit-for-purpose systems
The following list outlines some of the key elements of the Guidelines which draw on the analysis of the policy context in Europe and Ireland and the review of international practice.

1. Systematic initial assessment is an essential first step in promoting and developing basic skills.

2. The development of an Individual Learner Plan is necessary to support planning and monitoring of progress.

3. Self-assessment alone is an insufficient basis for developing a learning plan and should be confirmed by data gathered using other methods.

---

60   ANNEX I Tackling low skills: The Skills Guarantee Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions A NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness (COM (2016) 381 final).

4. Tutor observation is an important method of assessment for identification of specific difficulties.

5. Formative assessment, used to monitor progress and support teaching and learning, is a significant purpose for assessment.

6. One of the key purposes of ongoing assessment is to provide motivation and support for teaching and learning.

7. The strategies and approaches recommended by the "Assessment for Learning" movement can usefully be adapted to support adult learning.

8. Broader dimensions of learning, and not only straightforward attainment, must be assessed. This involves probing qualitative dimensions of competence.

9. It is necessary to use adult appropriate methods and materials.

10. Assessment methods must assess writing, as well as reading.

11. Assessment methods should be reviewed and if necessary, updated every two years.

12. Assessment must reference an external framework, e.g. QQI learning outcomes, which define criteria, support assessment and provide signposts for monitoring progress.

13. Tutors can develop their own approaches to assessment by developing local materials.

14. Support in the form of Guidelines, resources and templates is needed.

15. Training and development is needed to support reflective practice in assessment.

5.3 National assessment guidelines: Guiding Principles, Conditions, Criteria

The national assessment guidelines comprise:

- Six Guiding Principles which define the ethos underpinning literacy and numeracy assessment.

- Seven Conditions which establish a balance between consistency and flexibility in how assessment processes are implemented nationwide.

- Ten Quality Criteria or essential standards for all methods and materials.

5.3.1 Guiding Principles

All assessment procedures and support materials are based on established principles of adult education and good practice in literacy work with adults. Assessment is:[61]

- Learner centred: based on the individual's knowledge, skills, goals and aspirations; any dimension of literacy or numeracy the person needs in order to achieve their goal is assessed.

- Voluntary: puts learner's informed choice at the centre of all stages of assessment.

- Confidential: information is stored securely and learner's personal data, including information on progress and achievements, may only be distributed to professional colleagues on a need-to-know basis.

- Constructive: supports the learner in developing an awareness of their potential.

- Accurate: generates verifiable evidence of progress and achievements.

- Purposeful: leads to action that support learners' progress.

5.3.2 Seven Conditions

The seven conditions listed below describe:

- A *standard, national approach* to the methodology used to assess literacy and numeracy in adult literacy centres (Conditions 1–5).

- *Flexibility* in key areas of implementation (Conditions 6–7).

Standard national policy and procedures

1. Initial and ongoing assessment of adult literacy and numeracy is carried out using the *performance task* method of assessment.[62]

2. All assessment performance tasks are aligned to Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the National Framework of Qualifications and to the relevant QQI modules at those levels.

---

61 Draws on NALA (2012) "Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work," Dublin: NALA pp 23, 24
62 The learner demonstrates ability by engaging in complex tasks that probe their technical abilities, skills and competence in broader dimensions of learning. Performance is assessed and recorded according to specified criteria or outcomes.

3. All assessment performance tasks, materials and support resources comply with the ten Quality Criteria listed below.

4. The general structure of the initial assessment process is common to all ETBs.

5. All ETBs record assessment results for initial and ongoing assessment, and to plan learning programmes, using three standard forms. (See Appendices).

Flexible areas of implementation

6. The specific assessment performance tasks, materials and support resources used at local level are selected locally, in individual adult literacy centres, and coordinated by each ETB.

7. Arrangements for the timing and organisation of assessments are coordinated by each ETB and selected by individual adult literacy centres.

5.3.3 Ten Quality criteria for assessment methods, activities and resources

1. All methods and materials used in assessments are designed for use with adults.

2. The assessment process generates results presented in an adult-appropriate format: profile, mark, level or grade, but not reading or spelling ages.

3. Materials are aligned to literacy and numeracy Levels 1, 2, 3 on the NFQ/QQI framework. For more complex activities, sub-skills and specific dimensions may be at different levels.

4. Resources are selected to be consistent with the learner's goals and specific learning objectives.

5. Resources are organised and stored in a format that is accessible across the whole ETB. This could be a ring-binder, where resources are grouped according to knowledge/skill and QQI level; and/or an online platform which facilitates sharing of materials.

6. Where possible, resources make use of authentic tasks, situations and materials.

7. Recording of assessment results refers to specific learning goals which allow for ease of monitoring progress over time.

8. Recording of assessment results refers to technical knowledge and skill *and also*, to the relevant broader dimensions of application and competence.

9. Recording of assessment results references objective evidence of learner's progress and achievement.

10. Methods and materials are reviewed and updated regularly, at least every two years.

5.4 General strategy, initial and ongoing assessment

5.4.1 Initial assessment

Initial Assessment is carried out using two complementary strategies:

- Individual interview: one-to-one meeting with the learner.

- Task completion: learner completes literacy and/or numeracy tasks.

The individual interview is carried out according to Guidelines set out in the Toolkit[63], Item 3. These are supported by the Interview Prompt Sheet in the Toolkit, Item 4.

5.4.2 Ongoing Assessment

Learners' ongoing progress is monitored by

- Observation of learner's work on an ongoing basis.

- Observation and marking learners' performance on performance tasks.

5.5 Recording Tools

In order to ensure a standard approach to placing and progress tracking countrywide, all ETBs use the following three recording tools:

- Individual Learner Plan.

- Individual Learner Progress Tracking Form.

