



Guidance on the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools

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STL NOS guidance

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) were approved in June 2007. The new standards replace the national occupational standards for teaching and classroom assistants and cover a much broader range of roles and responsibilities. Although the STL NOS apply across the UK, these guidance materials only apply to England.

This guidance is designed to help you understand and use the new standards to support a range of training and development activities. The guidance will be updated as things change over time. Please check the website for the latest information when you want to use the STL NOS.

The principles for using the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools can be transferred to any set of national occupational standards.

About the national occupational standards

Find out about the STL NOS – what they are, who they apply to, how they are structured, and the benefits of using them.

Using national occupational standards

Find out how NOS can be used to support individual and organisational development.

Supporting occupational roles

Find out how the STL NOS support a wide range of job roles and responsibilities.

Supporting policy and initiatives

Find out how the STL NOS support a range of educational policy and initiatives in England.

Supporting transfer and progression

Find out how the STL NOS support transfer and progression within schools and across the wider children's workforce.

Understanding the NVQ process

The STL NOS are the basis of new national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Find out more about how the NVQs are developed and delivered.

About the national occupational standards

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) were developed to help improve the capacity and capability of the school workforce; they can make an important contribution to raising standards in schools. The new standards reflect developments in working practice and the wider range of roles undertaken by support staff in the classroom.

The STL NOS can be found on the national database of national occupational standards. The STL NOS are presented in 69 units. No individual is expected to meet all 69 units; only those related to their role in school. They describe the skills and knowledge learning support staff need to do their job effectively. They are nationally agreed standards of effective practice that can be used by practitioners and employers to support staff development and school improvement.

NOS relate to a person's role, rather than the specific setting or context they work in. This means an individual can demonstrate they meet the standards relating to supporting learning through evidence of their work whether in a primary, secondary or special school. An overview of the unit titles and elements and instructions for finding the units in the NOS directory can be downloaded from this section.

National occupational standards are in units and form the basis of national vocational qualifications (NVQs). You can read more about the NVQs in supporting teaching and learning in schools in the section 'Understanding the NVQ process'.

How the national occupational standards were developed

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) were developed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) as the sector body for schools in England. Sector bodies are recognised by the Government as the organisations responsible for identifying and developing NOS for the sector they represent.

The standards were developed with partners in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Consultation was carried out across the UK, to ensure the standards reflect the occupational roles of all learning support staff.

Employers and practitioners were closely involved in the development process to ensure the standards are practical and relate to how schools operate. Although the STL NOS apply across the UK, the online guidance materials only apply to England.

Responsibilities of organisations

When national occupational standards (NOS) are developed, different organisations continue to have a role in their implementation.

Sector bodies

Sector bodies define and update employment-based standards of competence for agreed occupations and associated qualification structures. The TDA developed the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools and the qualification structures based on these with partners in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Awarding bodies

Awarding bodies are responsible for developing national vocational qualifications (NVQs) using the NOS that are consistent with the NVQ structures developed by the sector body.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

The QCA accredits (formally recognises) proposals for NVQ awards developed by sector bodies and awarding bodies, and quality assures and audits the activity of awarding bodies.

Who do the national occupational standards apply to?

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) apply to anyone who provides direct support for teaching and learning in any type of school – primary, secondary or special. They have been developed to reflect changes in support staff roles following implementation of workforce reform.

The STL NOS replace the national occupational standards for teaching and classroom assistants (TA/CA NOS). They still cover the teaching assistant role but have been broadened in scope to include new roles and responsibilities such as cover supervision, exam invigilation, pastoral care and others.

National occupational standards are the basis of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) but individuals are not required to take a further qualification because the related NOS have been revised. The revised standards provide an opportunity to review skills and knowledge through self-evaluation and/or performance review/appraisal and plan ways to update them (if necessary).

You can find out more about how to use the STL NOS to support training and development in this guidance and a summary of the main changes made to the TA/CA NOS can be accessed from this page.

Not all support staff roles are covered by the STL NOS. Technicians, catering staff, premises staff, administrative staff and some other support staff roles are covered by different NOS. Information about other suites of NOS can be found in the NOS directory. More information on the range of qualifications available to support staff, including those based on national occupational standards, can be found in the career development framework for support staff and its accompanying guidance.

