

Mapping of the induction training materials for teaching assistants developed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to the National Occupational Standards for Teaching Assistants

Guidance notes: Explanation of how to use the maps

Introduction

The mapping between the DfES induction training materials and the national occupational standards for teaching assistants was carried out to show how the induction training programmes for teaching assistants (TAs) in primary and secondary schools would contribute to development of the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for the new National Occupational Qualifications (NVQs) for Teaching Assistants.

The induction programmes were developed as an introduction to the role and responsibilities of a teaching assistant and provide an overview of the skills and knowledge base required for competent performance within the role. However, they were not designed to develop occupational competence and, therefore, should not be taken to equate to an NVQ.

Presentation of the maps

The maps are presented as a series of spreadsheets covering the six programme modules for TAs in primary schools and the five programme modules for TAs in secondary schools. Each spreadsheet shows the outline content of one of the modules mapped against all of the units included in the level 2 and the level 3 NVQs for teaching assistants.

Different symbols are used on the maps to show the nature of the relationship between the training materials and the national occupational standards:

- indicates where the induction programmes raises awareness of things that the teaching assistant would need to know about in order to be deemed occupationally competent, e.g. NLS resources, child protection issues, policies and procedures.
- shows where the training materials help teaching assistants to develop relevant knowledge and understanding, e.g. in relation to mental calculation strategies or inclusive education.
- ▲ indicates where the course provides opportunities to apply knowledge and practise skills, e.g. self review, observing pupil performance.
- denotes opportunities to generate evidence which may be acceptable for an NVQ.

Using the maps

The maps show the links between the DfES training materials and the national occupational standards for teaching assistants and as such can be used to show how the induction programmes would contribute to developing occupational competence as defined by the NVQs.

The maps also illustrate how knowledge and understanding developed in one module, e.g. literacy, will contribute towards the underpinning knowledge required for a number of the NVQ units.

The induction modules have been developed as an introduction to the important work undertaken by teaching assistants. As such, the programmes were not designed to provide evidence of competence in carrying out this role. Indeed the TA files stress that activities undertaken before, during or as follow-up to the training modules do not involve doing written work that is going to be marked or assessed and any written notes made by the

teaching assistant are solely for their personal use. However, some of these written records could contribute to a portfolio of evidence for NVQ assessment and opportunities for generating evidence in this way are shown on the maps. In some cases, the activity and/or recording sheet will need to be adapted to provide evidence for assessment of competence, e.g. section 3.5 in the primary teaching assistant file could be easily adapted to record information about health and safety in the school.

It is important that where such written records may be used later as evidence for NVQ assessment, the records are dated and signed off as being a true record of the teaching assistant's own work by an expert witness, e.g. the teaching assistant's mentor. The evidence can then be cross referenced to the relevant standards and kept within the teaching assistants' professional development portfolio. The maps show the range of units to which such evidence may contribute.

What the maps do not show is how far the induction programmes will contribute to the overall demand of individual units. This relationship, which is relevant to those who want to build on learning developed through the induction programme to meet the requirements of occupational competence as defined by one of the NVQs, can be identified by reviewing the identified links against the performance indicators, knowledge base and scope of the relevant units.

Two examples of how the induction programmes would contribute to developing the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for particular NVQ units are given below. The first example shows the extensive links between the induction programmes and Unit 3-18 Help pupils to develop their literacy skills. The second example illustrates the less extensive links between the induction programmes and Unit 3-7 Observe and report on pupil performance. In both examples, the gap between the training materials and the knowledge, understanding and skills required for the relevant NVQ unit is also identified.

Example 1: Unit 3-18 Help pupils to develop their literacy skills

Unit 3-18 Help pupils to develop their literacy skills, is an optional unit in the level 3 NVQ for teaching assistants. Supporting literacy development is also a major focus of both induction programmes and there are extensive links between the training programmes and this NVQ unit. Teaching assistants who complete all aspects of the relevant induction programme, therefore, will have a sound basis for developing this area of occupational competence.

Unit 3-18 contains three standards:

- 3-18.1 Help pupils to develop their reading skills
- 3-18.2 Help pupils to develop their writing skills
- 3-18.3 Help pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills

For clarity, and conciseness, the significance of the links as described below refer to the primary induction programme. The links between the secondary induction programme and unit 3-18 are similar but not identical.

Performance indicators and knowledge base

The primary/reception literacy modules will raise awareness of:

- the importance of knowing the teacher's lesson plans and learning objectives;
- the learning objectives for different year groups;
- national frameworks and policies for English, e.g. the English National Curriculum, National Literacy Strategy;
- the interactive use of listening, speaking, reading and writing to promote literacy development;
- the resources available to support literacy development;
- how to encourage and support pupils with English as an additional language;
- the sort of feedback that would be useful to the teacher.

The primary/reception literacy modules also provide opportunities for developing knowledge and understanding of:

- how pupils learn to read and write;
- strategies suitable for supporting reading and writing development;
- the importance of monitoring pupils' progress and ways of doing this.

Although the literacy modules focus on the teaching assistant's role in supporting reading and writing in the classroom (standards 1 and 2 in unit 3-18) many of the above links apply also to standard 3-18.3 which is about helping pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Learning about strategies for supporting individuals and groups to take part in the different elements of the Literacy Hour will also develop awareness and knowledge in relation to:

- providing opportunities for pupils to engage in conversation, discussion and questioning;
- using open-ended questions to encourage pupils to contribute to conversations and discussions;
- supporting shy and reticent pupils in responding to questions;
- strategies for introducing pupils to new words and language structures.