- Group Progress Form.

5.5.1 Individual Learner Plan

An Individual Learner Plan is opened for every learner in the adult literacy service. The ILP

---

63   SOLAS/ETBI (2018 b)"Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy in FET: Toolkit," Dublin: SOLAS.

- Is a working document designed to support teaching and learning.

- Records only information that directly relates to the individual's learning.

- Contains no administrative data, apart from basic contact details for the learner.

- Sets out the person's long-term and short-term goals, as negotiated.

- Describes the person's starting level, strengths and learning needs in relevant areas.

- Includes a draft plan of work negotiated with the learner, aligned with QQI levels.

- Includes technical knowledge and skill and also, broader dimensions of learning.

- May be revisited and updated as the learner's goals and needs change over time.

The ILP is the property of the individual learner. It is filled in by the tutor with, or on behalf of the learner and is stored securely in the adult literacy centre. The information recorded in the ILP may be shared with other literacy practitioners on a need-to-know basis, and otherwise, only with the learner's consent.

5.5.2 Individual Learner Progress Tracking Form

The Individual Progress Tracking Form allows learners and tutors together to monitor the learner's progress over time. It connects directly to the goals set out in the Individual Learner Plan and includes:

- Initial goals expressed as learning outcomes, aligned to QQI levels.

- Three review sections to track progress on goals over time.

- Progress expressed as achievement in technical knowledge and skills.

- Progress expressed as improvement in broader dimensions of learning.

- A final summary of the learner's progress and achievement.

Like the ILP, the Individual Progress Tracking Form is a personal document designed to support teaching and learning, and belongs to the individual learner. Its contents may be shared with other literacy practitioners on a need-to-know basis, and otherwise, only with the learner's consent.

5.5.3 Group Progress Tracking Form.

The Group Progress Tracking Form summarises the progress and achievements of a group of learners or a cohort of one-to-one learners. It shows progress in terms of:

- Individual learners' achievements, shown as names or initials.

- Achievement of learning goals and outcomes.

- Improvements on broader dimensions of learning.

- Movement in performance from one QQI level to a higher level.

- A final group summary of progress in numerical format.

The Group Progress Tracking Form is the property of the adult literacy centre. Its purpose is to support tutors and managers in monitoring the outcomes of the service. As it contains information about several people, it is not available for inspection by any individual learner. The contents may be shared amongst managers and staff on a need-to-know basis within the individual centre.

Data in the final section, which summarises progress in statistical terms without identifying individuals, may be shared, as required, for reporting purposes.

5.6 Support for assessment processes

The assessment processes outlined above describe an in-depth approach to gathering and analysing information about learners' literacy and numeracy abilities. It is therefore essential that they are carried out by staff who are equipped to interpret the results. Practitioners are supported by a Toolkit[64] which accompanies the Guidelines Handbook. This provides a range of support tools including information summaries on relevant, assessment-related topics, sample performance tasks, and optional recording tools to support initial and on-going assessment.

---

64   SOLAS/ETBI (March 2018, b), op.cit.

The Toolkit is presented, not as a set of definitive assessment materials to be used by all practitioners but rather, as sample activities which can provide a model for tutors and managers to develop their own resources at local level. Many of the items contained in the Toolkit are versions of activities and tools supplied by ETB practitioners during the consultation phase of the research.

Ideally, the Toolkit should be available in both print and digital format, the electronic version forming part of a National Resource Bank, accessible through a digital platform. The Implementation Plan in Section Six below outlines a method by which this measure could be advanced.

Toolkit Contents

The toolkit contents include the following resources:

- Initial assessment checklist and interview script.

- NFQ/QQI framework summary, comprising learning outcomes for Levels 1, 2 and 3 of literacy- and numeracy-related modules.

- Goal-setting activities, one tailored for the learner and one for the tutor.

- Recording instruments (forms, templates) to support ongoing assessment, optional resources to complement the three common recording tools used by all ETBs.

- Background and overview of the process of developing learning outcomes.

- Background and overview of the process of developing progress scales.

- An introduction to the concept and process of scaffolding.

- An introduction to the concept and practice of Assessment for Learning.

- Performance task samples for Levels 1, 2, 3 for literacy and numeracy.

These Guidelines and supports were designed to include the ideal features of a fit-for-purpose assessment system in the service provided in ETBs throughout the country.

5.7 Additional supports required

The research process identified other features necessary for an assessment system which are not yet fully met by the new set of Guidelines

described in this report, and the accompanying Toolkit. Development of these elements will require advances in work which is the remit of other agencies, or further research by SOLAS and ETBI into assessment-related topics which were not covered during this project.

5.7.1 National framework of levels

One of the key elements common to all the systems examined was the alignment of initial assessment and monitoring of progress to an external framework of levels. Consultation with ETB practitioners confirmed that their work within the Irish system adopts a similar approach. The external framework used is the National Framework of Qualifications at Levels 1, 2 and 3 and specifically, the learning outcomes for QQI modules related to Reading, Writing, Communication, Information Technology and Numeracy/Mathematics at levels 1, 2 and 3.

Practitioner feedback further indicates that the current literacy and numeracy levels, as defined by the QQI modules just mentioned, while serving the accreditation purpose for which they were designed, in their current form do not adequately support initial and ongoing literacy or numeracy assessment. Difficulties mentioned elsewhere in this report may be summarised as follows:

- Distance between the levels is too great to provide signposts useful for identifying initial abilities that fall between levels; or for ongoing monitoring of progress in small steps.

- Learning outcomes do not always follow through systematically from lower levels to higher levels.

- Learning outcomes generally do not capture broader dimensions of learning.

