

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS OF OFFENDER LEARNING TO DELIVERY OF THE ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS STANDARDS (2019)

GUIDE



Original materials created on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation
and funded by the Department for education

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This Guide is designed to help teachers of Offender Learning to address the five skills areas of the [Essential Digital Skills Standards](#) (2019).

It identifies some of the opportunities, challenges, methods and resources that are relevant to, and appropriate for, learners in the secure estate.

It does not provide detailed information around the content of the standards, nor introduce any new content. That is to be found in the 20 [EDS modules](#).

Two levels of awards are supported by the [standards](#):

Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQ): from September 2020 covering selected parts of the standards

Digital Functional Skills Qualifications (Digital FSQs): from September 2021 covering the full range of the standards

The content and specifications of these qualifications at Entry Level and Level 1, by the preferred single awarding body for Offender Learning (currently OCR), will determine what you are required to deliver. It is important, therefore, to supplement the advice in this guide with information, commentary and resources from the awarding body and from the relevant advisory and policy

groups in the system when deciding which elements of the standards qualifications are likely to be most appropriate for your particular learners and establishment and how best to deliver them.

The standards have been created to underpin the entitlement for adults to a minimum level of competence and understanding of essential digital skills. This is a right established and supported by government to improve UK citizens' opportunities for life and work. In the case of people experiencing the criminal justice system, it will become a cornerstone of rehabilitation back into a community, where the digital way is increasingly the best way, and sometimes the only way, to engage in the business of daily life.

A core mission of the new entitlement is to reduce barriers, open doors and enable everyone to reap the benefits of digital technology. It is important that every effort is made to give learners the best possible chance for success.

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Teaching the Standards in prison education

The programmes you teach will work towards ESDQs rather than the full Digital FSQs, giving learners a solid foundation to move onto more wide reaching courses after release.

Restrictions around IT in the secure estate, including access to the internet and the lack of opportunity for practice outside scheduled sessions, place significant limits on essential digital skills learning. Differences in the security regime, resources and infrastructure from establishment to establishment will affect what can be offered, while the movement of learners between establishments at short notice can affect continuity of learning for any individual learner.

The new entitlement, the national standards and the support programme, including the online EDS modules, are designed to develop key digital skills around the demands and circumstances of everyday life; they cannot be delivered as freestanding machine IT skills in the same way as predecessors, such as CLAIT and ECDL. This presents unique challenges for prison education. This guide offers pointers to teachers in Offender Learning to the opportunities and challenges of Essential Digital Skills. It cannot and does not attempt to replace the creativity and determination of experienced Offender Learning professional educators to deliver the best possible experience and outcomes for their particular learners. The advice given here will be enriched, increased in

scale and value and adapted to changing circumstances if you share what you do, what you find works well and the resources you create with your colleagues and peers through the support programme's communities of practice and other collaborative media and processes within the Offender Learning family.





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Using devices and handling information

Looks at different types of hardware, software and apps and how to use them and keep them up to date; finding, evaluating, storing and organising information - and what to do if it goes wrong; using online resources to update digital skills.

The Key point

Finding information takes the learner onto search engines, but otherwise this is largely offline basic knowledge and skills that can be delivered without internet connectivity.

Challenges

A lot of hardware and software is prohibited: mobile devices, including phones and wearable devices, external storage (cloud or removable devices, such as USB sticks) so must be addressed by some other means for complete coverage. Many of these assets are at the core of everyday digital life experience so there is an issue of relevance here to be addressed. Working with operating systems, software updates and making changes to locked down systems is not possible.

Opportunities

Exploring accessibility options and settings on machines and on common software is a good place to go if you have access to up-to-date software. The prison system has a larger percentage of learners with disabilities and learning difficulties than mainstream society, so there is a real opportunity to benefit learners. Presenting accessibility options positively as tools for everybody rather than just for disabled learners is good practice. Tools, such as speech to text and reading text from the screen, offer opportunities for skills development and can support other essential skills work. Existing expertise in delivering underpinning knowledge in these areas continues to be valuable. Free search of the kind envisaged in the standards is not possible, for example, but you can explore issues and develop critical thinking around credibility, reliability and validity of information.



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Creating and editing

Entering and editing text in a range of formats in common packages; creating and editing digital media - images, sound, videos; working with numerical data and spreadsheets. (Level 1 only)

> The Key point

This starts with familiar IT fare – working with office type packages – and extends to more contemporary skills of creating and editing photos and working with digital media, including videos and sound files for a range of purposes.

Challenges

Limitations on taking photos or recording activity in sound or video files may exist as a result of the availability of hardware or local security arrangements. There are good examples of practice with digital media using still and video images in many prisons to build on.

