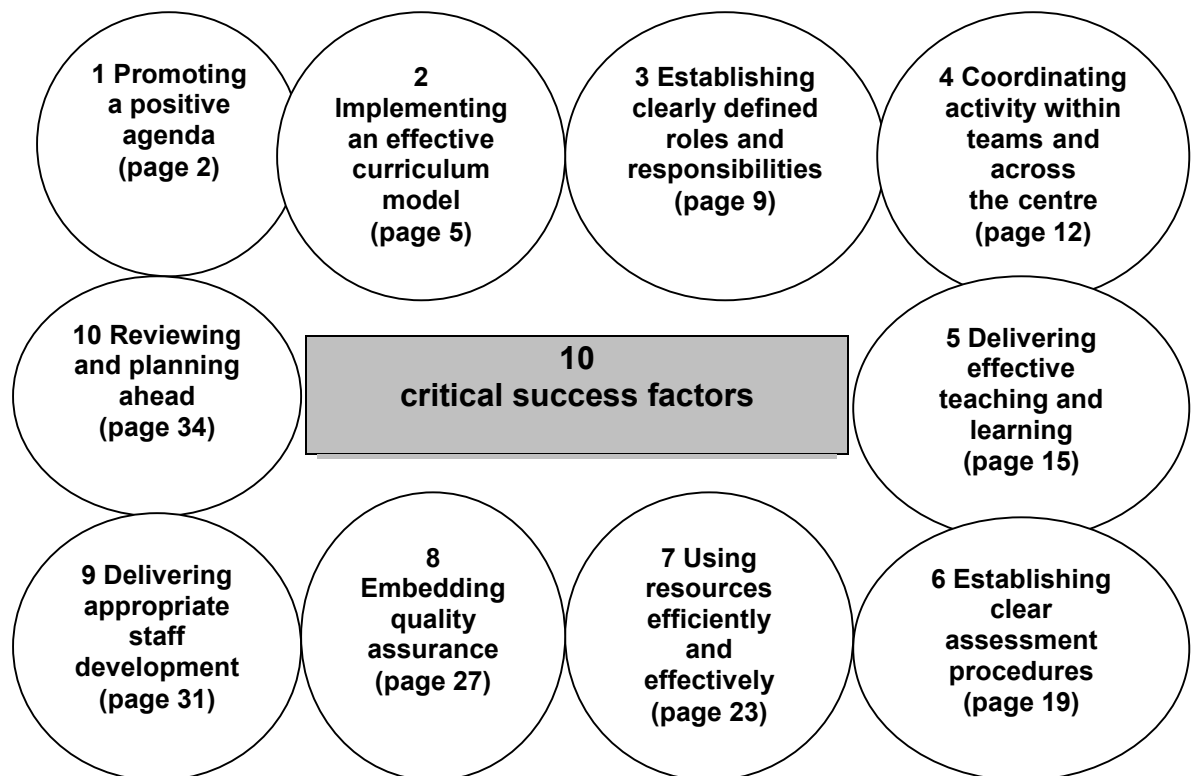


How are you managing?

Ten critical success factors



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Critical success factor 1

Promoting a positive agenda

Creating and promoting a positive agenda for key skills is the work of senior management, whose leadership and support have emerged as the single most important factor influencing effective practice in implementing key skills.

Managers can only promote a truly positive agenda if they believe in the value of key skills. This belief is found in the most effective centres, characterised by an innovative management style and a senior management team that believes in the intrinsic value of key skills for young people while they are studying and in their later lives; for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning; and for improving achievement.

Effective centres have found that a positive agenda at all levels of management is essential – it influences the attitudes of staff and students; it underpins policy and the management decisions needed to embed key skills effectively in the centre; and it provides the continuity of support needed by those charged with the implementation of key skills over a period of time. Until key skills are embedded as a normal part of centre operations they will need senior management attention to organisational structures, resources, roles, quality assurance and staff development. As managers, you will want to review progress against these areas and continue to plan for the positive development of key skills in your centre.

Questions for review and development

1 Is the senior management team seen to value key skills?

- How do managers convey their belief in the value of key skills to staff and students?
- What development plans have we for embedding and improving key skills?
- Are all staff aware of the plans and the timescale to achieve the aims and objectives?
- How innovative and supportive is the culture in our centre to continue the development of key skills?
- Are key skills promoted at our regular staff briefings?