It is likely that the QQI review of these modules at Levels 1, 2 and 3 which is currently in progress will resolve some or all of these issues in the long term. In the meantime, however, there is significant uncertainty amongst practitioners in the adult literacy sector concerning the focus, format and content of the revised modules and levels. Practitioners are not sure to what extent and in what ways the forthcoming revisions will impact on their work with learners.

It is worth noting that one of the conditions identified as being necessary for a fit-for-purpose strategy for initial and ongoing assessment, is the

support of an external framework of levels. For this reason, completion of the QQI review on the level 1, 2 and 3 modules that are relevant to literacy and numeracy is an urgent priority.

5.7.2 Locally-designed frameworks of levels

Practitioners in some ETBs have already created local solutions to these difficulties with the current national literacy and numeracy frameworks. In some cases, this involves developing more finely-grained benchmarks of achievements which sit within the existing QQI/NFQ framework, at local level, for use within individual ETBs. Examples of similar measures by practitioners were found in the international review of systems in other countries.

One of the resource items contained in the Toolkit is a step-by-step approach to developing Progress Frameworks at local level, supported by a method for writing learning outcomes. These resources can facilitate initial assessment and ongoing monitoring of progress in smaller chunks of learning than those allowed for by the current system of national levels. The Implementation Plan in Section Six below proposes an action research project to facilitate practitioners in developing their own tools in this area.

However, it is important to note that in the interests of harmonising a national approach to assessment, such locally-designed frameworks of levels can only complement, not replace, the national framework.

5.7.3 Responding to learners with complex needs

ETB literacy and numeracy practitioners report that they sometimes receive referrals of people with complex or profound needs which are beyond the scope of the adult literacy service. These include individuals whose behaviour, for a range of reasons, indicates either that they are not 'learning ready'; or that their needs are so profound that the literacy service cannot meet them, for example, a learner who has an intellectual disability. This is not a clear-cut question, as 'intellectual disability' covers a wide spectrum and the literacy service already provides support for many learners whose needs are complex and profound. Some ETBs specify that the learner must be accompanied by a staff member from the referring organisation; in others, learners must be able to attend independently.

At the present time, there is great uncertainty amongst ETB literacy service managers about how to address this situation. Clear guidelines which offer supportive and flexible strategies to support learners with a wide variety of needs in different situations are required. The revised guidelines for the inclusion of adults with intellectual disabilities in literacy schemes (due for publication in 2018) will seek to address this uncertainty.

5.7.4 Literacy and numeracy assessment in the wider FET system

Although the consultation phase of this research was confined to ETB adult literacy and numeracy practitioners, there was significant commentary from practitioners concerning the need for assessment of basic skills amongst students and applicants to programmes in the wider FET system. Managers in the literacy service report that some students following higher level FET provision find it difficult to handle the literacy and numeracy content of their particular programme. A student enrolled on Childcare, for example, will eventually need to be able to fill out incident report forms, read all Health and Safety materials, possibly communicate complex events in writing to parents. Similarly, a carpenter will need to make accurate measurements and calculations. ETB learners who struggle with these and other basic skills that are part-and-parcel of their programme are sometimes referred to the literacy service when their difficulties start to interfere with their progress.

In some ETBs, the adult literacy service has devised a system of initial assessment specially designed to identify applicants to the wider FET system who may have difficulty with literacy or numeracy of their programme. Strategies already devised to address this issue include:

- A group application day, where applicants to all FET programmes are brought together and, in the context of registration and information-giving, administered an initial screening test.

- A formal induction programme for all FET applicants which includes literacy and numeracy performance tasks.

- A regular monthly meeting where all applications for programmes across the ETB are examined by the team of programme coordinators and the literacy service representative.

- Individualised literacy and numeracy assessments designed for specific programmes, e.g. apprenticeships.

It is clear that the adult literacy service in many ETBs is already taking steps to address literacy and numeracy screening of learners in the wider FET system. However, there are at present no systematic procedures countrywide or guidelines as to how this should operate. Research to determine current practice and provide the basis for development of a set of procedures and supports suitable for entrants to BTEI, VTOS, Apprenticeships and other FET programmes is underway and should provide a useful starting point to address this issue.

5.7.5 Literacy and numeracy audit of all FET programmes

In order to implement a FET-wide assessment strategy, it will be necessary to clarify the literacy and numeracy content of all FET programmes, including the precise content of QQI modules, apprenticeships and others, at all levels available in FET. Research is therefore needed to identify the exact range of literacy and numeracy skills and tasks involved in successful completion of the programme and the job, and at what level these sit on the NFQ. Modules at Levels 4 and above may include literacy or numeracy content which, though often at a lower level, still presents difficulties for learners who have particular gaps. A published manual cross-referencing the literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills is an essential support in the initial phase of identifying people whose skills may not yet meet the demands of the particular learning experience they are engaged in. This will make it possible to put in place tailored supports to maximise the learner's chance of success. A published audit of the literacy and numeracy content of all FET programmes, regularly updated and in the public domain, would also provide an important support to many other initiatives.

5.7.6 Literacy and numeracy assessments by external agencies

The ETB literacy service regularly engages with individuals who have been referred by other agencies including the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the HSE, the Pathways to Employment agencies, as well as other organisations contracted to carry out labour market activation. Sometimes, one outcome of the engagement process is the client being referred to the literacy service. It therefore follows that staff in these agencies, in the course of their work, carry out some kind of process which identifies people who may have literacy or numeracy difficulties. Managers in the literacy service report that

people who come to the ETB through this route are not always voluntary learners and that tutors sometimes have to work hard to overcome initial resistance.

As things stand, there is little systematic information available on how staff in these external agencies carry out literacy and numeracy assessments, what training they have or what methods and materials they use. Protocols exist in some areas but it is not clear how widely these are implemented.

