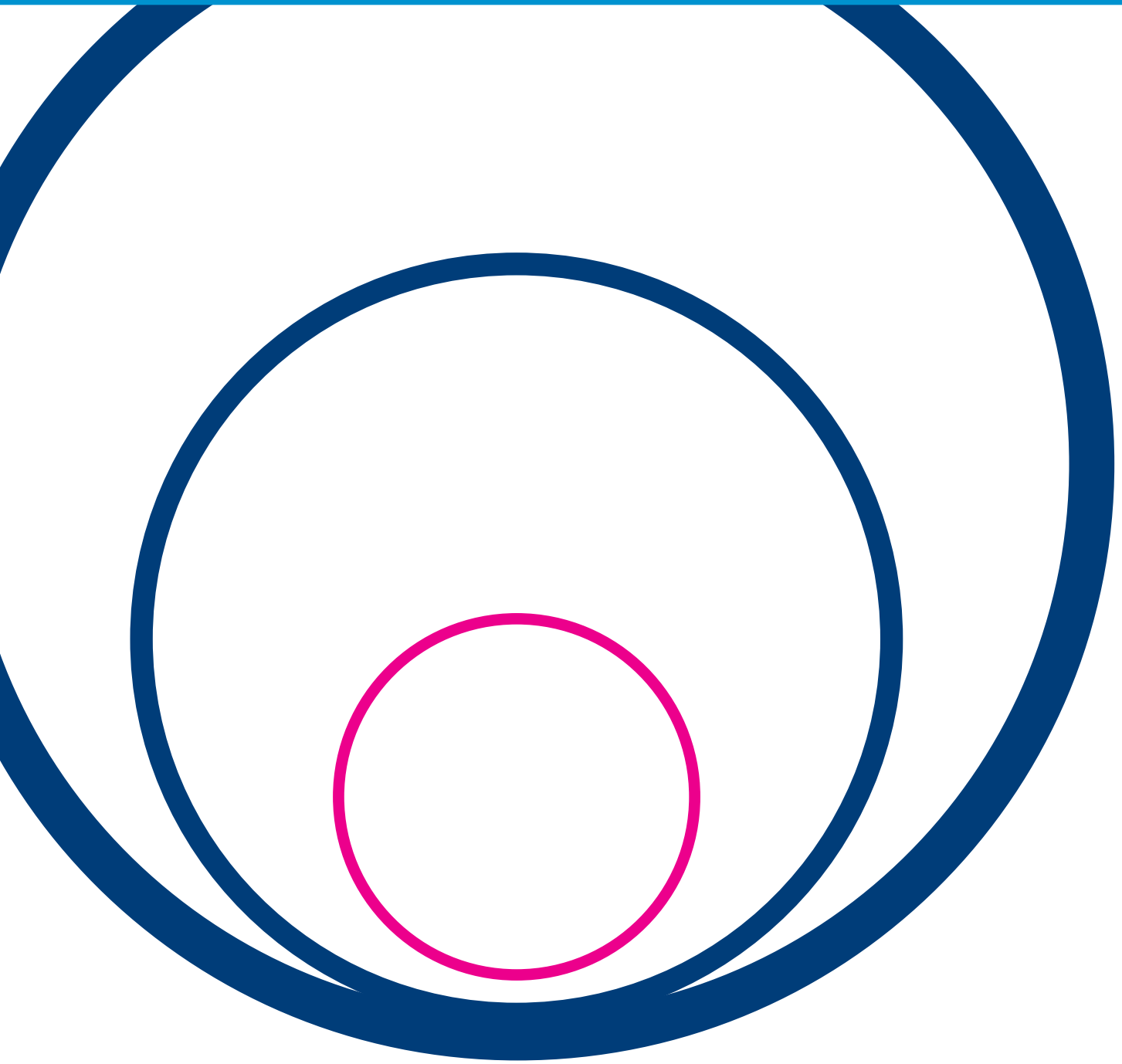




Quality
Improvement
Agency

Key Skills
Support Programme



Introducing
KeySkills4U:
the e-learning
resource for
key skills learners

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Introducing *KeySkills4U*: the e-learning resource for key skills learners

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Introduction

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning has developed rapidly in recent years. 'e-learning' and 'information and learning technology' (ILT) have become familiar terms to practitioners in many areas of the curriculum, from primary school through to adult education.

Key skills are no exception to this. An increasing number of online resources have become available (see the KSSP *Good practice guide: using IT in delivering key skills*) and, of course, the tests at Levels 1 and 2 are available on-screen.

In 2003, the Key Skills Support Programme, in association with Bradford Technology Ltd (BTL), developed the e-learning resource *KeySkills4U*. This package of e-learning material has been widely used and very well received.

It has now been enhanced with the addition of new material designed to support learners working at Level 1, and with a new set of practice questions, as well as being revised to take account of the 2004 key skills standards. The enhanced site was launched in a new format in 2007. Further research on usage will be carried out in 2007 and a report, together with more advice and 'top tips', will be published later in the year.

Who is this publication for?

This publication is designed to introduce *KeySkills4U* to practitioners who have never used it, and to reintroduce it, in its new format, to those who are already familiar with it. It shows how *KeySkills4U* can be used in a variety of ways to support learning and achievement in key skills.

It is therefore suitable for any member of staff who wants to know more about *KeySkills4U* and how it can be used to support the delivery of key skills. Readers will include key skills coordinators, ILT or e-learning coordinators, specialists in teaching any of the key skills, or teachers/trainers of other subjects who are aiming to integrate elements of e-learning into the delivery of key skills in their programme.

While you will be able to understand this publication without being logged on to *KeySkills4U*, it will be helpful if you log on and experiment as you read. You can access *KeySkills4U* directly from the internet or download it to your centre's intranet, virtual learning environment or local network. To access *KeySkills4U* on the internet, select www.keyskills4u.com or www.keyskillssupport.net To order a DVD with a network version which you can download, select 'Network versions'.

This publication does not include:

- detailed advice and guidance on interpreting the key skills standards or on the summative assessment of learners' work. Summative assessment is the responsibility of the awarding bodies, which provide specialised training. For contact details, please see Appendix 4.
- detailed advice about technical specifications for hardware and/or software
- recommendations about the quality or appropriateness of specific ICT equipment, resources, materials or suppliers.

What do the users say?

In September 2005, the LSDA, which was hosting the site at that time, commissioned a review of *KeySkills4U*. The aim of the review was to identify the impact the site was having on the teaching and learning of key skills.

The executive summary of the report, produced in March 2006, includes the following:

Key findings

The overwhelming response to *KeySkills4U* has been very positive indeed. It is perceived as a highly flexible learning tool that can meet a range of learning needs, is relevant to the vast majority of students following most types of courses, and can be embraced using a variety of pedagogical methods.

Practitioners felt that the 'Check your skills and learn' (CYSL) components of the site were of great value to them and their learners. Indeed, when compared with the learners' perceptions, this was validated, as the combination of the positive responses – 'Very Helpful' and 'Helpful' – gave a remarkable satisfaction rating of approximately 90%.

Learners also felt that the site had had a real impact on their learning of key skills. Feedback results on elements such as being able to learn at their own pace, giving them useful information, helping them to assess their own skills, and improving their key skills rated at around 90% when combining the responses 'Very Good' and 'Good'. Even taking the top response (Very Good) gave a high average of just under 60%.

One of the key findings to emerge from this review was the flexibility of *KeySkills4U*. This was demonstrated by practitioners' responses that the site was of benefit to learners from all types of courses, with the possible exception of traditional A-level courses.

Flexibility also meant that the site was meeting a variety of pedagogical and learning needs with regard to key skills. This was demonstrated by the clear indication that the main drivers for both practitioners and learners using the site were the capacity for the monitoring/tracking of skills progression and the potential for independent and individualised learning.

A prime example of this appears to be where key skills complement the delivery of NVQs, in that practitioners have little direct contact time with their learners, and the site not only affords the apprentice the opportunity to develop their skills through remote learning, but also enables the tutor to track their learner's progress.

An unanticipated learner group appearing from this review was that of adult returners lacking the appropriate qualifications to enter the teaching and training professions. Practitioners felt that the site was particularly useful for these groups, as they could develop and practise their skills in a discrete way, thereby helping to avoid any potential embarrassment and to build self-confidence.

In effect, *KeySkills4U* can therefore be seen as contributing to the widening participation initiative; an unexpected example of added value.

Another example of the flexibility of the site were the three main pedagogical functions for which it was mainly used:

- a. preparation for online testing
- b. developing individual learning plans and supporting differentiated learning, and
- c. identifying skills gaps and tracking learner progress.

What is *KeySkills4U*?

KeySkills4U:

- is a blended e-learning package designed to help learners check, learn and apply their key skills
- covers Application of Number, Communication, and Information and Communication Technology at Levels 1 and 2, and includes additional material for learners to support Level 1 learning in these key skills
- is available online either via the Key Skills Support Programme website at www.keyskillssupport.net or directly at www.keyskills4u.com
- can be supplied on DVD to be downloaded to a local network
- presents material that is addressed directly to the learner
- includes audio and video cartoon content
- aims to identify gaps in learning and to help learners build and develop the knowledge and skills required in Part A of the key skills standards
- will help learners to prepare for the tests
- does not focus on Part B and does not generate the evidence required for portfolios, which must relate to real-life contexts that are purposeful for the learner.

KeySkills4U is made up of:

- Key Skills Trainer, comprising:
 - a skills check
 - key skills learning materials
 - two games designed to develop learners' key skills at Levels 1 and 2:
 - The Symtel Files
 - The Serpent's Curse
- practice tests
 - Communication, Application of Number, and Information and Communication Technology at Levels 1 and 2
- FAQs for learners
- a glossary for learners
- tutor guides.

Who is it for?

KeySkills4U is suitable for learners aged 14–19 studying at school or college, with a private training provider, in the workplace (including apprentices), or at home. Adults on Skills for Life programmes in literacy, numeracy and ICT will also find it a valuable resource.

Learners can use *KeySkills4U* with or without tutor support and in many contexts – as part of a key skills session (or specialist session with key skills content), in a learning resource centre, in a tutorial programme, at home, or in a work-based learning environment.

Additional integrated support is available for users who have audio or visual impairments.

How long does it take?

The whole *KeySkills4U* package, including the material to support Level 1 learners, contains approximately 595 notional guided learning hours across Levels 1 and 2, as follows:

- Check your skills and learn: 430 hours
- The Symtel Files: 60 hours of work-based tasks and game play
- The Serpent's Curse: 10 hours of work-based tasks and game play
- Supporting Level 1: 95 hours.

However, *KeySkills4U* is not designed to be used as a course where the learner starts at the beginning and works through to the end. It is a bank of resources and tasks to dip into selectively and use in different ways. For example, it will be valuable to learners who have had a specific skill weakness identified by initial or diagnostic testing, as it allows the user to select specific skills development exercises.

What is the skills check?

The skills check is essentially for diagnostic assessment of a learner's key skills. The learner can log in to the section 'Check your skills and learn' and choose a key skill and the level at which they want to work. After a short audio and video explanation, the learner completes a test made up of four multiple-choice questions that are based directly on the key skills standards. The learner's score is recorded and shown on screen, and they are prompted to undertake additional learning in areas where they have scored poorly. For details, see pages 25–27.

📌 **The programme is first used as a diagnostic assessment for every learner. Once the learners have completed a section [of 'Check your skills'], the results are grouped to identify the group's learning gaps. Where learners have not scored, or just score one, they are timetabled for lessons on that specific subject. If learners score two or three, they are signposted to a variety of learning sites (depending on their ability) and to using a variety of teaching methods.** 📌

FE teacher

📌 **An excellent method to assess learners and highlight areas of weakness.** 📌

FE teacher

What are the learning materials?

These are on-screen interactive learning activities designed to target the areas of the Part A standards that the learner needs to work on, as shown by the skills check. Questions to test understanding are integrated into the learning materials and the learner's progress is recorded and can be viewed on screen. For details, see page 29.

“ I have found the progress map useful as it tells me how well I am doing. ”

National Diploma learner

What is ‘The Symtel Files’?