The benefits of the national occupational standards

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) provide a comprehensive framework of the roles and responsibilities of learning support staff in schools. Not all STL NOS apply to all staff or all schools but individuals and schools should be able to identify those that apply to their situation.

NOS can support individuals in their day-to-day tasks and help establish the link between the aims and objectives of a school, and what is required to achieve these. They can support the design and evaluation of education and training and the design of qualifications.

The standards can also be used to manage and develop organisations and individuals, job descriptions, recruitment, individual and team development, career planning and staff appraisal.

You can read more about how to use national occupational standards in this guidance.

Download the checklist to record your own priorities for using the STL NOS.

Using national occupational standards

National occupational standards (NOS) provide an important resource for organisations and individuals to use to improve their performance.

NOS can help you to make informed decisions about:

- the coverage and focus of job roles
- how well staff are performing
- the training and development needs of staff
- appropriate qualifications for staff, and
- matching job roles to the overall aims and objectives of the school.

NOS can be used for a range of purposes including:

- skill mix review
- job design
- developing job descriptions
- recruitment and selection
- training needs analysis
- training and development, and
- qualifications.

Skills mix review

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) can be used to support the planning and development of learning support roles in school.

Because they are developed from a detailed analysis of effective practice, the STL NOS describe the key roles and responsibilities in this area of work and define the quality of work expected in relation to these.

The STL NOS can be used to identify the activities required to support teaching and learning across the school, within a team, or in relation to an existing or new job role.

Carrying out a skill mix review based on the STL NOS will identify who, within the workforce, has the required skills and where there are skills gaps. Decisions can then be made about how gaps might be addressed through training and development and/or recruitment.

Decisions about skill mix requirements and how jobs can be designed to meet these will be made by the school leader to reflect the circumstances and needs of the school, its pupils and staff.

You can use the role audit tool to carry out a skills mix review.

Job design

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) describe the roles and responsibilities carried out by learning support staff in schools. They can be used as a starting point for designing new job roles and for reviewing/updating existing job descriptions to ensure you have an appropriate balance of roles and responsibilities within the school workforce.

Designing new or revised job roles can be used to:

- create a new post
- accommodate new requirements (eg. for cover supervision), and
- reflect an individual's developing skills and expertise.

Taking a holistic approach to job design and staff deployment means each individual's job description can be viewed as a part of a whole, each job can be seen in relation to other jobs within the school, and everything can be related to the school's aims for improving pupil attainment and well-being. Using national occupational standards for specifying job roles also ensures that job design is based on clear and realistic expectations expressed in terms of performance.

The role audit tool can be used to identify the roles and responsibilities that are, or could be, carried out by learning support staff in your school. Carrying out a role audit will help you to identify where you might revise and/or develop job descriptions to ensure you have an appropriate balance of roles and responsibilities across the school.

Developing job descriptions

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) can be used to develop and review job descriptions for learning support staff.

You can identify which of the STL NOS apply to an existing role holder and use the relevant unit and/or element titles to ensure his/her job description is clear, relevant and up-to-date. Alternatively you can use the suite of STL NOS as a prompt for identifying the roles and responsibilities to be included in a new post and use the unit and element titles as the basis of the job description.

By using national occupational standards to define job descriptions, units or elements can be added and removed as job functions change. Since NOS are written in broad outcome terms they are less likely to become outdated as policies and practices change. Another benefit is that NOS are subject to regular review and updating, so job descriptions can be updated as the standards are reviewed and amended.

Job descriptions can be used as the basis for recruitment and selection, induction and the subsequent appraisal of the role holder. By using national occupational standards as the basis for developing job descriptions you have a direct link to the detailed description of the required standards of performance and related knowledge and understanding that applies to the role holder.

There are some exemplar job descriptions available for download on this page that can be tailored to reflect the particular needs and circumstances of your school. You can use the role audit tool to identify those units which apply to particular job roles within your school.

Recruitment and selection

National occupational standards (NOS) can be used to support effective recruitment and selection. This is made easier if NOS have been used to design the job role and develop the job description.

NOS provide clear and objective statements of competence to ensure both candidates and selectors understand what is required for a particular job role and to support equal opportunities in recruitment practice. There is the added advantage that the first stage of

personal development planning has taken place during the selection process and there is a sound basis for planning induction and further training.

The table below shows how NOS can be used for each stage of recruitment and selection.

