



T Level Technical Qualification in Digital Support Services

Employer set project (ESP)

Core skills

Digital Support

Provider Guide

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About this document

Document security

Please do not distribute this document to students. This is for provider and tutor use only. All tutors must be familiar with the information in this document. This document should be kept secure at all times.

This document should be read along with the Regulations for Conduct of External Assessment. Assessment conditions and resources are defined in the Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery (QSID). These documents can be found on the [NCFE website](#).

About the employer set project (ESP)

The purpose of the employer set project (ESP) is to ensure that students have the opportunity to apply core knowledge and skills to develop a substantial piece of work in response to an employer set brief. The brief and tasks are contextualised around an occupational area and chosen by the student ahead of the assessment window.

To achieve the assessment objectives (AOs) and meet the brief, students must demonstrate the following core skills (CSs):

CS1: Communicate information clearly to technical and non-technical stakeholders

CS2: Work with stakeholders to clarify and consider options to meet requirements

CS3: Apply a logical approach to solving problems, identifying and resolving faults whilst recording progress and solutions to meet requirements

CS4: Ensure that actions identify and mitigate risk to security

The knowledge requirements will be taken from the core knowledge (CK) relevant to the briefs, and the briefs will change for each assessment window.

Administering the external assessment

The maximum overall time allowed for the external assessment is 12 hours 10 minutes under supervised conditions. The individual timings for each task are detailed later in the document. The table below shows when providers may run each task, which assessment materials should be issued to students and at which stage of the assessment window each task should be completed by:

Task	Issuing of assessment materials	Week 1	Week 2
1	Issue the Project Brief – Task 1 document.	NCFE fixed date: Monday	-
2	In addition to the above, issue the Project Brief and Email Template – Task 2 document.	Tuesday to Friday	-
3	In addition to the above, issue the Project brief – Task 3 document, including Control Document A.	-	NCFE fixed date: Monday

Task	Issuing of assessment materials	Week 1	Week 2
4	In addition to the above, issue the Project Brief – Task 4 document.	-	Tuesday to Friday

NCFE sets the start date and the submission date of the assessment window for the external assessment task. External assessment material should not be given to students until the first supervised assessment session.

The assessment window will consist of provider-arranged supervised sessions of external assessment. Sessions can be undertaken in the normal classroom environment, so long as each student has access to, or the option to use, a computer system. Providers can decide how to arrange supervised sessions for tasks 2 and 4. Tasks 1 and 3 are fixed date and time. Providers must submit students' completed assessment work by the published submission date.

When preparing to start a supervised session, time taken to print students' work is not included as part of the permitted hours for the external assessment task. In addition to this, time taken to collate and upload students' work is also not included as part of the permitted hours for the external assessment time.

Control Document A should be provided to students at the appropriate time throughout the assessment. Further instructions are detailed in the task specific instructions, in this document, and the control document is available in the project brief (Project Brief – Task 3 document).

At any time, NCFE may request the timetable that providers have set for the supervised sessions.

The permitted time must not be increased unless a reasonable adjustment has been agreed for a student in accordance with the Access Arrangements & Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Special Considerations Policy, which can be found on the [NCFE website](#).

The permitted time must not be decreased. Students must be given the opportunity to complete the full amount of time for the external assessment task. Providers must take this into account when timetabling the sessions.

In the event the student misses a supervised session the following procedure must be followed:

- if a student misses a fixed date session (task 1 or 3) providers must not rearrange another time for the student to complete the session; they must follow the reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy, which can be found on the [NCFE website](#)
- if a student misses a session that does not have a fixed date, providers may rearrange a suitable time for the student (providing it is in the appropriate assessment window); however, task 2 must be completed by all students before moving on the task 3

Each student is allowed up to a maximum of 15 minutes rest break during the tasks that have 3 or more hours allocated (tasks 3 and 4) and breaks must be managed by the provider. These breaks should be in a supervised, controlled room and monitored by the provider.

Marking the external assessment task

The external assessment tasks are set and marked by NCFE. This means that providers must not assess, internally quality assure or provide any feedback to the student about their performance in the external assessment task. However, tutors may be asked within a specific task to validate and generate supplementary evidence of student performance. The supervised external assessment tasks must be treated independently of the teaching of the outline content.

Instructions for tutors

Assessment conditions

Students must complete the employer set project (ESP) independently and under supervised conditions, as per each task-specific guidance later in the document.

Students and tutors are required to sign one External Assessment Cover Sheet (EACS) – Declaration of Authenticity Form to confirm that the work is their own. A single declaration form is sufficient for the whole project. The declaration form can be found on the [NCFE website](#). This is to ensure authenticity and to prevent potential malpractice and maladministration. Students must be made aware of the importance of this declaration and the impact this could have on their overall grade if the evidence was found not to be the student's own work.

Tutors must retain all materials and/or evidence produced by students within the supervised assessment at the end of each supervised session.