Opportunities

Editing and creating documents is familiar territory, offering hands-on opportunities to develop keyboard skills and insight into designing documents around practical purposes, such as job applications as well as filling in forms. Those nearing the end of lengthy sentences may need advice on how important these skills have become in recent years and embedding learning in realistic scenarios will provide motivation by showing that it's not just a classroom exercise. The reality of essential skills in the community extends to bringing together documents and digital media into combined forms, such as a newsletter, a presentation or a practical communication: much easier to post a video of a blocked drain to a landlord than try to explain the consequences in a letter or even phone call.

There is a chance here to work with other essential skills professionals to bring literacy and numeracy together. Using spreadsheets to develop problem-solving skills can be a good way into digital skills for Level 1 learners who are happy working with numbers.



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Communicating

Looks at using online communication tools, including phones, video calls and social media; digital footprint and online reputation.

> The Key point

Knowing how to use online communication effectively and responsibly is arguably the core essential digital skill in a modern world of mobile phones and devices, chat, messaging and social media.

Challenges

Hands-on access to real channels of online communication to develop and practice skills is not possible and direct digital communications between inmates are banned and likely to remain so. Those perhaps most in need of this training may be long sentence prisoners approaching release with no experience of the current scale, possibilities and importance of mobile and online communication.

Opportunities

There are some opportunities for interactive materials and games-based approaches here as well as some facilities provided by the Virtual Campus to model real-world communication processes, but they are only partial solutions and unlikely to meet the baseline requirements for communications in the standards. The way forward may lie in the development of approved simulation and its acceptance by the awarding body as valid for learning and assessment purposes.

Creating and tracing a digital footprint takes internet access. It will be an issue overhanging some offenders, with implications for rehabilitation. Work around what constitutes a positive identity and how to build one can be carried out in partnership with other areas of the education programme, such as business courses and preparation for employment.



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Transacting

Looks at using and interacting with a range of online services; buying online safely to get the best deals.

> The Key point

Private, commercial and government services have moved online in such great numbers that anyone who is unable or ill-prepared to use them is at a significant disadvantage.

Challenges

The rate at which organisations shift services online shows no sign of slowing, but there is no opportunity for most players in offender learning to get direct access to key services, including shopping online. This area of the standards poses significant problems within the secure estate. Dealing with payments online directly is problematical in any sector of education and impossible in offender learning.

Opportunities

Creating simulated forms to complete for typical services is both possible and valuable, particularly when set in realistic contexts such as benefits, passport renewal or vehicle tax, and is described in the modules. The underpinning knowledge of using online methods to make payments, including newer ones such as digital wallets, are well resourced in a variety of formats, with good videos to stimulate discussion.



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Being safe and responsible online

Looks at protecting privacy and data; behaving responsibly online; digital wellbeing.

> The Key point

This is a large area of the standards for which there is already a considerable body of understanding, resource and experience. The 2019 standards have largely caught up with current teaching practice in updating their 2007 predecessor, but understanding and teaching around these issues has been a core component of ICT education and skills for some time.

Challenges

The core theme running through this module is to use the internet safely, wisely and with confidence, being aware of the risks and of how to deal with them. The best way to teach any learners this is not to expose them to online risk, but to build sound knowledge of the issues to prepare them for going online and being online.

Opportunities

Many of the resources and ideas identified in the modules can be adapted and used in offender learning because they do not rely on being online. A consideration in the shift away from older ICT skills programmes to an essential skills perspective is that learning is not always best served by learners constantly facing a screen and interacting with a computer. Many of the issues around staying safe and behaving responsibly online call for guided and informed questioning and discussion rather than hands on keyboard activity.

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There are some immovable barriers to delivering parts of the essential digital skills standards, particularly around Skills areas 3 Communications and 4 Transactions.

National policy and its local implementation to manage the security risks of online learning, and even some elements of offline digital activity, must take precedence. There are examples of innovative uses of technology to support some of the challenging aspects of the standards in some prisons but there is no clear mechanism to enable the spread of this practice and the resources that support it.

The age profile and capability of equipment and infrastructure differs greatly from establishment to establishment and some is not suitable for the requirements of the 2019 standards. Despite all this, it is possible to serve the learner community by putting together those elements of the standards that can be delivered in your prison into a meaningful package and concentrating on what can be achieved rather than what cannot – on the opportunities rather than the challenges.



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<p>The modules in the Accessibility category of the Enhance EdTech contain good advice and links on supporting disability and learning disadvantage.</p>	<p>https://enhance.etfoundation.co.uk/</p>
<p>Successfully using ICT to support learning in the secure estate identifying and documenting current examples: A report for ETF by Angela Sanders (June 2017).</p> <p>Interesting examples of best practice developments in the use of ICT for learning.</p>	<p>https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Successfully-using-ICT-to-support-learning-in-the-secure-estate-Final-Report_20-June-2017.pdf</p>
<p>Bespoke resources developed with the offender learning workforce during 2014-2018 together with the ETF's mainstream offer are available.</p>	<p>https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/offender-learning/</p>

Acknowledgements

Steve Grix and Leigh Tullet.

Original materials created on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation and funded by the Department for education.