Recruitment and selection stage	How to use the NOS
Advertising job vacancies	Use the NOS unit titles to describe the kind of work you need a new recruit to undertake.
Getting appropriate information about applicants	Devise application forms that ask people to show how their work and/or other experiences match the relevant standards.
Selecting between applicants	Use the standards as a checklist to help narrow down the pool of suitable applicants, selecting those whose experience best matches the relevant standards for the role.
References	Ask potential referees to comment on an applicant's strengths and weaknesses in terms of their ability to meet the relevant standards for the job.
Interviews	Structure the interview process to probe candidates' experience, practice and knowledge in relation to key standards for the role, matching their responses to the standards to give an objective means of 'scoring' each candidate.

Training needs analysis

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) can be used as the basis of a training needs analysis which will help identify areas for development.

The process of identifying learning and development needs could be carried out as a self-evaluation exercise by the role holder and/or as part of an appraisal or performance review with their line manager. National occupational standards provide objective standards against which to judge existing skills, knowledge and understanding and identify where there may be development needs.

The first stage in the process is to identify the STL units that are relevant to the job role. Be realistic about which units to include – they should be directly related to significant aspects of the job role. Then use the detail of the units to identify the performance standards and associated knowledge and understanding. Use these as benchmarks of effective practice to

assess the role holder's current skills and knowledge and identify areas for further training and development.

The checklist may help you to work through the process. The role audit tool will help to identify the STL units relevant to the job role.

Training and development opportunities

Training courses are not the only way of developing staff.

Identifying learning needs against the needs of the workplace considers alternatives to traditional course-based routes for learning, such as:

- work shadowing to see how a more experienced colleague manages relevant aspects of their job role
- on-the-job project work, eg. pupil shadowing to see how a pupil with special educational needs responds to different teaching styles and learning contexts
- receiving coaching or being mentored by a more experienced colleague from within the school or one nearby
- contributing to the learning and development of others, eg. coaching, mentoring, giving demonstrations, or running training sessions
- visiting other schools to observe relevant aspects of working practice
- the opportunity to read and ask questions, eg. about new policies and programmes for promoting pupils' learning and attainment
- e-learning, eg. responding to questions and answers in electronic format, and searching the internet for specific information
- action learning or learning sets involving individuals with a common interest from within the school or from a group of local schools, and
- observing a teacher or other colleague who has particular strengths in the area identified for development, eg. behaviour management.

Using national occupational standards to define development needs means those who plan and deliver training courses or other development opportunities can link the design and content of the learning programme directly to the needs of the individual and their current strengths and weaknesses.

The checklist may help you work through the process of using NOS to support the training and development of support staff.

Qualifications

In addition to supporting a wide range of activities within the school, the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) provide the basis for externally accredited qualifications.

National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, competence-based qualifications assessed in the workplace. They are based directly on national occupational standards. These qualifications are outcome-based with no specific learning programme and can be delivered flexibly and tailored to meet the individual learner's needs. The STL NVQ is offered at levels 2 and 3 on the national qualifications framework.

The TDA is responsible for identifying the NVQ structure and assessment strategy. The NVQs are delivered by awarding bodies that design the qualifications and approve centres to deliver them.

Vocational qualifications are linked to national occupational standards and provide a learning pathway for those not yet in employment or who prefer a more traditional study-based training programme. Vocational qualifications are different to NVQs because they are not delivered and assessed in the workplace. Vocational qualifications are designed by awarding bodies and endorsed by the relevant sector body.

Apprenticeships offer a package of qualifications for those entering an occupational area. This includes:

- an NVQ
- usually a technical certificate (vocational qualification) covering the underpinning knowledge for the NVQ, and
- key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

There will be two apprenticeships in supporting teaching and learning in schools:

- apprenticeship based on the level 2 NVQ, and
- advanced apprenticeship based on the level 3 NVQ.

Supporting occupational roles

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) were developed to cover the full range of roles and responsibilities that learning support staff may perform. This includes new and emerging roles arising from workforce reform.

Decisions about skill mix requirements and how jobs can be designed to meet these will be made by school leaders to reflect the circumstances and needs of their school, its pupils and staff.

This section explains how the STL NOS support different occupational roles. Using NOS in this way provides access to agreed benchmarks of effective practice to support the development of staff working in schools.

Although some of these roles may apply in other UK countries, this guidance only applies to schools in England.

The core units

Consultation with stakeholders, including school leaders and learning support staff, identified the skills and knowledge that everyone supporting teaching and learning in schools needs regardless of their overall job role and responsibilities.