In addition to learning achieved in the literacy modules, relevant awareness or knowledge will be acquired in other induction programme modules. For example, the role and context module covers:

- national curriculum frameworks, e.g. the National Curriculum, the Early Learning Goals;
- awareness of relevant school policies;
- ways of organising pupils;
- matching work to pupils' developing abilities;
- cyclic process of supporting pupils - plan, prepare, implement and review;
- strategies for supporting individuals, groups and whole class situations;
- monitoring pupils' progress and providing feedback to the teacher;
- English as an additional language.

The behaviour management module covers all aspects of relationships with and between pupils, use of language, use of praise and developing pupils' self-esteem.

Aspects of unit 3-18 that will **not** be addressed by the induction programme include:

- the stages of literacy development and the particular learning needs of the pupils with whom the teaching assistant works;
- the nature of any special educational needs of these pupils;
- the language and vocabulary which is appropriate for the age and stage of the pupils;
- the home language, accents and local dialects used by the pupils;
- the nature and content of relevant school policies;
- the range of resources available within the school and how to access these;
- the teaching assistant's own literacy skills, e.g. how to spell and form grammatically correct sentences.

Scope

In respect of supporting reading and writing, the primary literacy module covers all aspects of the scope of learning needs and support strategies as specified in standards 1 and 2 of unit 3-18. Teaching assistants will also learn about working with pupils in small groups and within a class group as specified in the scope for pupils in standard 3-18.3.

Although not explicitly addressed within the induction programme, the scope of problems in standards 3-18.1 and 3-18.2 will be covered in part in discussion of the factors influencing learning in Session 3 Special Educational Needs of the primary Role and Context module.

Opportunities to generate evidence

The primary induction programme provides some opportunities for generating evidence that may contribute to the assessment of competence for Unit 3-18. These include:

- the weekly/daily planning grids in the Role and Context materials;
- the observation schedules in the Role and Context materials;
- Progression in Phonics follow-up activities in the Literacy module.

As described above, the primary induction programme provides a sound basis for developing competence in helping pupils to develop literacy skills as defined by NVQ unit 3-18. As with all NVQ qualifications, however, the emphasis of the assessment process is on evidence from actual working practice. Even evidence generated from course activities carried out as part of the teaching assistant's normal work in the classroom, and signed by an expert witness to testify the authenticity of the evidence, would need to be assessed by a qualified assessor in the context of the total body of evidence generated for the unit, e.g. from observation of performance, work products, oral questioning.

Example 2: Unit 3-7 Observe and report on pupil performance

Unit 3-7 Observe and report on pupil performance is an optional unit in the level 3 NVQ for teaching assistants. The induction programmes address the important role that teaching assistants have in monitoring pupil performance and providing feedback to the teacher but not to the depth required by this unit which is about carrying out and reporting on systematic and focused observations of pupils to gather evidence of their knowledge, understanding and skills.

Unit 3-7 Observe and report on pupil performance contains two standards:

- 3-7.1 Observe pupil performance
- 3-7.2 Report on pupil performance

The significance of the links as described below refer to the secondary induction programme. The links between the primary induction programme and unit 3-7 are generally similar but are not identical.

Performance indicators and knowledge base

The importance of observing pupil progress and providing feedback to the teacher is briefly addressed in the secondary role and context, literacy and numeracy modules. Teaching assistants who have completed the induction training course will be aware of:

- the need to confirm the reasons and objectives for observing pupil performance;
- how to tailor instructions and requests to pupils to match their age and characteristics;
- the importance of recording observations;
- the benefits of using agreed but simple formats for recording and reporting on pupil performance;
- the protocols covering written observations and the sharing of observations of all kinds with third parties;
- the need to summarise information to provide brief but specific feedback to the teacher;
- the importance of confidentiality and knowing and complying with the school policy and procedures for confidentiality of information about pupils.

There are significant aspects of unit 3-7 that are not explicitly addressed by the induction programmes and for which additional learning and experience would be required. This includes:

- how and when to use different observation methods;
- sources of distractions and disturbances that might occur and how to minimise these;
- the various roles that observers might play in enabling pupils to demonstrate their full potential, e.g. by prompting, questioning, suggesting activities;
- awareness of the concepts of reliability, validity and subjectivity of observations;
- the influence of culture, social background and gender on pupils' responses to being observed;
- different formats for recording observations;
- how to summarise and present information gathered from observations of pupil performance;
- how to explain and justify evidence of pupils' performance.

Scope

Little of the specified scope of unit 3-7 is explicitly addressed by the secondary induction training materials. However, across the five modules of the programme, teaching assistants will have opportunities to observe, or to consider how to observe and feedback information on, pupil performance in relation to:

- social and emotional skills;
- language and communication skills;
- intellectual and cognition skills.

There are no obvious opportunities to consider how to observe or record observations of pupils' physical abilities and skills.

The role and context module refers to the fact that teaching assistants may be asked to observe how pupils work independently and how well they work on co-operation with others, which will raise awareness of the different contexts as defined by the scope of observations covered by unit 3-7.

The induction programme makes brief references to the issue of formats for recording observations but does not specifically cover the use of free description, structured description and checklists as defined by the scope of this unit.

Opportunities to generate evidence

There are no opportunities to generate evidence for assessment purposes in relation to unit 3-7 from the secondary induction programme. (Note that the primary/reception literacy materials include a pupil observation sheet which provides a useful structure for recording evidence to support this, and other, NVQ units.)

It should be noted that evidence from simulated activities is not allowed in relation to unit 3-7 and that observation of pupil performance from a video sequence would not constitute valid evidence for NVQ assessment.