‘The Symtel Files’ is a whodunnit virtual office game, enabling learners to apply key skills in a fictional but real-world situation. It can be accessed at either Level 1 or Level 2 and contains integrated tasks that are mapped to the standards for Communication and Application of Number at the appropriate level.

The game is set in a fictional mobile phone company, called Symtel, that aims to provide the latest mobile phone technology direct to the customer. The company prides itself on giving quality support and advice, both before and after sales. It is a customer-focused company, with a free customer helpline.

The learner plays the role of a private investigator who has been employed by Symtel to work undercover to identify an employee who has sold confidential information to a rival company. For details, see pages 31–35.

“ The Symtel Files is helpful because it helps your communication skills. ”

National Diploma learner

What is ‘The Serpent’s Curse’?

‘The Serpent’s Curse’ is a game designed to develop the learner’s ICT skills. It can be accessed at either Level 1 or Level 2 and contains integrated tasks mapped to the key skills standards at the appropriate level.

In the game, the learner is an ICT expert who has come to Egypt to join an archaeological dig and to find out who stole the Serpent King’s diamond. The dig’s project leader, Sam Masterson, used to deal with this but he has disappeared in mysterious circumstances. The locals think it has got something to do with the Serpent’s Curse.

Isabella Martinez, the temporary project leader, asks the learner to keep their eyes and ears open while they complete the tasks. The learner interacts with the dig employees, carrying out tasks mapped to the key skills standards, learning, building their skills and eventually finding out who stole the Serpent King’s diamond.

What are the practice tests?

The purpose of the practice tests is to help learners prepare for the ‘real’ tests in Application of Number, Communication, and Information and Communication Technology at Levels 1 and 2. The questions in these practice tests have been written in the same format and style as the questions in the ‘real’ test. Their purpose is to enable learners to practise answering test-style questions on-screen and, particularly, to study the feedback that is intended to help the learner understand why each response is right or wrong.

There are 12 tests, two at Level 1 and two at Level 2 for each of Application of Number, Communication, and Information and Communication Technology. As with the ‘real’ tests, each test contains 40 questions. There is a ‘real-time’ clock on-screen so that the learner can keep track.

Practice tests allow learners to view where mistakes have been made. Printing out the explanation allows the learner to individually improve their own learning gaps.]

Sixth form teacher

What are the FAQs?

The site provides short, learner-friendly answers to four questions that learners typically ask when they are first introduced to key skills.

- What are key skills?
- Why should I do key skills?
- Which key skills should I do?
- How do I do them?

What is the glossary?

The glossary is a learner-friendly version of the official glossaries that have appeared in publications from QCA and the DfES.

What are the tutor guides?

The tutor guides are for the benefit of tutors whose learners are working with *KeySkills4U*. They explain how the various components of the website can be used for the maximum benefit of the learner. The main guide can be downloaded either as a single PDF document or in three parts.

There are also detailed guides to The Symtel Files and The Serpent's Curse, and to the material for supporting key skills at Level 1. All these can be downloaded as PDF documents.

How can I access or download *KeySkills4U*?

You can log in to *KeySkills4U* either via the Key Skills Support Programme website www.keyskillssupport.net (select the 'schools, colleges etc' section and then select 'Resources and Key Skills Trainer') or directly at www.keyskills4u.com

Select 'Network versions' on the home page for information about how to order a DVD from which you can download the network version and the user guides.

How does *KeySkills4U* work?

This is the home page at www.keyskills4u.com

Key skills students website

<http://www.keyskills4u.com/> Google

keyskills4u.com

[Key Skills Trainer](#) [Practice tests](#) [Tutor guides](#) [Network versions](#)

About Key Skills

- What are Key Skills?
- Why should I do Key Skills?
- Which Key Skills should I do?
- How do I do them?
- Glossary

About the Key Skills Support Programme

About Key Skills Trainer

About the Practice tests

Good Practice Guide

Tutor guide Levels 1 & 2

- Part A
- Part B
- Part C
- Whole guide (1.3MB)
- Using the Symtel Files tutor guide
- Using the Serpent's Curse tutor guide
- Supporting key skills at Level 1

Site Feedback

Key Skills > Trainer

ENTER SITE

Key Skills > Practice tests

ENTER SITE

QIA Quality Improvement Agency

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From this page, you can link to a number of areas, including:

- Key Skills Trainer: Enter site – This will take you to the login page.
- Key Skills Practice Tests: Enter site – This will take you to the online practice tests.
- About Key Skills – These are the FAQs, with answers addressed to learners, about what key skills are, who needs to do them, and why.
- About the Key Skills Support Programme – A link to the main Key Skills Support Programme site.
- About Key Skills Trainer – A brief description of what is available in Key Skills Trainer.
- About the Practice Tests – A brief description of what is available in the practice test area.

- Introducing *KeySkills4U* – You can download a PDF version of this guide.
- Tutor guide: Levels 1 and 2 – This will take you to an area where you can view the tutor guides online, or download the following guides as PDF documents:
 - The entire tutor guide for Level 1 and Level 2
 - The tutor guide in three parts
 - Using The Symtel Files – a description of what is in the Symtel Files, how to use this part of the package, and a list of each task and the key skill areas that it covers
 - Using The Serpent’s Curse – a description of what is in The Serpent’s Curse, how to use this part of the package, and a list of each task and the key skill areas that it covers
 - The guide to ‘Supporting key skills at Level 1’.
- Site feedback – You can send us email feedback about the material, or let us know if you are having difficulty accessing any part of the package.

At the top of the home page, you will find the following buttons:

- Key Skills Trainer
- Practice tests
- Tutor guides.

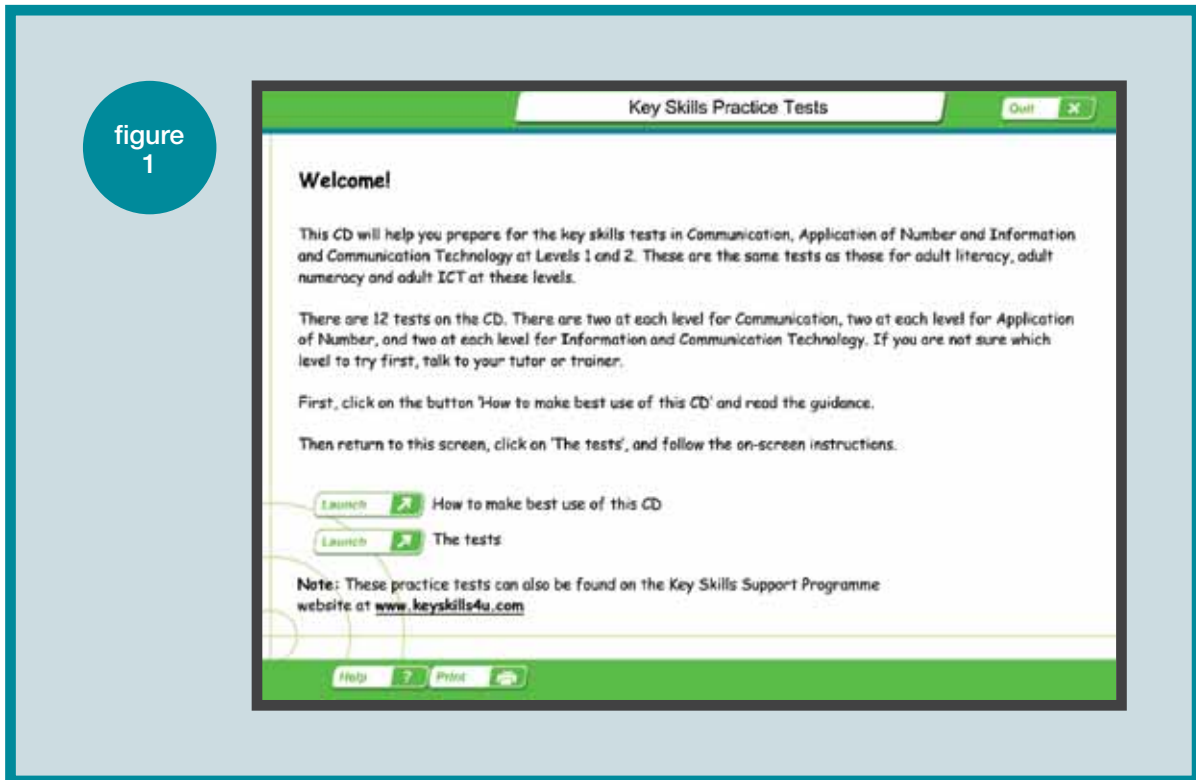
These buttons provide convenient, alternative routes to these areas of the site when you are not on the home page.

- Network versions.

Although *KeySkills4U* is designed to be accessed and used live online via the internet, it is also available on a DVD from which can be downloaded a network version for UK schools, colleges and work-based training organisations. From this link, you can get further information about how to obtain this DVD.

The practice tests

From the home page www.keyskills4u.com you can select 'Practice tests' and enter the practice test area of the site, where you will see this screen.



The learner (or tutor) can now:

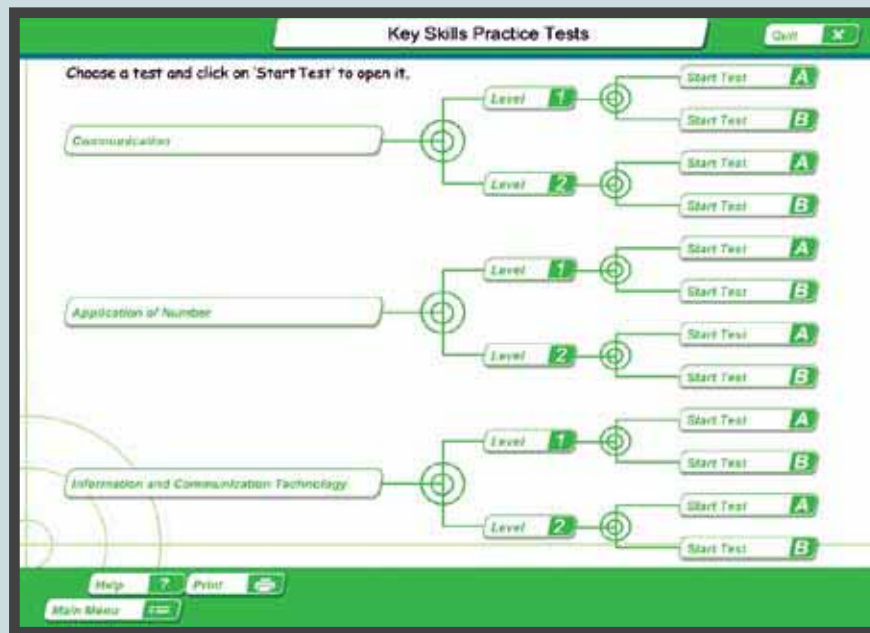
- read about how to make best use of the practice tests
- launch the tests.

On clicking 'The tests', the learner will see the screen in Figure 2.

This shows that there are two tests at Level 1 and Level 2 for each of the key skills, Application of Number, Communication, and Information and Communication Technology.

The practice tests are also available on a CD-ROM. For information on how to order a copy, please contact the Key Skills Helpline on 0870 872 8081.

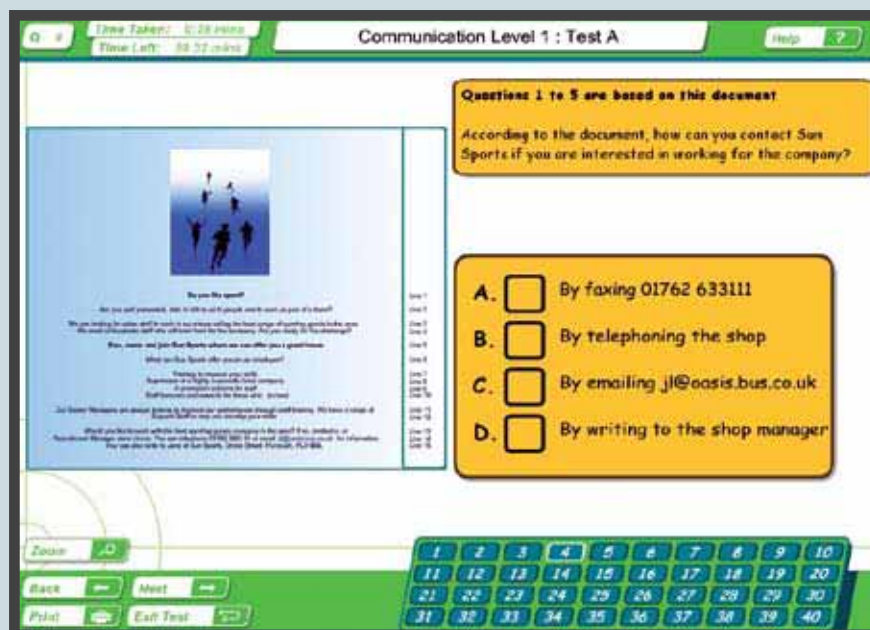
figure 2



The learner can then select which test they want to take by clicking on the appropriate 'Start test' button.