These have been incorporated into a set of 'core' units – the skills and knowledge that define the occupational role and underpin all learning support staff roles.

Some of the responsibilities or functions have been defined at two levels of practice:

- those new to the role and/or whose responsibilities are limited in scope, and
- those with more experience and autonomy whose working role calls for competence across a varied range of responsibilities.

The core units for staff working at the two different levels of responsibility are shown in the table on the next page. Other units from the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools would also apply, depending on the individual's role.

The units can be accessed from the NOS directory.

The table below shows the core units for supporting teaching and learning in schools.

Function	Those new to the role and/or working under teacher supervision/instruction	Experienced learning support staff working under the direction/guidance of a teacher
Supporting learning activities	STL1 Provide support for learning activities	STL18 Support pupils' learning activities
Supporting the development of children or young	STL2 Support children's development	Function would vary according to focus of the job role.

Function	Those new to the role and/or working under teacher supervision/instruction	Experienced learning support staff working under the direction/guidance of a teacher
people		
Safeguarding pupils	STL3 Help to keep children safe	
Promoting positive behaviour	Covered by STL3 above	STL19 Promote positive behaviour
Communication and relationships	STL4 Contribute to positive relationships	STL20 Develop and promote positive relationships
Working with colleagues	STL5 Provide effective support for your colleagues	STL21 Support the development and effectiveness of work teams
Personal development	Covered by STL5 above	STL22 Reflect on and develop practice

STL NOS to support different occupational roles

An overview of the STL NOS that support different occupational roles in England is available from this section.

Use the links below to download a PDF of the STL NOS that support each different occupational role:

- Teaching assistant
- Supporting literacy and numeracy
- Special educational needs
- Behaviour support
- Pastoral and welfare
- Bilingual support/English as an additional language
- Early years foundation stage
- Secondary schools
- Cover supervision
- Exam invigilation
- Learning guide
- Induction mentor
- Team leadership

Supporting policy and initiatives

The development of national occupational standards is linked to relevant government policy but it's important to be aware that education policy and practice varies across the four home countries of the United Kingdom.

Because national occupational standards apply across the UK there is no reference to legislation, policy or initiatives that only apply in some of the home countries. This means the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) do not refer specifically to current legislation, policies and initiatives. To some extent, this 'future-proofs' them against changes in these areas.

Schools in England should apply the standards within the context of their own education system. This section aims to assist with this by identifying the standards that apply to current policy and initiatives in England.

An overview of the STL NOS that support different policy and initiatives in England can be downloaded from this page.

Policy and initiatives

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) are consistent with, and support, the following educational policy and initiatives in England.

- Every Child Matters: Change for Children
- The National Healthy Schools Programme
- The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce
- Behaviour and attendance strategy
- Social and emotional aspects of learning
- Personalised learning
- Assessment for learning
- Gifted and talented pupils
- 4–19 diploma
- Study support
- Extended schools
- Schools facing challenging circumstances

Supporting transfer and progression

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) can be used to identify the skills and experience someone might bring to a role and those they would need to develop.

Transfer and progression between and within work roles is facilitated by common units of competence and/or consistency between the STL NOS and other standards, qualifications and training programmes.

Having the same or consistent standards means people moving between job roles can have their existing skills and expertise recognised. This means they can build on, rather than duplicate, previous learning and experience - saving time and resources. You can find out how the STL NOS can be used to help with recruitment and selection, training needs analysis and identifying relevant training and development opportunities in the section 'Using national occupational standards'.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) is a member of the Children's Workforce Network (CWN). The CWN is developing an integrated qualifications framework (IQF) for everyone working with children and young people. This will be introduced progressively from the end of 2008; it will support an integrated approach to children's services by encouraging and recognising opportunities for joint training and enhanced workforce mobility.

Transfer and progression within schools and across the wider children's workforce

There is now a clear career pathway for learning support staff to progress from induction/initial training programmes through to NVQ level 2 and/or level 3, and on to HLTA status, foundation degree. Those able to meet the initial teacher training entry requirements can go on to achieve qualified teacher status (QTS).

The national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS) also support transfer and progression from or to other support staff roles, such as learning mentor and specialist behaviour and attendance roles. There are opportunities for those who have achieved a support work in schools qualification to progress to the STL NVQs and for those with, or aspiring to, a team leadership role to identify and develop relevant skills and knowledge.