In order to achieve a comprehensive, fully integrated set of National Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment of adults, it will be necessary, firstly to determine the extent and nature of initial assessment practice currently operating within these various agencies; and then draw up Guidelines and provide training for assessment in those contexts which are consistent with the requirements of good practice and with the Guidelines adopted for the adult literacy service itself.

5.7.7 Resources and resource bank

Carrying out fit-for-purpose literacy and numeracy assessments places significant demands on the time and creativity of managers and practitioners, as performance tasks are selected to match the level and content interests of individual learners. Several ETBs have addressed this by creating a resource bank of materials which are sourced or developed by practitioners themselves. This is available to all managers and tutors in the ETB, thereby reducing the time any one person spends on finding or creating individualised performance tasks and related supports. The sample performance tasks contained in the Toolkit draw extensively on resources provided by ETB practitioners during the consultation stage of this study.

A nationwide Resource Bank of quality-assured assessment activities and support materials would further expand the range and variety of tasks available to practitioners. It would be worthwhile exploring the possibility of using a digital platform where materials which comply with the seven conditions and ten quality criteria listed above, could be uploaded and accessed by practitioners throughout the country. Concrete proposals for development are set out in the Implementation Plan in the final section.

5.7.8 Flexibility and Responsiveness

The literacy sector in Ireland has the benefit of access to a national cohort of highly-trained managers and tutors, whose knowledge and skills have been systematically professionalised through the provision of specialised third level programmes developed during the last two decades. This is a significant benefit to the Irish literacy sector, for teaching and assessing adults' basic skills is a very specialised intellectually challenging field that requires highly educated staff with a deep understanding of underlying conceptual and policy context of their work, in addition to expertise in practice.

As already pointed out in the DES review of ALCES funded Adult Literacy Provision, and emphasised strongly during this stakeholder engagement process, there remains a need to develop a more coherent staffing structure for Adult Literacy Programmes. Of the many features identified for a fit-for-purpose assessment system, a flexible and responsive service, based on a well-resourced and coherent staffing structure could be argued to be the most fundamental.

Many of the processes set out in the "National Guidelines on Literacy and Numeracy Assessment in Adult Literacy Centres" draw on activities that are already being carried out, at least in part, in some Education and Training Boards and supported by NALA. In order to ensure systematic implementation of the Guidelines in all adult literacy centres across the country, a participative Implementation Strategy is proposed. This consists of two distinct, but complementary, strands: dissemination actions within ETBs; and national research into key topics.

Section Six:
Implementation Plan

6.1 Implementation Measures

Coordination and management of implementation measures should draw on the experience and expertise of a range of interested agencies and make use of existing organisational infrastructures that could work in partnership with SOLAS to set in motion each initiative as swiftly as possible. Relevant agencies include: ETBI; NALA; QQI. Dissemination actions and national research are summarised here and outlined in more detail below.

ETB Dissemination Actions

Three ETB dissemination actions are recommended, to be carried out as practitioners' action research projects:

- **Supported roll out of Guidelines and Toolkit** summarised in Section Five above and elaborated in the companion Guidelines Handbook.

- **Resource Bank Development**: engage a group of practitioners in expanding and fine-tuning the assessment Toolkit, to provide a quality-assured national resource available countrywide, both in paper and digital format.

- **Progress Scales Development**: engage a group of practitioners in developing finely grained progress scales, to sit within the NFQ/QQI levels, to provide a quality-assured national resource available countrywide.

National Research

Three national research projects are proposed, to be managed and coordinated according to the strengths and existing internal or external infrastructures available to each specific task. For example, a literacy and numeracy audit of QQI modules could mobilise development committees already established by QQI:

- **Literacy and numeracy audit** of all FET Programmes, findings to be published.

- **Research and development into FET screening tools** in current use, and development of Guidelines to complement those created for the literacy service through the current project.

- **Research and develop** initial assessment, screening tools and protocols in current use by external agencies and development of Guidelines to complement those created for the literacy service through the current project.

- The consultation process which contributed to the development of these National Guidelines generated significant interest amongst practitioners. Building on this momentum, ETBI will oversee a 6-month supported roll out of the guidelines and toolkit. At the local level, ETBs will lead the adoption of the guidelines and toolkit. A broad overview of recommended aims and operational steps arising from the adoption of the guidelines and toolkit is outlined below. Responsibilities around the implementation of these steps should be determined by the partner agencies participating in each strand.

6.1.1 Supported roll-out of Guidelines and Toolkit

The purpose of this project is two-fold:

- to support swift and systematic implementation of the Guidelines throughout the country;

- to obtain specific feedback on the general methodology, recording instruments and support materials provided in the Guidelines and accompanying Toolkit.

Duration: six months

Target group, scope: all ETBs; participating adult literacy centres from each ETB.

Process/method: Written feedback, according to agreed analytic framework; face-to-face group interviews. Include managers, tutors and learners.

Feedback process to report on: methods; recording instruments; toolkit; challenges; benefits; outcomes. Include written feedback and face-to-face research.

Outcomes: Information about what works well, challenges, revisions to Guidelines identified and incorporated into new edition.

Additional actions to strengthen and extend assessment of literacy and numeracy in the sector are outlined in sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 below. Implementation options for these suggested approaches will be determined by the partner agencies participating in each strand. Section 6.2 puts forward for consideration a number of possible research / development projects aimed at building supports for literacy and numeracy skill assessment in the wider FET context.

6.1.2 Resource Bank Action Research Project

The purpose of this is to create a national bank of assessment materials, accessible by all adult literacy centres. The process will expand on materials provided in the Toolkit, draw on other material, develop new material. All resources will be made available as part of online resource.

Duration: one year and ongoing.

Target group and scope: a small number of ETBs whose practitioners have a special interest in materials development. Project description and Terms of Reference to be circulated to all ETBs inviting applications. Up to eight ETBs to be represented.