Figure 3 is an example that shows the screen when a learner has reached Question 4 of Communication Level 1 Test A.

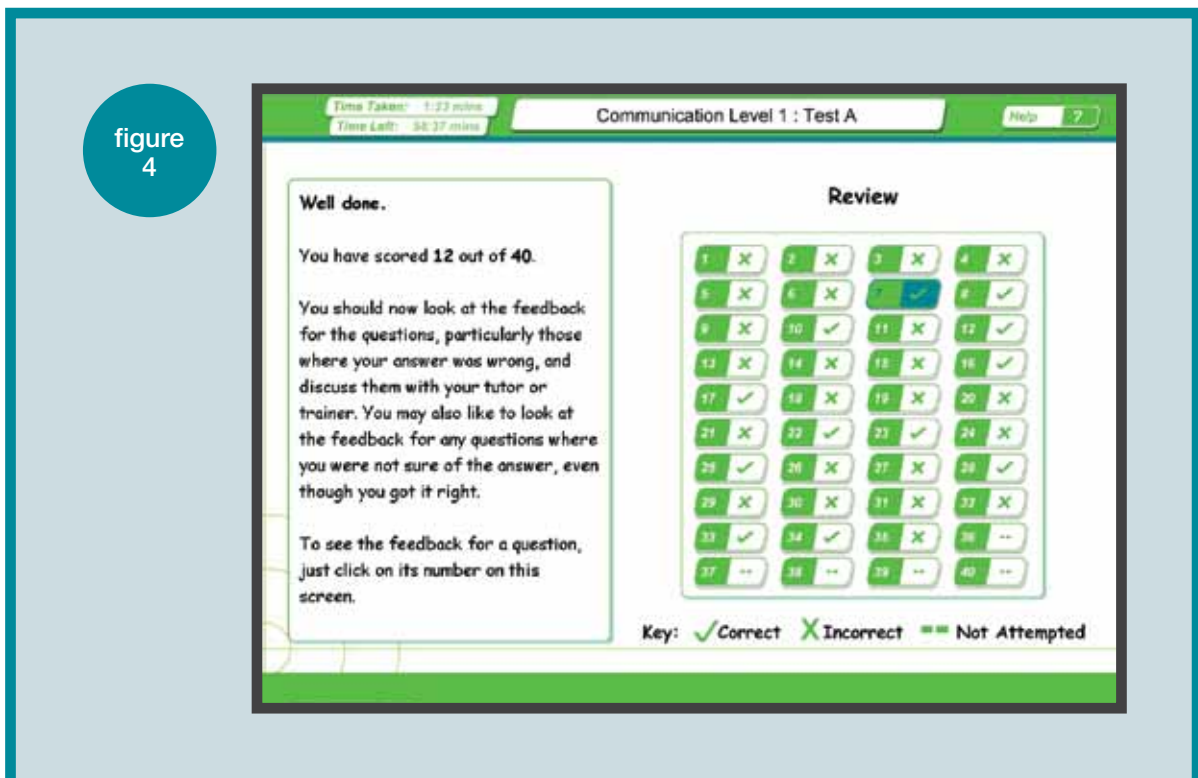
figure 3



The questions are presented in the same format as the 'real' tests.

Note how the screen shows the questions the learner has answered so far (in green), the time taken so far, and the time left. A learner can leave out a question and return to it later, or return to a question to check and perhaps change their answer, just as they can in the 'real' test.

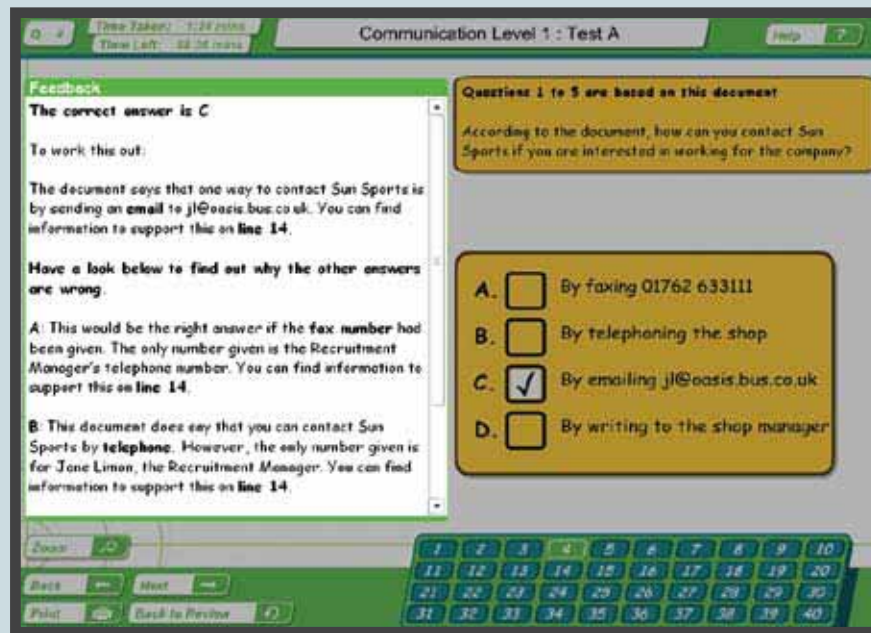
When the learner has completed a test, they will see a summary of their results showing which ones they got right, which they got wrong, and which they did not attempt, as shown in Figure 4.



If the learner then clicks on the number of a question, they will receive feedback on why their answer was right (or why it was wrong) together with similar explanations of the other three answers, as in Figure 5 (page 16).

The feedback to the learner's answer to each question is the most important aspect of this part of *KeySkills4U*. While learners will of course want to know their score for the test, the important learning comes from studying the feedback.

figure 5



Having answered the questions, the learner can identify which skill area/s they need to work on. They might then go to the 'Learn' material in the 'Check your skills and learn' area of *KeySkills4U* and do some work on these particular skills.

Key Skills Trainer

From the home page www.keyskills4u.com you can select the link to Key Skills Trainer.

Key Skills Trainer has been designed to help learners check, learn and apply their key skills. It covers Application of Number, Communication, and Information and Communication Technology at Levels 1 and 2. There is also an area 'Supporting key skills at Level 1' that is for learners who are developing their skills and need extra support towards their Level 1 learning. It aims to identify gaps in learning and to help learners build and develop the skills required in Part A of the key skills standards.

figure
6



This is the menu screen where the learner can choose the key skill and level that they wish to work at.



This is the opening page for Communication and Application of Number.



This is the opening screen for 'Supporting key skills at Level 1'.



This is the opening page for Information and Communication Technology.

The features of Key Skills Trainer

Check your skills and learn

Each part of Key Skills Trainer contains a 'Check your skills and learn' section. Key elements include:

- 'Check your skills' questions
- the Progress map
- learning material.

In the 'Check your skills and learn' section, the key skills of Communication, Application of Number, and Information and Communication Technology are broken down as shown in Table 1. You can see how this relates to the component headings in Part A of the key skills standards.

Table 1

Communication	Application of Number	Information and Communication Technology
Speaking and listening Reading Writing	Interpreting information Carrying out calculations Interpreting results and presenting findings	Sources of information Finding information Selecting information Entering information Developing information Deriving information (Level 2) Structuring, developing and presenting information Standard ways of working with IT

For more detailed information about what is covered in 'Check your skills and learn' see the sections on 'Using Check your skills and learn' (page 25), 'Using the Progress map' (page 28) and 'Using the learn material' (page 29).

It is essential that both you and your learners recognise that the tasks contained in 'The Symtel Files' and 'The Serpent's Curse' are not designed to generate the evidence required for portfolios.

The Symtel Files

There are two parts to The Symtel Files:

- the tasks. These are mapped to the Communication and Application of Number key skills standards at Level 1 and at Level 2 and enable the learner to apply the key skill in a realistic setting.
- the game. In this part the learner plays the role of a private investigator employed by the Symtel company to find out which employee stole confidential plans and sold them to a rival company. Learners have to complete the tasks in order to get the information they need to identify the thief.

The Serpent's Curse

The Serpent's Curse also has two parts:

- the tasks. As in The Symtel Files, these tasks are mapped to the key skills standards and apply ICT skills at Level 1 and Level 2 in a realistic setting.
- the game. In this part the learner plays the role of an ICT expert employed to find out what has happened to the Serpent King's diamond. The activities in this game can be undertaken without having to do the tasks.

More information about the games and the tasks is available in the main tutor guide and in the tutor guides to 'Using The Symtel Files' and 'Using The Serpent's Curse'. These are all available on the home page www.keyskills4u.com

In 'Supporting key skills at Level 1', only the 'Check your skills and learn' section is available, ie there is no game. However, the learning support material is more interactive than the material at Levels 1 and 2.

Using Key Skills Trainer

Login

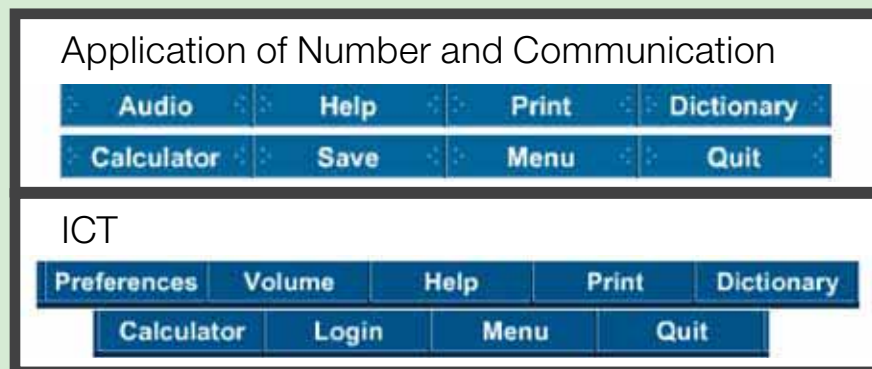
The first screen in Key Skills Trainer is the log in screen. The learner can login with a user name and password so their progress and scores can be saved. They can then return later and pick up where they left off without losing information about how far they have got, and how they are doing. It is possible to continue without logging in but progress and scores will not be saved between sessions.

figure
7



When the learner has logged in, they will be asked to select a key skill and a level. They will then see one of the navigation bars (shown in Figure 8) at the top of the screen, depending on which area they have entered.

figure
8



The buttons can be used as follows.

Preferences. This maximises the accessibility of *KeySkills4U* by giving the user a menu from which they can choose the font size and colour, and the background colour, of the on-screen text.

Audio or Volume. This button can be used to turn the sound on and off, or to adjust the volume. This provides additional support for learners with audio and/or visual impairments.

Help. This button opens the 'Help Menu'. Some help screens play automatically; others work by using the mouse.

Print. This button can be used to print the current screen.

Dictionary. This button can be used to open the dictionary. Learners can search for a word by typing it in, by selecting the appropriate first letter, or by using the 'Back' and 'Next' buttons. Selecting a word that is highlighted in blue in the main content of the package will also bring up the dictionary.

Calculator. This button can be used to open a fully functional calculator. The percentage function has been intentionally omitted from the calculator because Application of Number learners have to work percentages out for themselves.

Save or Login. If the learner logged in at the start of the package, this button appears as 'Save', which they can use to save their work at regular intervals. If they did not log in, the button appears as 'Login', which gives them the option to log in and save their work.

Menu. This button will return the learner to the 'Main Menu' for the current part of the package.

Quit. This button should be used to close the package and to save progress (if logged in).

How might Key Skills Trainer be used?