The STL NOS support transfer and progression across the wider children's workforce through common units of competence with child care, playwork and youth work. The introduction to each unit will tell you which area or areas of the children's workforce the unit applies to and its place in qualifications for those working with children and young people.

The STL standards also support transfer and progression to or from learning support roles in further education. Consistency across the STL standards and those being developed for learning support practitioners in further education means those working with students on diploma programmes will have shared expectations about their roles and responsibilities and will support those wanting to move between the schools sector and further education.

Download details of how the STL NOS support transfer and progression:

- from the teaching assistant induction programme
- from the support work in schools qualifications
- between the STL NVQ level 2 and level 3 qualifications
- to HLTA

- Mapping HLTA professional standards and the STL NOS
- to or from learning mentor roles
- to or from management and leadership roles
- to specialist behaviour and attendance roles
- from child care work roles
- from playwork
- from youth work, and
- to or from learning support in further education.

STL NOS and the NVQ process

National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, competence-based qualifications. They reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively, and show that a candidate is competent in a defined area of work.

NVQs are based on national occupational standards (NOS) developed by the relevant sector body. We are the sector body responsible for the NOS for supporting teaching and learning in schools.

NVQs are accredited to the national qualifications framework (NQF) by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Accrediting qualifications ensures they are of high quality and meet the needs of learners and employers.

The QCA is currently managing a series of tests and trials for a new qualifications and credit framework (QCF). This framework will be a unit-based qualification framework underpinned by a system of credit accumulation and transfer.

You can access further information about the STL NVQ structures, NQF and QCF from this page.

The NVQ process: who does what

A number of organisations are involved in the process of developing, delivering, awarding and preserving the quality of national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

- Sector bodies - identify, define and update national occupational standards (NOS) and NVQ structures based on these
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) - accredits proposals for qualifications submitted by awarding bodies and monitors awarding bodies offering NVQs
- Awarding bodies - develop qualifications based on NOS, approve centres to deliver NVQs, quality assure the assessment process in centres, register candidates and issue certificates
- Centres - approved by an awarding body to deliver specific NVQs

Most schools use external centres to deliver NVQs for their staff. However some schools have become centres in their own right, delivering NVQs for their own staff and staff from neighbouring schools.

You can download more information about becoming an NVQ centre.

Roles in the NVQ process

There are several roles involved in the delivery and quality assurance of national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

The essential roles in delivering NVQs are:

- candidate - the person who is being assessed against the units of competence required for the NVQ
- assessor – judges the evidence of a candidate's performance, knowledge and understanding against the units of competence to decide if they have demonstrated competence
- internal verifier - checks and standardises assessment decisions made by the assessor(s) in the centre; for this reason they cannot be directly involved in making assessment decisions on candidates for whom they are acting as internal verifier

- centre coordinator - oversees the centre's total NVQ operation and is the point of contact with the awarding body (in small centres the centre coordinator and internal verifier roles may be combined)
- external verifier - appointed by the awarding body to visit centres and monitor the assessment, internal verification process and consistency with the relevant standards and awarding body procedures

Schools using an external centre to deliver and assess NVQs for their staff are allocated one or more assessor. However some schools use their own staff as assessors. This may be because the school is an approved NVQ centre or the member of staff is sub-contracted to an external centre as an assessor as part of their wider job role in the school.

You can download more information about becoming an NVQ assessor from this page.

Other roles in the NVQ process

Apart from the essential roles in delivering and quality assuring the national vocational qualifications (NVQ) process, there are some additional roles that can be used to support the process.

Other roles in the NVQ process include:

- expert witness – contributes to the assessment process by testifying to the competence of a candidate in their area of occupational expertise
- coordinating assessor – coordinates the assessment process when more than one assessor is involved and makes assessment judgements for units where assessment relies on expert witness testimony or parts have been assessed by different assessors and/or expert witnesses
- training mentor – supports the candidate through all aspects of the NVQ but is not involved in making judgements about the candidate's competence.

The coordinating assessor is appointed by the centre. Expert witnesses and training mentors may be provided by an external centre but these roles are usually more effective when provided by the school.

Further information about the role of expert witnesses and training mentors can be accessed on this page. The guidance to the support work in schools qualifications also has some useful information about selecting training mentors and expert witnesses. This can also be accessed.