At the end of each supervised session, the tutor must collect all evidence and any other materials, including students' research materials, before students leave the room to ensure that no student takes any external assessment material or assessment evidence out of the room. This also includes sufficient monitoring and checks to ensure that students have not made materials available to themselves or anyone else electronically, for example via the internet.

External assessment materials should be securely stored between supervised sessions. Students must not have access to this area between the supervised sessions, including electronic files.

Work such as formative assessment and/or work done with sample assessment materials must not be used again as part of the external assessment task submission to NCFE.

Appendices should not be included and will not be marked unless specifically required from the task instructions.

Students are not allowed access to any online cloud storage or email and chat services during the assessment; this should be monitored by the providers.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism may result in the external assessment task being awarded a U grade.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) during the assessment is considered plagiarism, with the use of AI potentially resulting in disqualification/U grade.

For further guidance, refer to the Student Handbook – Plagiarism Guidance and Maladministration and Malpractice Guidance located at [NCFE website](#)

Resources

Students must have access to the appropriate resources required to complete the ESP. These include the following:

- a computer that has been configured according to the guidance for task 1
- technical equipment as required, such as audio recording equipment
- access to the internet (though this should be limited to ensure that access to online cloud storage services and/or online chat clients are not accessible)

- privacy mode should be disabled on any web browser and policies applied to prevent deletion of browsing history
- appropriate word processing and spreadsheet software

Internet access

This project is designed to simulate a real-world task the student may be given in the workplace. Internet access is appropriate for completion of this project as the student would be able to research error messages and potential solutions in a real-world setting. The assignment has been structured to test students' ability to complete real-world tasks and internet access will not compromise this. Internet access is allowed throughout all tasks though the use of online cloud storage or chat services should be restricted to ensure that students do not share materials or access any prior work completed before the assessment.

This list is not exhaustive, and you need to refer to the Qualification Specification for subject-specific details.

Accessibility and fairness

To promote accessibility and fairness for all students and to ensure diversity and equality, we expect providers to be aware of and meet the requirements of relevant NCFE policies and government legislation. You must ensure that:

- all of your processes concerned with assessment are carried out in a fair and objective manner
- you continue to adhere to current equal opportunities legislation
- you continue to operate an effective diversity and equality policy, with which students are familiar and which applies to all students using our products and services

Assessment and task specific instructions

Employer set project (ESP) briefs

For each assessment window, there will be two versions of the employer set project (ESP) available for booking; each version is contextualised against the occupational specialisms (OSs) relevant to the pathway. These two briefs will be set by employers in conjunction with NCFE and will be different for each assessment window.

The briefs are designed to ensure a motivating starting point for students and will be based on, for example, a real-world problem.

Selection of brief

Students are required to discuss and agree with their tutor which of the following occupational-based briefs they would like to take forward for their ESP:

- Digital Infrastructure and Network Cabling
- Digital Support

The provider must book students onto the appropriate version of the ESP by the deadline for that specific assessment series as indicated on the Key Dates Schedule, which can be found on the qualification page on the [NCFE website](#).

Bookings are made on the NCFE Portal, and guidance can be found in the Portal User Guide 2023, which can be accessed within the system.

Delivery guidance

Task 1

- task 1 will have a fixed, scheduled date set by NCFE within the assessment window
- the student will be expected to diagnose and identify two hardware faults based on the scenario information
- prior to assessment, the provider should access the BIOS and change the boot mode to legacy without UEFI compatibility – the student should be allowed access to the internet to allow them to research and identify solutions to the problem
- the student is required to submit a troubleshooting document and test plan document

Task 2

- students must be supervised from the start of the task until all parts of the task are complete
- students should be allowed access to the internet if they wish to research anything to help them construct their set of interview questions
- students will be working independently, planning their information gathering for this project; as part of this, they will need to interview the network manager:
 - the network manager interview should be conducted as a recorded role play with the provider supplying someone with appropriate technical knowledge to play the role of the network manager; each interview will be undertaken individually, with the maximum number of students interviewing each network manager being 10 students
 - it is acceptable that the tutor can play this role or someone with appropriate technical understanding; however, their responses must be only informed using the interview notes
 - the specific interview guidance to support providers with the completion of task 2 is detailed at the end of this document – Network Manager Notes (interview notes to support task 2)

Task 2 should be delivered to all students in the provider on a specific day within the assessment window. Providers should plan how they are going to administer the task, and this will vary depending on the size of the cohort and staff availability. It may be appropriate to give each individual student different start times that are staggered (with enough time to allow for setting up the audio recording equipment, for example). The following table is not intended to be prescriptive but should serve as a guide of how providers may stagger the start times of students to effectively administer the task.