Process: Individual practitioners nominated by up to eight ETBs form a working group to edit and adapt materials already supplied by all ETBs; and develop new materials. Special attention to be given to the development of assessment materials using digital technology. All materials to be available on nationally accessible digital platform.

Outcomes: Bank of materials, drawing on input from all ETBs wishing to contribute.

6.1.3 Progress Scales Action Research Project

The purpose of this project is to develop two sets of progress scales:

- Scales to describe fine-tuned steps of progress within QQI modules relevant to literacy and numeracy.

- Scales to describe fine-tuned steps of progress in relation to a number of commonly-stated learners' goals.

Duration: one year and ongoing

Target group and scope: a small number of ETBs whose practitioners have a special interest in the topic of progress scales. Project description and Terms of Reference to be circulated to all ETBs inviting applications. Up to eight ETBs to be represented, if possible ETBs not involved in the Resource Bank Action Research Project.

Process: Individual practitioners nominated by up to eight ETBs form a working group to develop progress scales that describe finely-tuned steps of progress in different aspects of literacy and numeracy.

Outcomes: Progress scales from beginner up to Level 3 in a) QQI related outcomes and b) common literacy and numeracy topics.

6.2 National Research

Implementation of a fully comprehensive set of integrated National Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment depends on the availability of important supports in the various contexts where literacy and numeracy assessment takes place. These include:

- FET literacy and numeracy screening tools and protocols, Guidelines for use in FET service nationwide.

- Standard screening tools and protocols, Guidelines for use by external agencies nationwide.

- Literacy and numeracy audit of all FET Programmes.

6.2.1 Development of literacy and numeracy screening tools for FET

The purpose of this research is to develop a set of screening tools and resources, according to a standard set of protocols across all ETBs countrywide, to support managers and tutors in identifying learners or applicants who might have literacy or numeracy difficulties that would interfere with their progress on the chosen FET programme.

Duration: four months

Target group and scope: Managers and tutors in wider FET programmes whose students may be identified as having a literacy or numeracy difficulty.

Process: Fieldwork to research current methods and materials used in FET, using telephone contact and questionnaire as the main data-gathering processes. Desk research into international practice.

Outcomes: Expansion of current Guidelines to include tools, resources and protocols, based on research findings for use throughout the country in all ETBs and FET programmes whose managers/tutors may refer people to the adult literacy service for support.

6.2.2 Standard screening tools for external agencies

The purpose of this is to develop a set of screening tools, and resources for use according to a standard set of protocols across all agencies countrywide whose frontline staff have a remit that may include referring clients to the adult literacy service for literacy or numeracy support.

Duration: six months

Target group and scope: Frontline staff in all external agencies whose clients may be identified as having a literacy or numeracy difficulty.

Process: Fieldwork to research current methods and materials used in government bodies and private agencies, using telephone contact and questionnaire as the main data-gathering processes. Desk research into international practice. Development of Guidelines comprising tools, resources and protocols, based on research findings.

Outcomes: A standard set of screening tools and protocols for use throughout the country in all agencies who may refer people to the adult literacy service.

6.2.3 Literacy and numeracy audit of all FET Programmes

The purpose of this research is to identify the literacy and numeracy content of all FET modules, encompassing: the programme content; and any materials necessary for teaching, learning or assessment. This will provide a resource for programme developers and practitioners throughout the FET system when designing learning experiences and materials, and especially, in facilitating the integration of literacy and numeracy into a wide variety of other programmes.

Duration: one year and ongoing

Target group and scope: practitioners and developers of FET modules.

Process: Desk research by literacy and numeracy expert, in collaboration with content specialists, to identify literacy and numeracy content in modules, methods and materials integral to the work.

Outcomes: A Literacy and Numeracy Audit Handbook, setting out a table for every FET module, cross-referenced with defined literacy and numeracy levels 1, 2 and 3.

6.3 Conclusion

The project to develop national guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment in adult literacy centres was set in motion with the aim of supporting adult learners and the tutors and managers who work with them. Countrywide implementation of robust assessment procedures, underpinned by relevant theoretical constructs, will facilitate educators and learners in monitoring their progress and supporting their learning. The guidelines emerging from this project are therefore designed for formative purposes, and complement existing procedures for accreditation within national structures. The combination of effective formative and summative assessments will maximise the opportunities of all FET learners in achieving their learning goals.

It is significant that these final project outputs – national guidelines and support materials – are underpinned by a process of research and development that draws on the most significant conceptual constructs relevant to literacy and numeracy assessment of adults. In addition, recent national and international policy developments provide a firm foundation for the approach described in the Guidelines document. Most significantly, the shape of the final version of the Guidelines was influenced by an intensive, iterative process of consultation with practitioners in every ETB in the country.

That said, it is important to note that the current version of the national Guidelines presents only part of the picture. More work is needed to clarify and refine the assessment procedures practised in other contexts. These include the wider FET system; and also, front-line staff in other agencies and contexts, such as labour market interventions, where adults' literacy or numeracy competence is assessed. A set of fully integrated National Guidelines on literacy and numeracy assessment of adults should support all these contexts. Future development of protocols and procedures to support those wider contexts can draw on the bottom-up development processes of the current project.

A fully realised nationwide approach to adult literacy and numeracy assessment in all contexts where this occurs, will support learners in maximising their personal and social potential and enhancing their lives as citizens.

Appendix 1:
Interview Schedule, Consultation Phase

ETBI Literacy Assessment:
Interview Schedule

1. What approach to a) initial and b) ongoing assessment does your centre implement? Mention: when assessment takes place; method (task, self-assessment, test, electronically, etc).