There are many possible ways of using Key Skills Trainer, including:

- to raise awareness. 'Check your skills and learn' covers each key skill component. Content is then classified into skill areas, showing what needs to be covered in Part A. The 'learn' material then illustrates the learning that needs to take place for this skill area. See Case Study 1.
- to motivate. Learners can get instant feedback on skills that have been tested, access a particular skill area and work on their own particular needs, see a visual illustration of their skills profile in the Progress map, and practise the application of their skills in the simulations. See Case Studies 2 and 3.
- to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding and learn the new skills required to fill these gaps.
- to check understanding. A teacher or trainer can use the package to enable learners to check their understanding of what they have been taught in class or at the workplace.
- to develop and apply skills in a realistic setting.
- to enable learners to work at their own pace and at a time that suits them. See Case Study 4.
- to enhance teaching and learning in a classroom setting.
- to personalise learning activities for individual learners.
- for action planning and target setting.
- as homework or out-of-class activity.
- for staff development and training.

Raising awareness

A key skills coordinator at a work-based learning (WBL) provider reported that trainee tutors for both the adult and community learning and the WBL sectors benefited from using Key Skills Trainer. In particular, it highlighted skills gaps that even mature, experienced professionals, let alone non-traditional learners, had not previously recognised in themselves.

Many trainees, she felt, did not realise that they needed to demonstrate their competence in the key skills; they assumed that the training would focus on delivering their specialist subject. Perhaps more strikingly, she found that a number of trainees did not even consider the possibility that they might have skills deficiencies. In order to support this awareness-raising for trainees, it was important that the 'Check your skills and learn' tests gave them privacy and individualised learning, and minimised any potential embarrassment among their peer group.

Motivation

At an FE college in the west of England, the key skills coordinator initially structures lessons by going through the *KeySkills4U* website with the group to familiarise learners with how to access the site and load the material.

Next, the questions and answers (Check your skills and learn) are considered in a whole group discussion.

Learners are then split into smaller groups and compete against each other with the follow-up exercises. This competitive approach increases learner motivation and has proved to be both popular and successful with learners.

Following this, work is set for home study, private study at college and individual study in preparation for online testing. A key requirement, before learners are entered for online testing, is that they individually complete and print out two tests to the required standards. The key skills coordinator feels that this method has worked with all ability levels and given a very high success rate.

Motivation

A key skills coordinator at an FE college has found Key Skills Trainer particularly useful with those who are less able or less motivated, as the layout of the questions and the site makes it easy for them to access and navigate. She has found that, for some of her foundation-level learners, the use of technology is definitely more appealing and motivating than the more traditional and formalised paper-based resources that are available. Practice with online testing is also seen as invaluable, so that learners are appropriately prepared in a formative rather than a summative setting.

Her approach has been to split key skills sessions into three sections: portfolio building, online work with Key Skills Trainer, and discussion of a topic. The portfolio building operates mainly on an individual basis, drawing on work that learners are doing elsewhere in their programme. The online work with Key Skills Trainer can also be done individually, but learners often collaborate informally in pairs to develop their skills and understanding. Discussion involves the whole group. This approach, she feels, maintains healthy motivation.

Flexible learning

An FE college, as part of its work-based learning provision, finds Key Skills Trainer particularly useful for its apprentices. The amount of contact time is very limited due to the learners' work commitments, which allow them to be in college only one day a week. The 'Check your skills and learn' section of the site gives a more flexible approach to learning and allows individual learners to progress at their own pace and their own level.

Learners are initially required to complete the four questions in Test A of one of the sections of 'Check your skills'. If they answer all these successfully, they move on to the next section. If they get any answers wrong, however, they have to complete the relevant 'Learn' section and then take the appropriate Test B. If they still have problems, the learners are given individual assistance, tailored to their needs.

The key skills coordinator feels that this approach is learner-centred and gives apprentices the opportunity to tailor their learning to meet the gaps in their knowledge in preparation for their key skill tests.

Using 'Check your skills and learn'

In the 'Check your skills and learn' section the key skills of Communication, Application of Number, and Information and Communication Technology are broken down into their components as they are presented in Part A of the standards. Each component is then further broken down into the skill areas that make up the required knowledge and understanding for that area.

The example in Figure 9 is taken from Communication and Application of Number Level 1. It shows that Communication is broken down into 'Speaking and Listening', 'Reading' and 'Writing'. 'Speaking and Listening' is then further broken down into 'Prepare an argument', 'Give clear information', 'Appropriate language' etc. Each of these skill areas has two sets of four questions, Set A and Set B, (in 'Supporting key skills at Level 1' there is only one set of four questions per skill area). The learner can select a component such as 'Speaking and Listening', then select and highlight the skill area they wish to check. Next, by selecting 'Take set A' they will be taken through the four questions per skill area. When they have finished, they will be asked if they wish to return to the subject menu to check their progress. When they return, they will see the ticks and crosses indicating which questions they got right and which they got wrong.

figure
9



From this the learner is able to see at a glance the areas where they need to focus their efforts. They can then select 'Learn' and use the material to help them develop the required skills.

Once the learner has undertaken some learning to address areas of weakness in the Level 1 and 2 packages, they can return to the subject menu and answer the questions in Set B to see how their results compare with those from Set A.

“ I now enjoy learning English (and Maths) using KeySkills4U. It breaks down the skills into small groups so I don't get a rush of information all at once, like in my GCSEs. I can just go back and do things I am struggling with rather than having to do all the questions. ”

Performing arts learner

Work-based learning

Work-based learning providers have given a positive response to Key Skills Trainer. Typically, when working with apprentices, the lack of contact time can make the delivery and monitoring of key skills challenging. One provider felt that the 'Check your skills and learn' section of the site were extremely useful in providing direct support in the learner's own environment, and therefore improved their learning experience. Understanding is developed by encouraging learners to apply their learning to their work environment.

This has proved to be very popular with learners but there is sometimes an issue with accessibility. Not all their learners have access to a computer or the internet at work, and some do not have access at home either. Consequently, trainees are offered free access to the centre at any time during the working day, or are encouraged to use alternative facilities such as public libraries, internet cafés etc. They all seem to manage somehow.

“ We use 'Check your skills and learn' as a homework tool to improve learners' skills, and use the test score printout as an indicator of their readiness for the external formal assessment. ”

Work-based learning tutor

case
study
5

Checking understanding

When working with advanced art and design learners in an FE college, the key skills coordinator, who is also the ICT tutor, was concerned with learners' lack of commitment to key skills. She tackled this by closely managing and monitoring their learning through the use of 'Check your skills and learn' and the 'Progress map'.

She has a record of all her learners' individual log-in and password details, and each week sets the group an objective of reading through a 'Learn' topic and completing the Set A and Set B tests. Before the next group session, she checks online that all the learners have completed the tasks by entering their passwords herself and monitoring their individual progress maps. The learners then have to complete a written test in their group session the next week to demonstrate understanding.

‘ It is very time-consuming, but I feel it’s necessary to make sure that their knowledge and understanding is improving and measurable. ’

On occasions, the learners are put into small groups, working on different topics. They then have to give a presentation to the rest of the group based on what they have learned from Key Skills Trainer.

case
study
6

Checking understanding

For NVQ Hair and Beauty learners, one FE tutor feels that Key Skills Trainer works well in tandem with a peer development approach. The learners on her course typically have a varying range of ability in key skills, and differing levels of self-confidence.

‘ I get my groups to go through the same test individually, and then they print out their results in ‘Progress map’. We then, as a class, go through the test together using a projector. This leads to discussion and group learning, where they can draw on their own and each other’s experience. ’

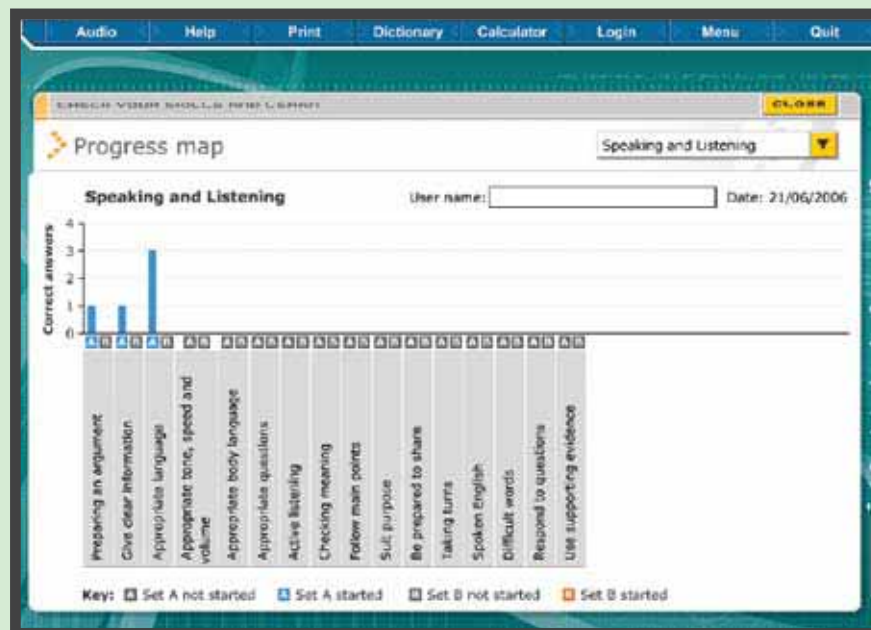
FE tutor

Bearing this in mind, she pairs able learners with less able learners on one computer – a kind of 'buddy system'. This leads to them discussing the work and sharing their experience and learning.

Using the 'Progress map' and developing individual learning plans

Once a learner has worked through one or more of the skill areas and completed Test A, they can select 'Progress map' and see a display of their skill profile against the skill areas (see Figure 10). Using this, they can see their spiky profile (ie where they have strengths and weaknesses in their underpinning knowledge and understanding) and which skill areas they need to target. They can use the 'Learn' material to work on their areas of weakness and then go back to the 'Check your skills' page and do Test B to see how they have improved. All these pages can be printed and used as the basis of an informed discussion during a tutorial or to build an individual learning plan. The learner can also print a 'Progress map' which will show the skill areas they have covered, and the date. As well as evidence for discussion in tutorials or review sessions, this can be used as part of a learner's evidence towards Improving Own Learning and Performance.

figure 10



Test B is available only for the Level 1 and Level 2 material. It is not available for 'Supporting key skills at Level 1'.

Identifying gaps and action planning

A key skills coordinator at an FE college finds that the progress maps explicitly identify where a learner's skills gaps are. She finds this particularly valuable with her NVQ students, who have inconsistent levels of knowledge across the key skill areas. The progress map helps her to develop both group and individual learning plans.

‘ I believe this is the most accurate toolkit we have to screen individuals. The results help me to meet the learners’ needs directly, by identifying their learning gaps. ’

Key skills coordinator

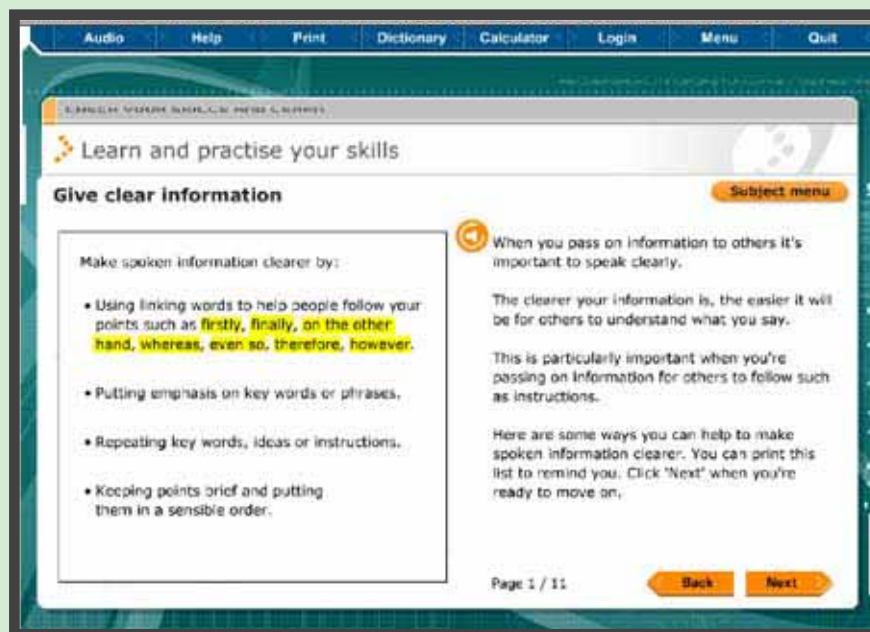
First, she uses Key Skills Trainer as a diagnostic assessment tool for every learner (the appropriate level having been pre-determined by the entrance screening results). Once the learners have completed ‘Check your skills’, the results are analysed to identify the group’s learning gaps. Where learners have not scored at all, or scored only one out of four, they are timetabled for lessons on that specific topic. If learners score two or three, they are first signposted to a variety of appropriate learning sites, and then a range of support is agreed. At this point, both group and individual learning plans are drawn up.