Task 2: start time	Task 2: interview start time	Task 2: task complete time	Student
9.00 am	10.00 am	11.10 am	A
9.15 am	10.15 am	11.25 am	B
9.30 am	10.30 am	11.40 am	C
9.45 am	10.45 am	11.55 am	D

- task 2 can begin at different times for students; however, once students have completed their interview, they must go to a controlled, supervised room
- task 2 can be completed over more than 1 day; however, all students must complete task 2 within the first week of the assessment window
- students will have 1 hour to prepare their questions for the interview, which will then be carried out 1 hour after the start
- interviews should last no longer than 10 minutes
- once the interview is complete, the student will have the remaining 1 hour to complete the task
- where a student asks questions outside the brief, the network manager should explain they do not have the answer to that question at this time
- the Network Manager notes (Interview notes) should not be provided to the student
- the network manager interviews must be completed in a private space, with the role play submission being captured as an audio file
- the tutor must ensure the interview is recorded in the correct format and will be responsible for uploading the recording for the student
- task 3 must not commence until all students in the provider setting have completed task 2 to prevent them accidentally seeing or receiving information regarding Control Document A: Specification of Requirements before it is appropriate; providers must, therefore, ensure that all interviews have taken place before the fixed scheduled date of task 3
- email templates will be provided for this task; students should not use their own email accounts to construct the two emails required as evidence for the task

Task 3

- task 3 will have a fixed, scheduled date set by NCFE within the assessment window
- providers must ensure that students are given a copy of the specification of requirements (Control Document A) at the start of the task – these are included in the Project Brief – Task 3 document
- students will be required to submit a detailed project proposal on changes to the network
- it is appropriate that students have internet access to allow them to research and develop a robust solution to the scenario
- each student is allowed up to a maximum of 15 minutes rest break during this task; breaks must be supervised by the provider

Task 4

- students should be allowed access to the internet
- students should be allowed access to all previous ESP materials apart from the interview audio recording
- students are required to submit a sample satisfaction survey document and a post-project review document
- each student is allowed up to a maximum of 15 minutes rest break during this task; breaks must be supervised by the provider

Timings

The timings below have been devised to support student and provider planning.

Task 1 = 2 hours 30 minutes

Task 2 = 2 hours 10 minutes

Task 3 = 4 hours

Task 4 = 3 hours 30 minutes

Total = 12 hours 10 minutes

Instructions for completing and submitting the external assessment tasks

The external assessment tasks must be completed and uploaded at the end of each session.

Once task 2 has been completed, students' work from task 1 and 2 should be stored securely to prevent information distributed for task 3 being used to amend the first two tasks.

Tutors are encouraged to ensure that students follow the filename conventions specified in the external assessment tasks for each individual document, which is:

- Surname_Initial_student number_task number_evidence reference (for example, Smith_J_123456789_Task1_troubleshooting.pdf)

Where evidence reference is shown, this should be replaced with the task number for which the work reflects. All files must be saved in .pdf format. These files, per student, should be placed within a single folder before being zipped and submitted.

Students must respond to each task individually and follow the document structure when submitting their evidence as per the evidence requirements section within each task. They must not combine responses for separate tasks.

Network Manager Notes (Interview Notes)

Please note this document matches Control Document A: Specification of Requirements, in the Project Brief – Task 3 document.

Control Document A to be issued at the start of task 3.

Spring Leaf have a head office in London and provide a sales/marketing support for other companies in the local region. The IT team are based at the London head office. They have recently opened a new office in Edinburgh and have hired new employees consisting of 5 senior managers and 15 staff. All staff are office based and have been issued with company computers and most staff have been issued with a company mobile phone.

Desktop computers

The desktop computers supplied to staff have the following specifications:

- Windows 10 Pro with Office 2013 with Outlook 2013 and Adobe Photoshop installed (2.4 GHz processor, 8 GB RAM, 512 GB HDD)

The desktop computers supplied to senior managers have the following specifications:

- Windows 11 Pro with Libra Office and Thunderbird email client (3.1 Ghz Processor, 16 GB Ram, 1TB Nvme2)

Where staff are issued with mobile phones these are mid specification Android devices.

Current issues

The current issues identified with the new office include:

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)/data protection issues with customer details on local storage on the desktop devices
- staff providing personal phone numbers for business calls
- staff are finding it hard to communicate and work together with each other
- lack of consistency – staff are using a wide range of ‘web meeting’ platforms, usually with free versions
- where company equipment is being used there is no way of monitoring usage
- there are concerns that updates are not being applied appropriately
- where new software applications are to be rolled out, managing this is complex

Project Requirements

The requirements are:

- all computers should be moved to a standardised operating system
- software should be standardised across all computers with all users using the same productivity software with standardised centrally managed endpoint protection implemented
- an appropriate solution for remotely managing company computers is required
- a good quality web meeting solution should be implemented that is standardised for all users – this should include the ability for ad hoc meetings, larger web meetings, text chat and file sharing – it would be preferred if chat transcripts could be archived
- staff do not need to use their phones for work

- users should not be able to install software on their work computers
- any training or upskilling for staff to use the new systems should be considered

Document information

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