

What can the National Occupational Standards do for you?

- ✓ Help to develop and retain a more efficient workforce
- ✓ Improve recruitment
- ✓ Identify previously acquired competence
- ✓ Provide a cost effective assessment tool
- ✓ Identify knowledge and skills gaps
- ✓ Provide a benchmark against which to measure own skills
- ✓ Ensure that training is relevant
- ✓ Support organisational planning
- ✓ Enable staff to achieve in the workplace



Introduction

The National Occupational Standards define what each sector agrees to be good practice. The Standards can provide the basis for qualifications within the sector, but they also have many wider uses.

The Standards were developed following widespread involvement and consultation across the sector in each of the home countries, and a period of piloting in a range of youth work settings. A team of consultants, a steering group and many colleagues from the Youth Work Sector assisted in this work.

The Standards can bring everyone into the 'learning cycle'. Unlike the qualifications which are based on them, the National Occupational Standards themselves are not set at levels. They define the competence required by youth workers and can be used to develop and monitor these skills in key individuals. By using the National Occupational Standards, for example, a set of skills and learning objectives can be drawn up, which is passed to the individual, their supervisor and training specialists as a 'prescription' for a development programme.

This guide provides some examples and is designed to explain what the standards are and signpost further advice and information.



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In This Guide:

- What are the National Occupational Standards?
- The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work
- Example from a Unit of the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work
- Using the National Occupational Standards
- Benefits of using the National Occupational Standards
- Next Steps

Benefits of using the National Occupational Standards

For Organisations

The National Occupational Standards form a ready-made, nationally agreed set of competencies. They can be used to support any business or organisation to:

- Improve recruitment and the composition of teams through defined job descriptions, person specifications and effective interviewing
- Ensure staff are clear about their responsibilities and work activities
- Help to develop and retain a skilled motivated and flexible workforce
- Appraise individual performance
- Provide focused feedback to staff
- Identify knowledge and skills gaps
- Reduce training costs through effective design of learning and development programmes and work-based assessment
- Encourage staff to acquire skills and knowledge for enhanced job prospects
- Ensure staff complies with legal and organisation requirements
- Measure their performance against clear benchmarks
- Identify priorities for development and improve organisational planning
- Inform discussion about practice
- Use common standards when working in partnership
- Provide evidence for national quality standards, such as Investors in People and the Matrix standard for information, advice and guidance services
- Improve customer care
- Improve focus on quality of service and outputs

For Individuals

An organisation which implements national occupational standards, is showing commitment to raising standards of competency, skills and knowledge among its workforce. The benefits for workers include:

- Clearly defined job descriptions and responsibility levels
- A benchmark to measure own skills against nationally recognised standards
- Guidance on best practice
- Appraisals which recognise and reward their true levels of skills and competency
- Appraisals which identify of skills and knowledge gaps
- Training to meet the needs of the individual
- Encouragement to acquire skills and knowledge for enhanced job prospects
- Ability to use the National Occupational Standards to gain recognised qualifications
- Undertake work-based assessment which does not involve extensive time away on courses
- Job satisfaction, which comes from confidence in one's own standards of performance

The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work

The National Occupational Standards are designed to reflect the key aspect of Youth Work and they are broken down into six distinct parts:

A	Build relationships with young people which enable them to explore and make sense of their experiences, plan and take action
B	Facilitate young people's learning and their personal and social development
C	Enable young people to organise and take co-responsibility for activities, events and projects
D	Work with young people in accordance with the core values of Youth Work
E	Plan, manage and develop Youth Work
F	Support and develop effective, efficient and ethical practice in Youth Work

Each of these aspects is broken down into a number of units making up the National Occupational Standards.

At the heart of all of the standards is the Key Purpose of Youth Work which is:
To work with young people to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, and enable them to gain a voice, influence and place in society in a period of their transition from dependence to independence.

What are the National Occupational Standards?

The National Occupational Standards are developed by Sector Skills Councils and Standard Setting Bodies, such as ENTO, through consultation with practitioners, employers, professional bodies and trades unions.

A National Occupational Standard describes:

What an experienced and effective worker does in their job

There are National Occupational Standards for many different sectors in existence and they all have similar format:

Key roles	The different areas in which people in the occupation operate
Units Summary	A description of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the Unit about? ■ Who is it for? ■ Explanations of terminology
Elements of Competence	Divisions of the Unit which describe the activities which the person has to carry out
Performance criteria	Describe what effective workers do and the standards to be achieved
Knowledge requirements	What an individual needs to know in order to perform to the standards
Performance Evidence	Specification of the types of evidence needed to prove competence and the minimum requirements

Example from the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work

National Occupational Standards for Youth Work

UNIT: **A.2 Enable young people to access and use information and make decisions.**

ELEMENT: **A.2.1 Identify, collect, analyse, store and make information available.**

This is about: working with young people to identify the kinds of information they require, assisting young people to obtain it, storing it appropriately and making it available to young people.

Performance Criteria You will need to show that you can:	Knowledge Specification You will need to know:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a work with young people to identify accurately the types of information needed to address their information needs b work with young people to collect and store the necessary information c identify with young people ways of storing and accessing information in <i>media</i> which suit their needs d ensure that young people have the knowledge they need to access other sources of information e collect information which broadens the scope of <i>options</i> considered by young people f encourage and influence <i>information providers</i> to produce information which is relevant and attractive to young people g make efforts to ensure that information collected is easily <i>accessible</i> to young people h monitor the currency of information and make efforts to maintain its accuracy i hold and store information in line with organisational policies and legislation j provide opportunities to disseminate information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 why it is important to have a wide variety of information available for young people's use 2 issues affecting young people 3 sources of information relevant to young people 4 a range of <i>media</i> for storing and displaying information 5 storage, retrieval and display systems appropriate for young people 6 ways of disseminating information, or of making it available to young people 7 information presentation methods which are appropriate and interesting to young people 8 factors affecting <i>accessibility</i> of information 9 systems for ensuring that information is kept up to date 10 organisational policies and legislation relevant to the storage of information, photocopying and copyright.

Notes on this element:

- I *media*: written and spoken information, telephone information services, displays and notices, computer based information (if possible)
- II *options*: options for action, for personal and social development
- III *information providers*: may include statutory and voluntary bodies, benefits and allowances services, libraries, leisure facilities, legal services
- IV *accessible*: this may include formats adapted to meet particular needs (languages, access for people with visual and hearing impairments, and people with other special requirements) make information available in detached work, formal and informal environments
- V *opportunities*: formal and informal.

January 2002
Part 2 - Section A
Page 6

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Unit Title

Element of Competence

Unit Summary

Performance Criteria

Knowledge Requirements

To help you get started the following are some examples of how you might set about using the Learning and Development standards.

Recruitment and Selection

- Identifying the required components of current job role
- Identifying the required components of an anticipated future job role
- Preparing job advertisement details
- As advance information to job candidates
- As an interview checklist
- To specify induction and initial training

Identifying Individual and Organisational Training Needs

- Identifying the skills and competence needs of an organisation
- Identifying previously acquired competence
- Identifying individual learning needs
- Identifying group and organisational learning needs
- Developing a strategic view of future learning requirements

Structuring Learning programmes

- Linking training to objectives and the needs identified
- Identifying priorities
- Increasing the relevance and credibility of training and learning programmes
- Developing the knowledge content for learning programmes
- Specification of required outcomes and targets for trainers
- Identifying learning opportunities in the workplace
- Evaluation and selection of learning resources against organisational requirements

Next Steps

For a full set of the standards or further information and advice about making the National Occupational Standards work for you contact:



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