Using the ‘Learn’ material

The ‘Learn’ material can be used to support the development and acquisition of skills. Some learners know exactly the areas or topics where they need to top up their understanding. They are able to use the package like a textbook, dipping in to get information and then coming straight out again, returning when they need further information about another skill area.

For example, a learner who found it difficult to give clear information in Communication at Level 1 could go to Key Skills Trainer and, even without logging in, go to ‘Communication and Application of Number Level 1’, then ‘Check your skills and learn’, ‘Give clear information’ and ‘Learn’. They would then see the screen in Figure 11. This is the first of 11 screens that take the learner through this topic, including some audio content and interactive exercises.

figure
11



Using 'Check your skills and learn' to prepare for the test

As for any kind of assessment, learners need to prepare as well as possible for on-screen or online tests. They have not only to develop their underpinning knowledge and understanding, but also to become familiar with the layout and methodology of on-screen and online tests and the ability to navigate quickly round the system. 'Check your skills and learn' can be used both before and after a practice test.

Using 'Check your skills and learn' before a practice test

The questions used in 'Check your skills and learn' are based on the questions used in the real key skills tests. By working through a variety of these questions the learner will not only gain an understanding of how well they know and understand these skill areas, but will also have practised the style and type of questions that they will face in a real key skills test, on-screen or online.

Using ‘Check your skills and learn’ after a practice test

After a learner has taken a practice test, they can look at their results and identify the skill areas that they need to work on. They can then go into the ‘Learn’ area and work through the appropriate learning screens to address these weak areas. Following this, they can use the ‘Check your skills’ tests to see how well they have understood the skill.

📌 **Our students work through a ‘Preparing for your online test’ booklet. They record their scores for all practice tests taken and make a note of the areas for improvement. Weaknesses are targeted by developing individual learning plans using the *KeySkills4U* material. The aim is to achieve 70% on three consecutive tests before entering for the live test. 📌**

FE teacher

Using ‘The Symtel Files’ or ‘The Serpent’s Curse’

Developing application of the skills in a realistic setting

Both games can be accessed at either Level 1 or Level 2. When a learner enters a game, they will see a screen that explains where they are and what to do. Both games contain tasks that are set in a realistic setting. These tasks are based on the key skills required at the chosen level. The tasks involve moving through the game/simulation and obtaining information.

figure
12



Example

Setting a directed task in 'The Symbel Files' to develop two components of the Application of Number skills at Level 1:

- Interpret information
- Carry out calculations.

Carry out tests and calculations on a new phone

From the home page www.keyskills4u.com select Key Skills Trainer. Enter 'Communication and Application of Number Level 1' and select 'The Symbel Files'. Listen to the instructions when you see Saffron at her desk in the screenshot in Figure 12.

In this example we will work through the task set out in the email from Clinton Riley with the subject 'Product test'. In this task we need to carry out tests and calculations on new phones. Step-by-step instructions to work through this task are shown in Table 2.

A similar summary of each task contained in 'The Symbel Files' and in 'The Serpent's Curse' is provided in the guides 'Using The Symbel Files' and 'Using The Serpent's Curse'.

Table 2

1	Open the laptop by selecting the laptop button at the bottom of the screen.
2	On the laptop, open your inbox by selecting 'email'. You will now see the screen shown in Figure 13.
3	Open the email 'Product test' from Clinton Riley and read through to see what you have to do. Print the email if you wish to. Select 'More details' if you want more help about what to do. Open the attachment 'Testing report' in the email. As you scroll through the attachment you will see what information is required. For example, on the page shown in Figure 14, information is required about the dimensions of the phone, its resistance to heat and cold, its stand-by time and its key features.
4	Exit the email and the laptop. Go to the laboratory. To get there, select 'Office plan' and then 'Laboratory'.
5	Listen to the instructions that explain how to gather all the information you need about how the equipment in the laboratory works.
6	Now read the email again to see what information you need to gather.
7	Use the instruments in the laboratory to gather the information you need. Figure 15 shows the measuring ruler.
8	Now put the information you have gathered into the email. You might write it down on the sheet you have printed.
9	When you have entered the information in the email, you must save your work. To do this, use the 'Save' button at the top of the screen.
10	You can get your tasks marked by going to see Catherine Murdock. To do this, close all the applications that are open and get back to the screen that shows Saffron sitting at her desk in reception. Use the 'Office plan' link at the bottom left of the screen to open up the office plan, then select Catherine Murdock at the top left. Select her computer and then 'Feedback'. You will now see the email you completed. If you logged in with a username it will have your name; if not it will say 'New user'. Open the email and look at the attachment. You will be able to see which bits of information you provided are correct and which are wrong.

figure 13

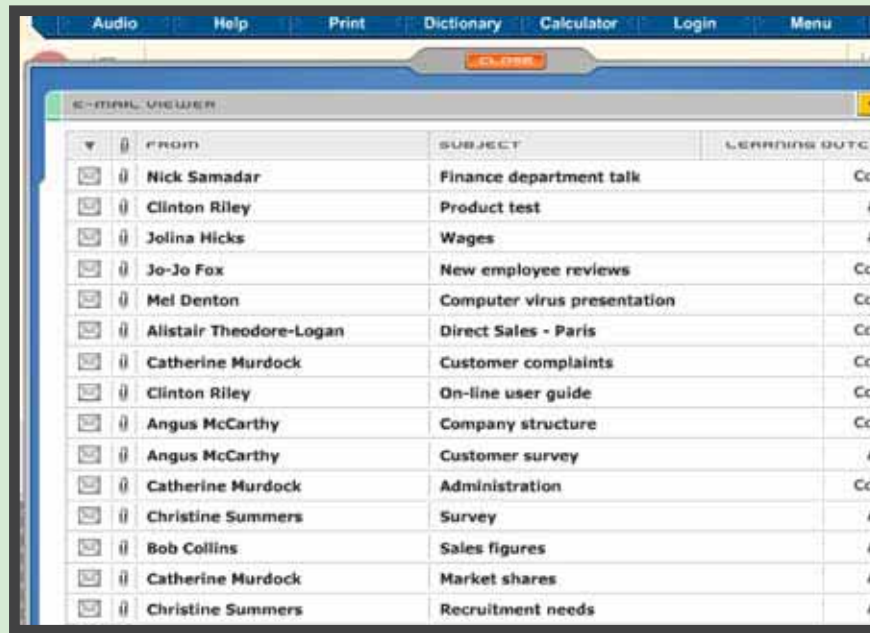


figure 14

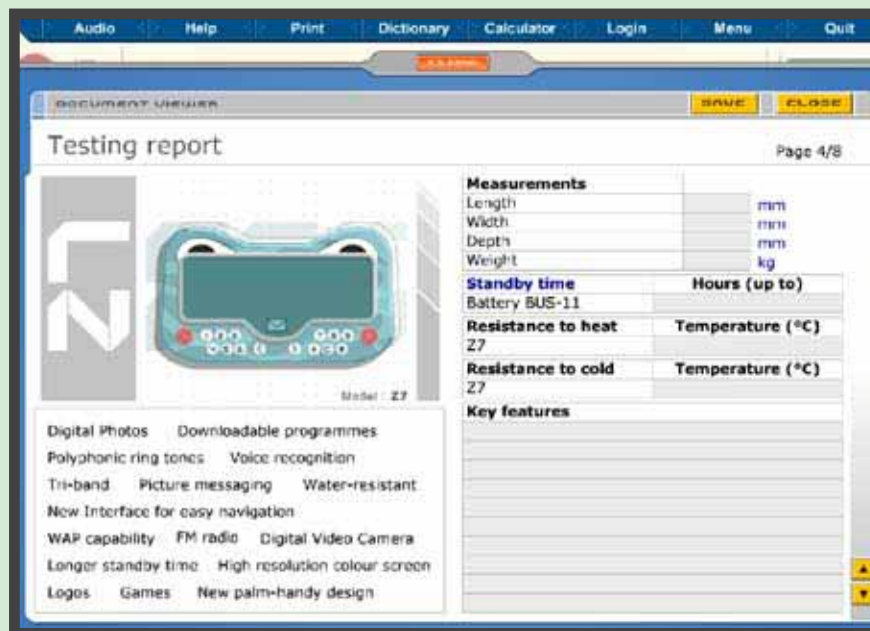
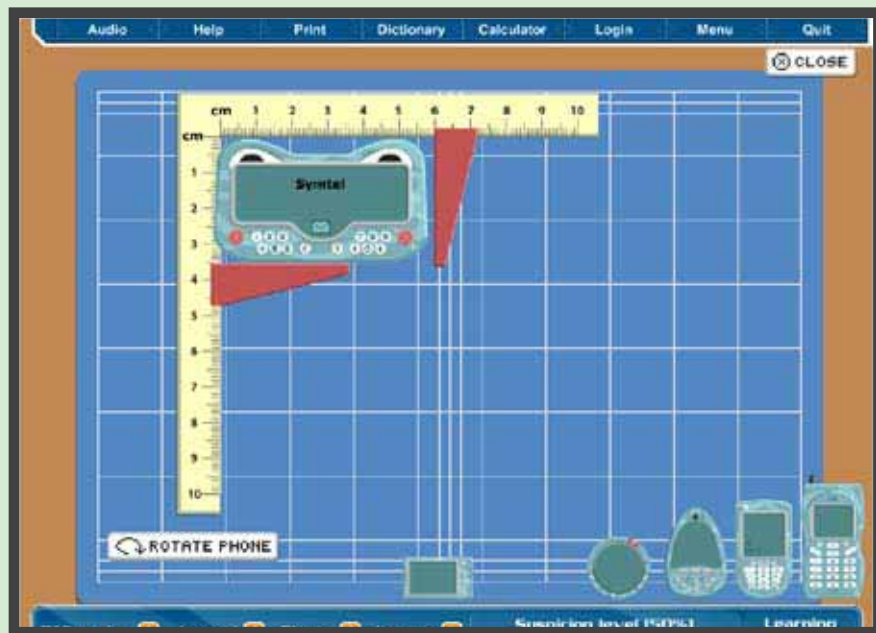


figure
15



case
study
8

Using 'The Symtel Files'

A key skills coordinator at a sixth form college was having a great deal of difficulty getting his A-level learners to see the relevance of doing key skills. He found, however, that 'The Symtel Files' helped to bring home to them the importance of a broad base of skills in the world of work.

The tutor split the learners into groups of three and, having introduced them to the Level 1 Symtel package, gave each group a printout of the emails that are included in the early stages. He also gave out the task summary sheet from the '*Using The Symtel Files*' tutor guide, which contains the instructions needed to complete the tasks set out in the emails. The learners then went to the learning centre to complete the tasks.

The following week, each group had to report back on what they had done to complete the tasks.

Feedback on what they had done included:

- making notes and giving accurate feedback on performance
- dealing with letters of complaint; checking information, and writing an appropriate reply
- filing information, and checking punctuation and grammar
- gathering information, and completing documents accurately
- taking measurements and inputting the information.

Using Key Skills Trainer for staff development and training

Many tutors delivering key skills are not specialists in the skills of Application of Number, Communication or Information and Communication Technology. They are subject or vocational experts who are developing learners' skills in context. They need to be aware of what needs to be covered in a particular skill at a particular level.

The 'Check your skills and learn' page, which shows the key skill broken down into components and skill areas, can be used to quickly and easily show staff what is required for a key skill at a particular level.