2. What is assessed? (Reading, writing, oral, other e.g. independence)

3. What materials do you use to assess literacy (e.g. bought in package, electronic package, centre-based materials, other). If possible, please bring hard copies of paper materials.

4. How often does assessment take place? And in what setting does assessment take place? E.g. in group, one-to-one, self-assessment by learner, other.

5. What signposts are used to assess a learner's a) initial, base level and b) progress along the way? E.g. QQI levels as specified in relevant modules such as reading; signposts developed by centre; other.

6. How are the assessment results recorded? E.g. electronically, on database; on paper, on customised forms; other?

7. Are the assessment results collated for each centre or for your ETB? Or are they used mainly to inform the progress of the individual on specific skills?

8. Overall, what would you say is the purpose of your a) initial assessment process? b) ongoing assessment process?

9. Is there anything you would like to improve in your assessment processes? Method, materials, available supports, other? Is there any particular instruction or recommendation you would like to see included in national guidelines for literacy assessment? (This question will be probed again at a later stage, when draft guidelines are available but if you already have a recommendation, mention it now).

Appendix 2:
Recording Instruments, Initial Assessment, Ongoing Assessment, Group Record

Pages 46 – 52 below provide you with the necessary templates to record learner goals and to track individual and group progress toward these goals.

Individual Learner Plan

Name_____

Contact number (mobile, landline)_____

My motivation: my immediate reason for coming to the adult literacy service

1. My previous experience of learning

Formal: school, training, awards, other	**Informal:** work in community, home, other

2. My long-term goals, if known: employment, family, community work, study, other

3. My short-term learning goals identified: tasks in reading, writing, numeracy, other

5. Learning Outcomes I have decided to work on: reading, writing, numeracy, other

	a) I want to be able to:	b) I can do this now…			
		Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
QQI Level _____	1				
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				
	6				

6. Initial assessment performance tasks: tasks I carried out to generate evidence for 5 b)

Task QQI Level

Task 1:

Task 2:

7. Broader Dimensions: Independence, fluency, setting, other

I want to be able to carry out literacy/numeracy tasks…

	Independence: without help	I can do this now…			
		Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
Learning Outcome	1				
	2				
	3				
Learning Outcome	Fluency: easily, with no hesitations	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
	1				
	2				
	3				
Learning Outcome	Setting: anywhere	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
	1				
	2				
	3				
Learning Outcome	Other: e.g. with learning awareness, confidence etc	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
	1				
	2				
	3				

8. Final Agreed Levels and General Notes

Reading:

Writing:

Numeracy:

Individual Progress Tracking Form

Name

Contact number (mobile, landline)

1. Learning Outcomes I decided to work on: reading, writing, numeracy, other

a) I want to be able to:

		b) ILP: I can do this... Date				c) Review 1: I can do this Date				d) Review 2: I can do this Date				e) Review 3: I can do this Date			
		Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
QQI Level 1	1																
	2																
	3																
	4																
	5																
	6																
QQI Level 2	1																
	2																
	3																
	4																
	5																
	6																
QQI Level 3	1																
	2																
	3																
	4																
	5																
	6																

2. Broader Dimensions: Independence, fluency, setting, other

Learning Outcome	b) ILP: I can do this... Date ___				c) Review 1: I can do this...				d) Review 2: I can do this... Date ___				e) Review 3: I can do this... Date ___			
	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes	Not yet	A bit	Mostly	Yes
Independence: without help a) I want to be able to carry out this/these literacy/numeracy tasks...																
Fluency: easily, with no hesitations a) I want to be able to carry out this/these literacy/numeracy tasks...																
Setting: anywhere all want to be able to carry out this/these literacy/numeracy tasks...																
Other: e.g. with learning awareness, confidence, under specific conditions etc																

Final Progress Summary

	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1→2	Level 2→3	Level 1→3	No change in level	Totals
Reading													
Writing													
Numeracy													
Other													
Totals													

Summary of Group Progress Form

Date _____ **ETB** _____ **Centre** _____

Reading

Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1→2	Level 2→3	Level 1→3	No change in level	Totals
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
Totals													

Writing

Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1→2	Level 2→3	Level 1→3	No change in level	Totals
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
Totals													

Numeracy

Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 → 2	Level 2 → 3	Level 1 → 3	No change in level	Totals
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
Totals													

Other

Learners' name or initials	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1 → 2	Level 2 → 3	Level 1 → 3	No change in level	Totals
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
Totals													

Summary of Group Progress Form (continued).

Number of learners in group: _____

Final Progress Summary	Less than 50% LOs achieved	More than 50% LOs achieved	All Learning Outcomes Achieved	Independence Yes	Fluency Yes	Setting Yes	Other Yes	Broader dimension No	Level 1→2	Level 2→3	Level 1→3	No change in level	Totals
Reading													
Writing													
Numeracy													
Other													
Totals													

References

Europe

Council of Europe (2010) Council Conclusions on Competences supporting lifelong learning and the new skills for new jobs initiative, May 10th 2010.

Council Recommendation of 19 December on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (201/16/C 484/01).

European Commission, Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning Brussels, 17.1.2018 COM(2018) 24 final 2018/0008 (NLE) https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf

European Commission (2016) "A new Skills Agenda for Europe COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness {SWD(2016) 195 final}." Brussels: European Commission

European Commission (2016) "ANNEX I Tackling low skills: The Skills Guarantee Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions A NEW SKILLS AGENDA FOR EUROPE Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness {COM(2016) 381 final}." Brussels: European Commission

European Commission (November 2012) "Education and Training 2020 Work programme Thematic Working Group 'Assessment of Key Competences': Literature review, Glossary and examples." Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission (2010) "Europe 2020: A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth," Brussels: European Commission.

EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (September, 2012) "Final Report," Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) Key Competences for Lifelong Learning http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN

Ireland

An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh Central Statistics Office" PIAAC 2012 Results for Ireland," Dublin Stationery Office.