Accreditation of prior learning

One of the features of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) is that relevant prior learning and experience can be taken into account when assessing evidence of occupational competence. For example, evidence from previous training, previous or current employment or voluntary work can be used for accreditation of prior learning towards the NVQ. It must be relevant to one or more units in that NVQ.

Accreditation of prior learning allows candidates to use evidence of previous learning to move directly to the assessment stage without repeating the learning process. However, the assessment process must still take place.

Evidence of prior learning will be assessed against the relevant unit(s) of competence in the NVQ along with any other current evidence. Assessors must be satisfied that the evidence is genuine and current when deciding if the outcomes of the unit have been met. The 'shelf life' of evidence depends on the skills and/or knowledge being assessed and evidence does not have

a set time limit. For example, IT skills/knowledge may go out of date quickly because technology changes rapidly, but skills/knowledge relating to liaising with parents may be relevant for some time. Only evidence reflecting the candidate's skills and knowledge at the time the NVQ assessment takes place will be accepted for achievement of NVQ units.

Direct transfer of NVQ units

Direct transfer of national vocational qualification (NVQ) units means units achieved as part of one NVQ can be credited towards another NVQ that includes the same unit.

The NVQs in supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL) include units that also appear in other NVQs for the wider children's workforce. Some STL units are also common to both level 2 and level 3 STL NVQs.

If a candidate has previously achieved a unit or units, it/they will be accepted as achieved for an STL NVQ. The assessor needs to see the original unit certificate and can only accept direct transfer of units with identical accreditation reference numbers (this is a unique reference number given to a unit). When authenticity is established the candidate does not have to undergo any further assessment for the unit or units transferred.

Units achieved through the support work in schools qualifications, even where they have the same unit titles, don't necessarily offer direct transfer or credit to an NVQ. This is because they are assessed differently. Awarding bodies will provide guidance on their procedures for recognising achievement of these units through the NVQ assessment process.

Selecting NOS units

Nobody is expected to meet all the national occupational standards for supporting teaching and learning in schools (STL NOS). Selections of STL units apply to a particular job role.

We are developing an online unit selection tool that focuses on selecting and tailoring a national vocational qualification (NVQ) to match a particular job role, but will also help you to:

- define the coverage and focus of the job role
- identify the skills and knowledge needed by the role holder
- identify benchmarks of best practice for evaluating the role holder's performance, and
- identify the role holder's training and development needs.

Further information about using national occupational standards can be accessed from this page. The online selection tool will be available from the end of February.

Learning and assessment for an NVQ

People do not have to follow a specific course to complete a national vocational qualification (NVQ). They may already have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding from experience in the job to complete the NVQ without formal training.

If there are gaps in someone's knowledge or they need to develop their practice, you might consider using a school-based training mentor to give them the necessary one-to-one support. Alternatively, your local authority or training provider may provide training programmes supporting aspects of the NVQ. This is one of the benefits of doing an NVQ; you can identify the learning and development opportunities to match the individual's personal training needs and learning style.

Another benefit of doing an NVQ is that it allows for prior learning and experience to be recognised. This means that if someone has gained relevant skills and knowledge from previous training and/or experience they may be able to use this as evidence towards assessment for the NVQ. This is called accreditation of prior learning.

To achieve an NVQ, a candidate needs to demonstrate to an assessor that they are competent in the activities defined in the relevant NVQ units. Much of this evidence will come from the assessor observing how their duties are carried out in the school and asking questions to confirm their knowledge and understanding. The assessor will also consider other forms of evidence such as work products and witness testimony as part of the assessment process.

Refer back to page six for more information on APEL.

How the school can support staff doing an NVQ

There are several things the school can do to support a member of staff doing a NVQ in supporting teaching and learning in schools.

These include:

- advise and agree on their choice of optional units, considering their role and opportunities for development
- provide a mentor to support them through the NVQ process
- provide time and opportunity for training and development
- encourage and support other staff to provide witness statements and/or act as expert witnesses
- provide appropriate work experience such as working with different pupils and groups
- provide access to a computer for recording and organising their evidence
- take account of their assessment plan when planning their activities during assessor visits
- facilitate assessor visits to the school
- provide time for them to meet with his/her assessor
- discuss their progress with both the candidate and their assessor at regular intervals to offer encouragement and provide additional support where necessary, and
- recognise and celebrate their achievements.