Once staff know what they need to do, they want to feel confident and competent in their own ability to develop the skills of their learners. By using the questions in the 'Check your skills' tests, tutors can identify or confirm any areas of their own skill weaknesses and then use the 'Learn' material to address these weaknesses. Doing this on a computer-based system such as Key Skills Trainer enables them to carry out the skill check in a non-threatening environment and to personalise the activity to their own individual needs. By logging in and saving their work, they can carry out this check and updating as and when they wish, returning to the activity at a time that suits them.

How else is *KeySkills4U* being used?

Research into the use of *KeySkills4U* has identified that it is being used in a wide range of other contexts and for a variety of purposes to aid learning.

To improve learning in the classroom

A 'spiky profile' occurs when a learner's knowledge and understanding in a particular key skill, or between skills, is developed at different levels. For example, a learner may be working at Application of Number Level 2 and be competent in many of the skills required, but be weak in certain areas, such as percentages or fractions. This spiky profile will vary from learner to learner and means that learning has to be personalised to individual needs if we are to avoid spending time teaching learners things they already know, or failing to support learners with particular weaknesses.

In one example from the research described on pages 3–4, a tutor working with a group of learners realised that, although most had good grades at GCSE, their knowledge and understanding of some areas was still quite weak. However, each individual had different areas of weakness, so teaching a topic like fractions to the whole group would mean that many were bored while others needed individual attention. Using the results of an initial diagnostic assessment, the tutor was able to set individual learning plans for each learner. They then used the ‘Check your skills and learn’ section of *KeySkills4U* to work on their weaknesses individually. When they had done this, small groups of learners with similar skills needs discussed the questions with the tutor.

As homework

After a classroom session where work had been undertaken in a contextualised vocational setting, the tutor set follow-up work asking the learners to go to *KeySkills4U* and check their skills in the relevant skill areas. Learners were advised that, if they got two or more of the multiple-choice questions wrong, they should do the ‘Learn’ material. As evidence that they had done the work, the tutor asked them to print off their results in the ‘Progress map’.

To enable differentiation

A group of learners on a motor vehicle course were assessed as having a range of abilities in Application of Number. To allow the tutor to work with a small group identified as Level 1, he set a series of tasks based around relevant skill areas for the other learners, who then went to the learning centre and completed them online. They came back to the tutor with their results printed out as screen shots from the ‘Check your skills’ page.

To enable learners to work at their own pace and at a time and place that suits them

Adult learners who had difficulty getting to college due to domestic pressures and commitments were able to address their skill needs by working through sections of the ‘Check your skills and learn’ material. Using this material, they were able to keep up with their programme of study and many learners who, in their tutor’s view, would have drifted off during the year were retained and completed their programme.

The Serpent's Curse

A teacher in a school sixth form was finding it difficult to engage her advanced art and design learners with Level 2 Information and Communication Technology. They couldn't see what it had to do with them or their main programme of study. By using aspects of 'The Serpent's Curse', she was able to demonstrate to them the relevance of technology to the real world of art.

The learners were first introduced to 'The Serpent's Curse' in a whole class situation, and shown the steps to follow in order to complete the database tasks. They then individually input the relevant details of the artefacts into the database.

The teacher then asked them to work in pairs and decide what kind of art or design business they might like to represent in a role-play situation. She gave them the following examples, although they could choose their own:

- independent art gallery
- auction house
- graphic design company
- fabric printing company
- photographic agency.

By the following week, they had to create a list of potential customers, suppliers or any other business contacts they felt might be valuable to their prospective businesses.

They were then required to create their own databases into which they input their contact lists. From the initial stimulus of operating 'The Serpent's Curse' database in a virtual reality world, the learners had moved on to understanding the relevance of ICT as a skill in the real world.

Key skills for adults

A higher education institution that included some adult and community learning in its provision realised that a number of its new teachers, while well qualified in their specialist subjects, were lacking key skill Application of Number at Level 2. Classes were put on especially for them but, as they were expecting to be taught in a traditional way, this was a potentially embarrassing experience for them.

Their teacher, recognising this, used a blended learning approach, a part of which was introducing them to *KeySkills4U*, which allowed the learners some discretion. Topics were introduced in a whole class situation. Problems were set up for small groups to solve but then learners were encouraged to use the package on an individual basis. This gave them flexibility, the opportunity to work at their own pace and in their own time and, most importantly through the 'Check your skills' section, it enabled the teacher to easily identify the learners' skills gaps.

The teacher felt that having the opportunity to test themselves discreetly allowed his weaker learners to develop their confidence in the use of number, and to progress more quickly than they otherwise might.

‘ Due to the changes in the course I am studying, it is now a requirement to pass Level 2 in English and Maths, even if I was not to teach them. This was daunting, but with this practice I am now able to go and do the test and pass, knowing a little about what is in front of me. Thank you. ’

Cert. Ed. learner

Getting support for using *KeySkills4U*

Tutor guides

The following tutor guides are available from the home page www.keyskills4u.com

- Tutor guide Levels 1 and 2 (Application of Number, Communication, and Information and Communication Technology)
 - Part A
 - Part B
 - Part C
 - Whole guide
- Using 'The Symtel Files'
- Using 'The Serpent's Curse'
- Supporting key skills at Level 1.

Site feedback and Helpline

If you have any technical difficulties using the site or would like to give feedback on the material in the site, please use the 'Site Feedback' link on the home page www.keyskills4u.com or contact the telephone helpline 0870 872 8081, or email enquiries at kssp@LSNeducation.org.uk

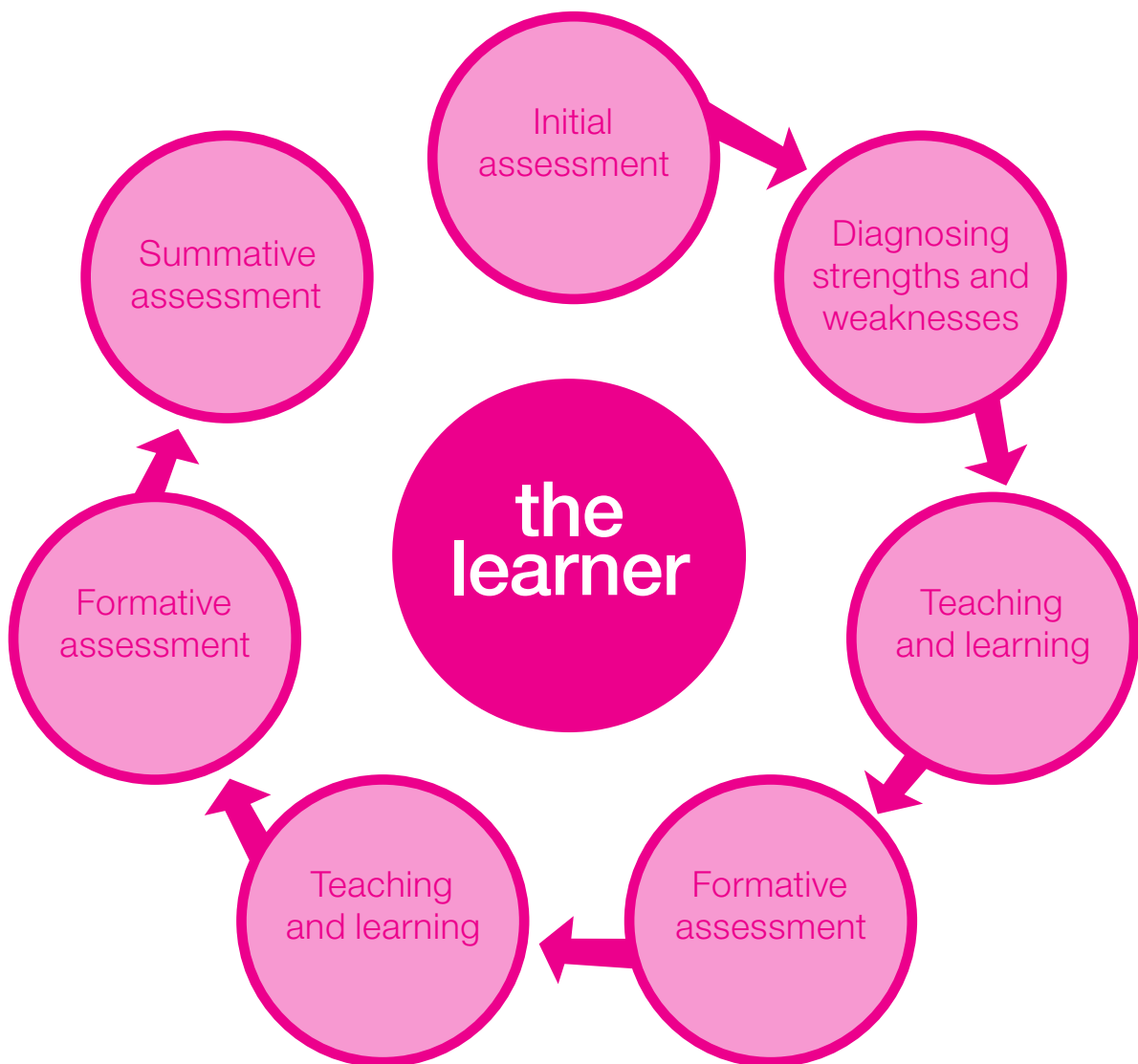
Support and training

The Key Skills Support Programme provides free support and training on using a range of ICT resources to deliver key skills, including the use of *KeySkills4U*. Details of how to apply for this support can be found on the main Key Skills Support Programme website www.keyskillssupport.net In the 'schools, colleges etc' area of the site, go to Training, Events and Support and scroll down to 'Centre based support'.

Appendix 1. How can ICT help the delivery of key skills?

Figure 16

ICT can help at each stage in the learning journey.



There are benefits for the **learner**, the **teacher** and the **centre**.

ICT and technology can be used to help the learner, the tutor/ trainer and the centre at each stage of the learning journey from enrolment (and indeed pre-enrolment) through to summative assessment. However an ICT-based package should be planned into the learning experience just like any other aid to learning. Hence, when deciding if and how to use ICT, we need to consider how the technology can help and what advantage it will bring compared with other methods of delivery and assessment.

There are many reasons to use ICT and e-learning.

- Benefits to the learner may include:
 - immediate feedback on work
 - visual and interactive learning material
 - a non-threatening learning environment
 - personalised learning activities that are targeted at individual needs.
- Benefits to the teacher may include:
 - information and resources to target learning to individual needs
 - more motivated learners
 - improved learner achievement.
- Benefits for the organisation may include:
 - improved motivation, retention and achievement
 - better information about individual/group needs
 - when used appropriately, better inspection grades.

Let us consider some of the potential benefits of using ICT at each stage of the learning journey as set out in Figure 16.

Initial assessment

Initial assessment is a term used to refer to the formal and/or informal process of identifying appropriate learning programmes for individual students. Good initial assessment is needed to ensure that learners are working and supported at the level best suited to their needs and current attainment, both in their main programme and in key skills.

Here are three examples of initial assessment tools:

- The Basic Skills Agency (BSA) has published a revised version of its initial assessment pack for literacy and numeracy, mapped to the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy. Further information is available on the BSA at NIACE website www.basic-skills.co.uk Details of this resource can be found at www.toolslibrary.co.uk, from where you can download the computer-based initial assessment tests.
- Cambridge Training and Development (CTAD) has published 'Target Skills' assessment materials for literacy and numeracy. See the CTAD Target Skills website at www.targetskills.net for details.
- West Nottinghamshire College has produced 'basic & keySKILLBUILDER' – for details, see www.bksb.co.uk

Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment builds on initial assessment to provide more in-depth information about an individual learner's strengths and weaknesses, enabling tutors to design a personalised programme of work suitable to their needs. By carrying out effective regular diagnostic assessment of a learner's skills needs, you can target the teaching and learning to suit individual requirements. When you have more than a handful of learners to teach, identifying and keeping track of their individual requirements becomes time-consuming. This is where technology can help.

While the packages listed above will help diagnose learners' skills strengths and weaknesses, you can also use *KeySkills4U* for this purpose.