An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta (2000) "Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education," Dublin: Stationery Office.

Carrigan, J., Downes, P., Byrne, I. (2010) "Is there more than what's the score? Exploring needs and skills checking for literacy as part of a holistic initial assessment process in a lifelong learning society," Dublin: Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College.

Committee on Adult Education (1973) Adult Education in Ireland (the Murphy Report). Stationery Office, Dublin.

Commission on Adult Education in Ireland (1984) "Lifelong Learning Report of the Commission on Adult Education," Dublin: Stationery Office (The Kenny Report).

Department of Education and Skills (2017) "National Strategy: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011 – 2020 Interim Review: 2011 – 2016 New Targets: 2017 – 2020" Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

Department of Education and Skills (2016) "Review of National and International Reports on Literacy and Numeracy," Dublin: DES.

SOLAS (2014) "Further Education and Training Strategy, 2014 – 2019," Dublin: DES/SOLAS.

Kett, M. (2014) "Guidelines for the Administration of Initial Assessment in Adult Literacy Programmes," Dublin: DES.

Department of Education and Skills (2013) "Adult Literacy Programme Operational Guidelines for Providers," Dublin: DES.

Department of Education and Skills (2011) The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Learning Among Young People 2011 – 2020 Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.

DES (April, 2012) IVEA Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE) Key Area Guidelines," Dublin: IVEA.

Kett, M. (2013) Guidelines on Initial Assessment of Adult Literacy, Dublin, Department of Education and Skills

NALA (2011) "Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Practice," Dublin: NALA.

NALA (2002), "Mapping the Learning Journey," Dublin: NALA.

National Educational Psychological Service (2013) Developing Basis Literacy and Numeracy Skills in Youthreach and Community Training Centres: Guidelines for Staff 2013," Dublin.

NQA (2003) "National Framework of Qualifications" Dublin: NQA.

QQI/FETAC (1997 onwards) Levels 1, 2 and 3 modules in Reading, Writing, Communications and Numeracy/Mathematics. Dublin FETAC/QQI.

SOLAS/ETBI (March, 2018) "Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy: a Handbook of National Guidelines," Dublin: SOLAS/ETBI.

SOLAS/ETBI (March 2018) "Assessing Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Toolkit," Dublin: SOLAS.

Department of Education and Skills (2015) Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025.

An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh Central Statistics Office PIAAC 2012 Results for Ireland Dublin Stationery Office.

Theoretical Background

Assessment Reform Group (2002) "Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles: Research-based principles to guide classroom practice, "Nuffield Foundation" http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/assessment-reform-group

Black, P. & Wiliam, D (1998) "Assessment and Classroom Learning," in Assessment in Education 5(1).

Cedefop(2016) "Application of Learning Outcomes Approaches Across Europe: A Comparative Study." Luxembourg: Publications.

Cedefop (2008c) "Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 100 key terms," Luxembourg: Publications Office. Available from Internet: http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/ Glossary.csp [cited 22.07.2010]

Cluster Key Competences – Curriculum Reform (March, 2010) "Peer Learning Activity, 'Implementation and Assessment of Key Competences' Prague, 8 – 11 December, 2009,"Brussels: Key Competences Cluster Group.

Le Deist, F., Delamare, F., and Winterton, J. (2005) " What is Competence?" Human Resource Development International, Vol. 8, No. 1, March 2005.

Winterton, J. (2008) "Competence across Europe: highest common factor or lowest common denominator?" Journal of European Industrial Training Vol. 33, no. 8/9.

Winterton, J., Le Deist, F. and Stringfellow, E (2006) "Typology of knowledge, skills and competences : Clarification of the concept and prototype," CEDFOP Reference Series 64, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Commission.

http://teaching.uncc.edu/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives

http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cognition/bloom.html

https://www.missouristate.edu/assets/fctl/Blooms_Taxonomy_Action_Verbs.pdf

International General

Looney, J. (2008), "Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Adults," Paris: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION (2009) INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS SURVEYS IN THE OECD REGION OECD working Paper No. 26," Paris: OECD.

OECD (2016) "Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills," OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD Directorate for Education (2009) "International Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Surveys in the OECD Region," OECD working Paper No. 26," Paris: OECD.

OECD/Statistics Canada (1995) "Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the first international Adult Literacy Survey," Paris: OECD.

OECD (1995) "IALS, Results for Ireland," Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Australia

Commonwealth of Australia (2016) "Australian Core Skills Framework: Pre-level 1 content," Canberra: Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.

Australian Government(2013) "Foundation Skills Assessment Tool: Quick Start Guide," Canberra: Department of Education and Training.

Commonwealth of Australia (2013) "Core Skills for Work: Developmental Framework, Overview," Canberra: Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Commonwealth of Australia (2012) "Australian Core Skills Framework," Canberra: Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education.

Individual Student Report for Professionals, Core Skills Profile for Adults.

Core Skills Profile for Adults, Writing Report.

Core skills Profile for Adults, Writing Sample.

Australian Core Skills Framework Performance Variables Grid.

https://www.education.gov.au/australian-core-skills-framework

Warshauer, M. and Grimes, D, (2008) "Automated Writing Assessment in the Classroom," in Pedagogies: An International Journal, 3: 22–36, 2008.

Dikli, S. (2006). An Overview of Automated Scoring of Essays. Journal of Technology, Learning, and Assessment, 5(1). Retrieved November 5th] from http://www.jtla.org.

Canada

Campbell, Dr. Pat (nd) "Student Assessment in Adult Basic Education: A Canadian Snapshot," Winnipeg: Centre for Education and Work.

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (2011) "Supplemental Tasks for Practitioners" Ontario: Employment Ontario.

Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (2012) "Embedded Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes Reference Guide for Ontario ESKARGO," Ontario: Employment Ontario.

Employment Ontario (March 2012) "Onatario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) Learner Plan Template," Ontario: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Employment Ontario (March 2011) "Onatario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) Supplemental Tasks for Practitioners," Ontario: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Employment Ontario (March 2011) "Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) An Introduction to Goal Path Descriptions for Practitioners and Learners," Ontario: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Employment Ontario (March 2011) "Onatario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) Selected Assessment Tools," Ontario: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Employment Ontario (March 2011) "Onatario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) OALCF Implementation Strategy Resource: Initial Skills Assessment," Ontario: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Employment Ontario (March 2011) "Onatario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) OALCF Implementation Strategy Resource: Tip Sheet, Initial Skills Assessment," Ontario: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Canada Goal Path Task-Tracking Sheets Numeracy Learner Plan: Building Capacity for Successful Task Completion http://www.lbspractitionertraining.com/component/content/article/52-oalcf-training/429-task-tracking-sheets-pdf

Task Tracking Tip Sheet: file:///C:/Users/Elizabeth/Desktop/ETBI/Canada/task-tracking%20tip%20sheet.pdf

http://www.lbspractitionertraining.com/pd-courses/practitioners/planning-the-lbs-program/348-45-tracking-learner-progress

England

BIS (December 2014) Evaluation of English and Maths Pathfinder Pilots," London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills BIS Research Paper 191.

BKSB Live (2014) "Reporting User Guide," Mansfield: BKSB Limited.

Edexcel (2013) "Functional Skills Initial Assessment Tool Deliverer's Guide,"London: Edexcel.

Excellence Gateway http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/interactive-resources

Faculty of Health (2012) "Undergraduate Nursing Pre-entry testing: Literacy Assessment – Sample Test Paper,"Birmingham: Birmingham City University.

Pearson Initial Assessment Tool (IAT) https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-functional-skills/teaching-support/initial-assessment-tool.html

Ofqual (2015) "Improving Functional Skills Qualifications," Coventry/Belfast: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

Ofqual (2015) "Qualifications and Component Levels," Coventry/Belfast: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

Ofqual (2011) "Functional Skills Criteria for English, Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1, Level 2," Coventry/Belfast: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

Ofqual (2011) "Criteria for Adult Literacy and Numeracy Qualifications," Coventry/Belfast: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

Ofqual (2011) "Controlled Assessment Regulations for Functional Skills," Coventry/Belfast: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.

Read Write Plus (nd) "Materials for Assessing Adult Literacy Level 2," Department for Education and Skills.

New Zealand

National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Tukua Kia Rere, Assessment Tool Support: https://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/355041

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (April, 2016) "Guidelines for Using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (April, 2016) "Guide to using the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool Starting Point Options," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2010)"Starting Points Assessment Guide," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2009) "Strengthening Literacy and Numeracy: Theoretical Framework," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2008) "Learning Progressions for Adult Numeracy," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2008)"Make Sense of Number to Solve Problems," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2008) "Learning Progressions for Literacy," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2008) "Teaching Adults to Read with Understanding: Using the Learning Progressions," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2008) "Read with Understanding Strand Chart," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Tertiary Education Commission, Te Amorangi Matuaranga Matua (2008) "Teaching Adults to Write to Communicate: Using the Learning Progressions," Wellington: Tertiary Education Commission.

Northern Ireland

CEA (2013) "Essential Skills Literacy Task: Giant's Causeway L 011 Tutor Guide and Tutor Script, (Entry 1 – 3)," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CEA (2013) "Essential Skills Literacy Task: Giant's Causeway L 011 Assessment Scheme, (Entry 1 – 3)," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CEA (2013) "Essential Skills Literacy Task: Party, L 011 Tutor Guide and Tutor Script, (Entry 1 – 3)," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CEA (2013) "Essential Skills Literacy Task: Party, L 011 Assessment Scheme, (Entry 1 – 3)," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CEA (2013) "Essential Skills Literacy Task: Party, Student Answer Booklet (Entry 2 – 3)," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CCEA (2003) "Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills Adult Literacy: Specifications," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

CCEA (2003) "Entry Level Certificate in Essential Skills Adult Numeracy: Specifications," Belfast: Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

http://ccea.org.uk/essential_skills/

Scotland

Communities Scotland (2004) "An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland," Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Education Scotland (2016) "Scotland's Adult Literacies Curriculum Framework Guidelines: Learning, Teaching and Assessment," Livingstone: Education Scotland.

SQA (2014) "Use of ICT in National Literacy Units: Reading," Glasgow: Scottish Qualifications Authority.

SQA (2014) "Introducing Essential Skills: Adding Value to Qualifications," Glasgow: Scottish Qualifications Authority.

SQA (nd) "Exploring Unit Equivalencies," Glasgow: Scottish Qualifications Authority.

SQI (2013) "Quick Guide to Assessment for Disabled Candidates and/or those with Special Support Needs," Glasgow: Scottish Qualifications Authority.

www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/resourcesandcpd/research/summaries/sassessment.asp

http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63090.3674.html

United States

American Institute for Research (October 2016) "English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education," Washington: American Institute for Research.

CASAS (2012) "Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems Maths Level A Sample Test Items," San Diego: CASAS.

CASAS (2012) "Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems Maths Level B Sample Test Items," San Diego: CASAS.

CASAS (2009) "Reading: Sample Test Items Levels A, B, C, D Administration Packet," Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems Maths Level A Sample Test Items," San Diego: CASAS.

OCTAE (nd) "Bridging Research and Practice: the Role of Diagnostic Assessment in Evidence-based reading instruction," Washington DC: The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) https://www.startoolkit.org/assets/files/Issue_Assessment.pdf