🗨️ **'Check your skills and learn' allows apprentices to move on as quickly as they need. I get them to complete the four test questions in Part A. If they get all correct, they then move on to the next section. If they get any wrong, they complete the 'Learn' section and then take the Part B test. If they still have problems, I can then give individual assistance tailored to their needs. 🗨️**

FE teacher

Teaching and learning

To engage and motivate learners it is useful to be able to personalise learning to their individual needs. Also, learners want to be able to access learning on a particular topic at a time, and perhaps a pace and a place, that suits them. ICT can be used to identify individual needs and then to target the learning to these needs.

It can also be used to:

- enhance the learning experience, adding interactivity and a visual and/or audio element to suit different learning preferences
- extend learning outside the classroom by allowing learning to take place in a learning centre or at home
- enable learners to study at a time that suits them.

“ My teacher suggested that this [revision] lesson would benefit all of the class. I am now using KeySkills 4U at home and anywhere there is a computer. I’m not very confident with ICT, but this website has helped me a lot. ”

ICT Level 2 learner

Formative assessment

When they are developing their skills, learners benefit from prompt feedback on their performance. A computer-based tool can give immediate feedback on whether an answer is right or wrong and may also give suggestions about how the question might have been approached. This is a particular feature of the practice tests that are included in *KeySkills4U*.

Summative assessment

Many learners seem to prefer taking their tests on-screen or online.

“ Feedback from all types of learner confirming the benefits of on-screen assessment (flexibility, instant feedback, non-threatening environment) is very positive. Achievement is generally higher with on-screen testing compared with paper-based. ”

[www.edexcel.org.uk/44608/
50869/50870/82073/](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/44608/50869/50870/82073/)

Appendix 2. Glossary

The following abbreviations are used in this glossary.

Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT

for *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: communication, application of number, and information and communication technology; Levels 1– 4 2004.*

Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS

for *The wider key skills qualifications standards and guidance: working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem solving; Levels 1– 4 2004.*

Key skills policy and practice

for *Key skills policy and practice: your questions answered.*

Details of these publications are provided at the end of the glossary.

Accuracy

(a) *In Communication*

Accuracy in written communication ‘includes the ability to punctuate, spell and apply the rules of grammar with accuracy at increasing levels of sophistication’. Part A of the standards prescribes the skills required at each level. At Level 1, ‘one or two’ spelling mistakes may be tolerated, ‘as long as these are not repeated in the second document’. The same applies at Levels 2 and 3, but only ‘providing meaning is still clear’. However, fitness for purpose is an important factor (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 29).

At all levels, learners must demonstrate that they have checked the accuracy of their work, whether it is hand-written or word-processed.

(b) *In Application of Number*

The requirements for accuracy vary between the levels. For details on accuracy and checking, see Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT: Level 1 pages 55–56; Level 2 page 60; Level 3 page 66.

Evidence of checking for accuracy is required at all levels. At Levels 1–3 ‘where there is a series of calculations of the same type, evidence of checking at least the first few of each type should be recorded for assessment purposes. For the remainder, accurate results should confirm that effective checking has taken place’ (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 55–56, 60, 66).

Adult literacy and adult numeracy

QCA adopts the Basic Skills Agency’s definition of adult literacy and adult numeracy skills as ‘the ability to read, write and speak in English/Welsh and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general’ (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 4). The standards for adult literacy and adult numeracy at Levels 1 and 2 (which are designed for learners aged 16+) are aligned to the standards for Communication and Application of Number key skills, respectively, at these levels. The key skills tests at Levels 1 and 2 in Communication and Application of Number also act as the tests for adult literacy and adult numeracy. Candidates who gain the adult literacy and adult numeracy qualifications by passing these tests can progress to achieving the Communication and Application of Number key skills qualifications if they wish. In order to meet the requirements of the internal assessment component of the key skills qualifications, candidates have to develop a suitable portfolio of evidence (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 4). See also ‘*Skills for Life*’.

Advanced

Advanced-level qualifications are at Level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework and include AS levels, A-levels, BTECs and OCR Nationals, NVQs at Level 3 and key skills at Level 3. See also ‘National Qualifications Framework’.

Assessment

(a) *Formative assessment*

This is part of the feedback that a teacher or trainer provides during a learning programme to help the learner reflect on and review their progress. It is often referred to as ‘assessment for learning’ in contrast to ‘assessment of learning’ or summative assessment. It has no direct effect on the learner’s final result. ‘Assessment for Learning is 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’ (Assessment Reform Group, 2002).

For more information, see www.qca.org.uk/7659.html

(b) *Summative assessment*

This is the assessment that determines whether a candidate has achieved a qualification and, if appropriate, with what grade. See also 'Internal assessment' and 'External assessment'.

Assessor

The person responsible for the initial judgement of a candidate's performance against defined standards expressed as assessment criteria or mark schemes.

Awarding body

There are 16 awarding bodies offering key skills qualifications, including the unitary awarding bodies in England (AQA, Edexcel, OCR), WJEC in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland. They are listed on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/603.html : select 'Contacts'.

Basic skills

See 'Adult literacy and adult numeracy' and '*Skills for Life*'.

Chart

For the purpose of the Application of Number key skill, it is not necessary to distinguish between 'chart' and 'graph'. QCA defines these as 'a representation of the relationship between variables such as categories and frequency data, or x and y coordinates. Examples include: pie or bar chart, histogram, pictogram, frequency polygon, frequency chart or diagram, single or multiple line graph, scatter graph with or without line of best fit'. (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 51). See also 'Diagram'.

Complex

For the Communication key skill at Level 3, complex subjects include those that deal with abstract or sensitive issues and lines of enquiry dependent on clear reasoning. The subject matter, as well as having a number of strands, must also be challenging to the individual candidate in terms of the ideas it presents (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 43–44). At Level 3, the candidate must write two different types of documents, each one giving different information about complex subjects.

For Application of Number at Level 3, the activity from which evidence is taken must be complex, requiring candidates to consider carefully the nature and sequence of tasks when planning how to obtain and use information to suit their purpose (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 68).

Diagnostic assessment

In the context of key skills, diagnostic assessment is the process which helps to identify the skill areas in which a learner is already competent and those in which their skills are in need of further development. Together with initial assessment, this should inform the learner's individual learning plan. See also 'Initial assessment'.

Diagram

QCA defines a diagram as any graphical method of representation, other than a chart or graph, where scale is or is not a factor (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 51). Examples include: scale drawing, plan or workshop drawing, circuit drawing, 3D representation, flow chart, critical path or network diagram, and organisation chart. See also 'Chart'.

Document

Any printed or written material is a document.

E-learning

E-learning is any form of learning that is delivered electronically. This includes both CD-ROM and online content, whether delivered stand-alone or via an intranet, a VLE (virtual learning environment), or the internet. The term 'e-learning' is becoming more widely used than 'ILT' (information and learning technology).

Entry level

Entry level is subdivided in to Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3. Entry-level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance and supervision. Key skills are not available at Entry level.

Evidence

Key skills candidates have to produce a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that they have the skills required to meet Part B of the relevant key skills standards. Evidence can include written material, computer printouts, artwork, photographs, artefacts, audio and/or video recordings, and witness statements/testimony. See also 'Portfolio' and 'Witness statement'.

Exemption

Key skills candidates can claim exemption from all or part of particular key skills qualifications (most commonly the test) for up to three years from the date of the award of specific accredited proxy qualifications. See also 'Proxy qualifications'.

Expectation

The Secretary of State wishes to see key skill programmes offered to all post-16 learners. Where learners have not already achieved A*–C grades in GCSE English, Maths or Information and Communication Technology, their programmes should lead to the formal acquisition of the relevant key skills qualification/s at Level 2. Where young people are starting on advanced-level programmes with the aim of pursuing a professional or higher-level qualification post-19, then institutions should support them in gaining at least one relevant key skills qualification at Level 3 (*Key skills policy and practice* pages 6–7).

Extended period

For the first three key skills at Level 4, an extended period of time is about three months.

External assessment

In England and Northern Ireland, the external assessment for the first three key skills takes the form of a test which samples from the whole standard at the appropriate level. The tests are externally set, taken under supervised conditions, and externally marked (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 14). See also 'Tests' and 'Exemption'.

Candidates for the wider key skills qualifications may be required to give satisfactory answers to questions asked by an assessor (eg tutor, trainer, supervisor). See 'Questioning'.

External moderation

See 'Standards moderation'.

Fitness for purpose

Key skills portfolio evidence should be appropriate for the wider context and purpose for which it was produced. See also 'Purposeful'.

Foundation

Foundation-level qualifications are at Level 1 of the National Qualifications Framework and include GCSEs at grades D–G, NVQs at Level 1 and key skills at Level 1.

Functional skills

Functional skills are:

'the core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills, and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently effectively and independently in life and at work'.

*14–19 education and skills:
implementation plan (DfES 2005)*

A three-year pilot of functional skills qualifications in all post-14 settings, including with GCSEs, will run from September 2007. The qualifications in functional English, Mathematics and ICT, and the associated revised GCSEs, will be introduced for first teaching in 2010.

It is anticipated that, in due course, functional skills qualifications will replace the qualifications in the 'main' key skills (Communication, Application of Number, ICT) and *Skills for Life* (Literacy and Numeracy). These qualifications will continue to be available for first registration until at least August 2010 (ie, certification until August 2012). Key skills qualifications above Level 2 may remain. Functional skills qualifications will be available to all learners aged 14+ in all sectors. For more information, see www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19 and www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills

Funding

Brief guidance on the funding of key skills and *Skills for Life* provision in schools, colleges and work-based training can be found in *Key skills policy and practice*.

Grading

There are no grades for key skills. Candidates either 'pass' or 'fail'.

Graph

See 'Chart'.

Image

Information and Communication Technology and Communication both require the use of images. Examples include models, plans, sketches, diagrams, pictures, graphs and charts. Whatever form the image takes, it must be fit for purpose and must aid understanding of the written or spoken text.

At Levels 1 and 2 of Communication, candidates must use at least one image **either** to obtain information **or** to convey information in a discussion **or** a talk **or** a document they write. At Level 3, candidates must use an image or other support material in their presentation and at least once more, either to obtain information **or** to convey information in a document they write.

At Levels 1, 2 and 3 of Information and Communication Technology, candidates must use at least one example of an image (as well as examples of text and of number).

A table of text or numbers does not count as an image for Information and Communication Technology or for Communication (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 27)

Independent assessment

All qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework must include a form of independent assessment or an alternative approved by the regulatory authorities (QCA, ACCAC, CCEA). For key skills, this requirement is met by external assessment.

Information

Where the standard for the key skill Information and Communication Technology, at every level, refers to 'information', this can take the form of text and/or images and/or numbers.

Initial assessment

In the context of key skills, initial assessment is the process of identifying the appropriate level at which a learner should start their key skills learning programme and what level they might aim for. This may vary from one skill to another (see 'Spiky profile'). See also 'Diagnostic assessment'.

Inspection

Brief guidance on Ofsted inspection of key skills provision in schools, colleges and work-based training can be found in *Key skills policy and practice*.

Intermediate

Intermediate-level qualifications are at Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework and include GCSEs at grades A*–C, NVQs at Level 2 and key skills at Level 2.

Internal assessment

Internal assessment of key skills is organised by the centre. It focuses on the requirements of Part B of the standards, is based on a portfolio of evidence, is internally assessed, internally verified/moderated, and externally verified/moderated (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 14).

Internal moderation

Internal moderation is sometimes referred to as 'internal verification' and sometimes as 'internal standardisation'. An internal verifier is often referred to as an 'IV'. Whatever the name, this is the process of quality assurance by which an identified person in a centre ensures that the standards of assessment in the centre are consistent both across the centre and with national standards. There are no formal qualification requirements for internal moderators but the awarding bodies provide training and internal moderators/verifiers should aim to achieve the appropriate Verifier unit (V1). See also 'Standards moderation'.

Interpersonal skills

Candidates for the wider key skills are encouraged to develop and apply their interpersonal skills, eg skills in responding appropriately to others, offering support and encouragement, communicating their ideas and needs, accepting constructive feedback, and helping to resolve conflict (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS pages 20, 40). See also 'Process skills'.

Key skills qualifications

All six key skills are qualifications in their own right and are included in the National Qualifications Framework at Levels 1 to 4.

National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework was created by the 1997 Education Act and revised in 2004. It includes all external qualifications that are accredited by QCA (DECWL in Wales and CCEA in Northern Ireland), plus degrees and other higher-level qualifications which are regulated by the universities and QAA. It has nine levels: Entry level and Levels 1 to 8. Key skills qualifications are available at Levels 1 to 4. See www.qca.org.uk/493.html

Objectives

The purposes for working together that are shared by the people involved in an activity for Working With Others are their 'objectives'. They may be set by a tutor, trainer or project leader, or by members of the group or team, depending on the level (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS pages 22, 28, 34).

On-demand assessment

Many awarding bodies offer test opportunities 'on demand', ie in addition to the dates scheduled by QCA. These may be paper-based or on-screen. For details, contact your awarding body. On-demand assessment is not available for the Level 3 or Level 4 tests.

On-screen assessment

The key skills tests at Levels 1 and 2 can be taken electronically on-screen. Results are usually available immediately. There is evidence that many candidates prefer to take the tests on-screen and that results are better than for the paper-based version. For details, contact your awarding body. On-screen assessment is not available for the Level 3 or Level 4 tests.

Part A and Part B

All the key skills standards are made up of these two parts. Part A sets out what the candidate must know, understand and be able to do; Part B sets out what the candidate must do, ie the evidence they must present in their portfolio.

Pilot

Following a period of consultation about new standards and assessment regimes, such as for the new functional skills, QCA normally has a period of 'trailing', when a limited number of centres work with the new standards. QCA may modify the standards in the light of feedback from this trial. This is followed by a period of 'piloting' on a larger scale, when candidates in the pilot centres can be awarded certificates in the new qualification, using the draft standards. The pilot may lead to further changes before the standards are confirmed and the new qualification is made available to all centres.

Portfolio

Candidates for a key skills qualification have to organise and present a portfolio of evidence of how they have met the requirements of Part B of the standard at the appropriate level. The portfolio is usually a file of hard copy but may be an electronically based storage-and-retrieval system (an e-portfolio) (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 14).

Problem

There is a problem when there is a need to bridge a gap between a current situation and a desired situation (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS pages 60–61, 65, 71).

Process skills

All the wider key skills standards include process skills, eg skills in planning, target-setting, organising and carrying out activities, and reviewing progress. These skills are the main focus of assessment of the wider key skills (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS pages 20, 40). See also 'Interpersonal skills'.

Proxy qualifications

Proxy qualifications are qualifications that have been agreed to assess the same knowledge and skills as aspects of the key skills qualifications. Because of this overlap, key skills candidates can claim exemption from all or part of particular key skills qualifications (most commonly the test) for up to three years from the date of the award of the specific proxy qualification. For the current list of proxy qualifications, see the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html See also 'Exemption' and 'Relaxation'.

Purposeful

Key skills evidence must be generated in the context of a task or activity that satisfies some purpose in the candidate's work or leisure. Evidence that is collected simply to satisfy the requirements of the key skills portfolio is not purposeful and does not meet the assessment requirement. See also 'Fitness for purpose'.

Questioning

In addition to submitting a portfolio of evidence, candidates for the wider key skills qualifications may be required to give satisfactory answers to questions asked by an assessor (eg tutor, trainer, supervisor). The assessor will select these questions (the 'Part A questions') from a list supplied by the awarding body, in order to confirm the candidate's knowledge and understanding of areas of Part A where the assessor cannot infer this from the portfolio of evidence. This will mean that some candidates are asked more questions than others. Where a candidate has clearly covered the whole of Part A in their portfolio, no questions need be asked. Candidates' answers should be recorded in note form, or in an audio or video format. These notes or records should be available to standards moderators/verifiers if required. Guidance on the effective use of Part A questions will be provided by your awarding body.

Relaxation

The relaxation ruling allows Apprentices and Advanced Apprentices who started on or after 1 September 2001, and who have achieved a grade A*–C GCSE in English and/or Mathematics to complete their frameworks without being required to take the Level 2 Communication and/or Application of Number key skills qualifications. This also applies to those who have achieved a GCE A-/AS level at grade A–E in English or Mathematics. Achievement of the GCSE, A- or AS level must be no longer than five years before the date of registration on the Apprenticeship framework. This five-year limit took effect on 1 August 2004 and replaced the previous three-year limit. See *Key skills policy and practice* para 9.5.

This is distinct from the use of proxy qualifications.

Skills for Life

Skills for Life, the government's strategy for improving adult literacy and adult numeracy skills, was launched in January 2001, largely in response to the Moser Report *A fresh start* (1999). The term *Skills for Life* is preferred to the term 'basic skills' and includes key skills, Adult Literacy, Adult Numeracy, Adult ICT, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and, for LSC funding purposes, GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics. See the QCA websites www.qca.org.uk/7423.html and www.qca.org.uk/596.html

Spiky profile

A 'spiky profile' occurs when a learner's knowledge and understanding in a particular key skill, or between skills, is developed at different levels. For example, a learner may be working at Application of Number Level 2 and be competent in many of the skills required, but be weak in certain areas, such as percentages or fractions. This spiky profile will vary from learner to learner and means that learning has to be personalised to meet individual needs.

Standards

Since September 2004, the key skills units (formerly specifications) are referred to as the 'key skills standards'.

Standards moderation

This is the process through which internal assessment and verification/moderation is monitored by an awarding body to ensure that it is valid, reliable, fair and consistent with the required national standards. Each centre will be allocated a standards moderator for key skills. This process is sometimes referred to as 'external moderation'. Some awarding bodies offer a system of external verification, which focuses on the centre's quality assurance arrangements rather than on candidates' work. Whatever process is followed and whatever name is used, the key point is that this is a process of quality assurance that is carried out by the awarding body. Some awarding bodies offer a system of 'accredited centre status' or 'direct claim status' whereby centres with a good record of standards moderation can claim certification for portfolios, subject to regular checks of their arrangements for assessment and internal moderation.

Straightforward

(a) Straightforward subjects and materials are those that candidates commonly meet in the context in which they are working or studying, or in other activities. The content is put across in a direct way so that candidates can easily identify the information they need for their task. In Communication, sentence structures are simple and candidates will be familiar with the vocabulary.

(b) Straightforward tasks can be broken down into easily managed steps and involve familiar resources and situations (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS page 23).

Targets

Targets are the steps for helping to achieve personal, learning and/or career goals. Targets should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-related (SMART) (Guidance; WWO, IOLP, PS pages 41, 48).

Tests

In England and Northern Ireland, summative assessment of the first three key skills includes a written or on-screen test. Details can be found on the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html There are no such tests for the wider key skills but see 'Questioning'. The tests for Communication and for Application of Number at Levels 1 and 2 also act as the tests for Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy at these levels (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT page 26). See also 'External assessment'.

Transferable

Key skills are transferable. This means simply that, once a learner has developed a skill for the purpose of one context, they should be able to identify when and how to apply the same skill for another purpose in another context.

Trial

See 'Pilot'.

Witness statement

This is a statement (sometimes called 'witness testimony') that is signed by a competent person and confirms that the candidate has completed the activity in question at the required standard, eg taken part in a discussion. A witness statement should not be the sole form of evidence. Assessors are responsible for judging the validity of witness statements. They are most likely to be used in Communication (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 33, 37, 43 and 49), Information and Communication Technology (Guidance; Comm, AoN, ICT pages 80 and 84/5) and in the wider key skills.

Note

Copies of the following publications can be ordered from:

QCA Publications
PO Box 99
Sudbury
Suffolk CO10 2SN
Tel 01787 884 444
Fax 01787 312 950

The key skills qualifications standards and guidance: communication, application of number, and information and communication technology (ref: QCA/04/1272; price: £10)

The wider key skills qualifications standards and guidance: working with others, improving own learning and performance, and problem solving (ref: QCA/04/1294; price: £10)

Copies of *Key skills policy and practice: your questions answered* (latest edition 2005) can be ordered free of charge from:

Key Skills Policy Team
Room E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3759
Email key.skills@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

All three publications can be downloaded from the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/603.html

Appendix 3. Useful addresses

AoC

(Association of Colleges)
5th Floor
Centre Point
103 New Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1RG
Tel 020 7827 4600
www.aoc.co.uk

AQA

(Assessment and
Qualifications Alliance)
Devas Street
Manchester M15 6EX
Tel 0161 953 1180
Publications 0870 410 1036
www.aqa.org.uk

ASDAN

(Award Scheme Development
and Accreditation Network)
Wainbrook House
Hudds Vale Road
St George
Bristol BS5 7HY
Tel 0117 941 1126
www.asdan.co.uk

BSA at NIACE

(Basic Skills Agency)
Commonwealth House
1–19 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1NU
Tel 020 7405 4017
Publications 0870 600 2400
www.basic-skills.co.uk

BTL e-learning

Salts Wharf
Ashley Lane
Shipley
West Yorkshire
BD17 7DB
Tel 01274 203 250
www.btl.com

CCEA

(Northern Ireland Council for
the Curriculum, Examinations
and Assessment)
29 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG
Tel 028 9026 1200
www.ccea.org.uk

CfBT

(Centre for British Teachers
Education Trust)
60 Queens Road
Reading RG1 4BS
Tel 0118 902 1000
www.cfbt.com

City & Guilds

1 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DD
Tel 020 7294 2468
www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
www.key-skills.org

DCELLS (formerly DELLS)

(Department for Children,
Education, Lifelong
Learning and Skills)
Castle Buildings
Womanby Street
Cardiff CF10 1SX
Tel 029 2037 5400
<http://wales.gov.uk>

DCSF

(Department for Children,
Schools and Families)
Functional Skills Policy Team
Room E3c
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 3781
Publications 0845 602 2260

DIUS

(Department for Innovation,
Universities and Skills)
Key Skills Policy Team
Room W3d
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
Tel 0114 259 4731
Publications 0845 602 2260
www.dfes.gov.uk/keyskills

Edexcel

One90 High Holborn
London WC1V 7BH
Tel 0870 240 9800
Publications 01623 467 467
www.edexcel.org.uk

**Functional Skills
Support Programme**

Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Helpline 0870 872 8081
functionalskills@
LSNeducation.org.uk
[www.LSNeducation.org.uk/
functionalskills](http://www.LSNeducation.org.uk/functionalskills)

**Key Skills Support
Programme**

Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Helpline 0870 872 8081
kssp@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.keyskillssupport.net

Learning for Work

The Cottage Office
Eightlands Road
Dewsbury
West Yorkshire WF13 6PF
Tel 0870 758 1411
mail@lfw.org.uk

LSC

(Learning and Skills Council)
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Tel 0845 019 4170
www.lsc.gov.uk

LSN

(Learning and Skills Network)
Regent Arcade House
19–25 Argyll Street
London W1F 7LS
Tel 020 7297 9000
Information and Customer Centre
0845 071 0800
enquiries@LSNeducation.org.uk
www.LSNeducation.org.uk

OCR

(Oxford Cambridge and
RSA Examinations)
Coventry Office
Progress House
Westwood Way
Coventry CV4 8JQ
Tel 024 7647 0033
Publications 0870 770 6622
www.ocr.org.uk

Ofsted

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
Tel 08456 40 40 45
Publications 0700 263 7833
www.ofsted.gov.uk

QCA

(Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority)
83 Piccadilly
London W1J 8QA
Tel 020 7509 5555
Publications 01787 884444
www.qca.org.uk/keyskills

QIA

(Quality Improvement Agency)
Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
Enquiries 0870 211 3434
www.qia.org.uk

UCAS

(Universities and College
Admissions Service)
Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham GL52 3LZ
Tel 01242 222 444
Publications 01242 544 610
www.ucas.ac.uk

The Key Skills Support Programme is managed by the Quality Improvement Agency and delivered by the Learning and Skills Network

The e-learning resource *KeySkills4U* was first launched in 2003 and was an immediate success. It has been enhanced with the addition of new material designed to support learners working at Level 1, as well as being revised to take account of the 2004 key skills standards. The enhanced site was launched in a new format in 2007.

This publication is designed to introduce *KeySkills4U* to practitioners who have never used it, and to reintroduce it, in its new format, to those who are already familiar with it. It shows how *KeySkills4U* can be used in a variety of ways to support learning and achievement in key skills.

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