2 How effective is our key skills policy?

- Does our policy reflect our belief in the value of key skills and is it understood and shared by all staff?
- How effectively is our policy implemented and monitored?
- How do staff contribute to the review and updating of the key skills policy?
- Are our students consulted about the policy?
- Is the policy for equal opportunities linked to the key skills policy?
- Are key skills highlighted in the self-assessment report?

3 What are we doing to promote the value of key skills to higher education?

- What opportunities have we taken to promote the benefits of key skills to HE partners? What more could we do?
- Have we disseminated case studies of students who have had their key skills recognised by higher education?

4 How effectively have we explained the benefits of key skills to local employers and work placement providers?

- What opportunities have we taken to develop key skills through students' work placements?
- Could we develop further links with employers to promote and develop key skills

5 How successful have we been in promoting key skills positively to students?

- How do we know if our students value key skills and see benefits in them?
- Are we using students who are successful in key skills as ambassadors for promoting the value of key skills to new and prospective students?
- How effectively do the centre prospectus and induction information promote the value of key skills?
- How effective is the information we provide for parents about key skills?

6 How successful have we been in promoting key skills positively to staff?

- How are staff involved in continuing debates about the value of key skills and our policy?
- Are staff promoting key skills positively to students at induction?
- How are we ensuring that staff continue to reinforce the value of key skills in their teaching programmes?
- What proportion of staff are positive role models for key skills through their tutorials with students?
- Does our induction for new staff include the positive promotion of key skills?
- How have we responded to the concerns staff have had about key skills?

7 How do we champion success in key skills teaching and in student achievement?

- How do we spread good news about key skills internally and to external stakeholders?
- Are our students encouraged to celebrate their achievements in key skills and are they given any public recognition?

Critical success factor 2

Implementing an effective curriculum model

It is good practice to implement a curriculum model that enables students and teachers to value and develop key skills in relevant contexts. Because students can learn and practise key skills, including the wider key skills, in a wide range of learning contexts, an effective curriculum model should be based around the student's total learning experience. This presents organisational challenges.

An effective model will enable students and teachers to:

- plan a key skills programme that meets the needs of individual learners
- identify and develop those key skills that underpin the main curriculum area
- maximise naturally occurring opportunities for development and assessment in all elements of the student's learning programme
- provide opportunities for students to learn and practise the basic techniques for each key skill
- provide opportunities for assessment at an appropriate time.

Senior managers will also need to review the effectiveness of the key skills curriculum model in the light of other national initiatives. For example, the national standards and core curriculum for adult literacy and numeracy, the introduction of structured tutorial and enrichment programmes together with increasing emphasis upon the value of the wider key skills and developments in information and communications technology (ICT) – all contribute to an overall programme of skills development for the learner.

There are implications for the organisation of staff, resources, processes and systems in the challenge to deliver a comprehensive and efficient curriculum model that delivers a coherent experience to learners. Crucially, learners have an important role in tracking and reflecting upon their own skills development; involving them successfully in the management of their programme will strengthen your curriculum model.

Questions for review and development

1 How effective is our curriculum model?

- How effectively are we teaching the underpinning techniques?
- How successfully are we providing opportunities for students to build and develop key skills as an integral part of their main learning programme?
- How do we provide adequate assessment opportunities?

- Who is responsible for these three stages of skills development?

(The three stages of skills development are exemplified in **the continuum model of key skills development** – see Appendix 1, page 35.)

2 Does our curriculum model include a well-developed process for initial assessment of students' key skills?

See also critical success factor 5: Delivering effective teaching and learning, page 15.

- Does it provide the assessment data we want cost-effectively?
- Is it coherent with the process for identifying additional learning support needs?
- How well is the initial assessment process working for staff and students to help them plan individual key skills programmes?

3 How does our curriculum model enable students to develop the key skills they need to succeed on their primary programme?

- Have course/subject/departmental teams identified the essential underpinning key skills in their curriculum areas?
- Does initial assessment help us to ensure that all students are taught the key skills they need to succeed on their primary programme?

A model to help course teams identify the level of key skills essential to their programmes is included in Appendix 2 on page 36.

4 How effective is our curriculum model in enabling students to achieve high levels of attainment in key skills?

- Do we provide opportunity and challenge to students to progress in key skills?
- Do individual students have the opportunity to study skills at the level appropriate to them?
- What arrangements have we made to enable students to choose to develop all the key skills at Level 3?

5 How effectively does our curriculum model embrace a range of key skills learning opportunities?

- Are key skills signposted and developed in the curriculum areas?
- How does the tutorial programme contribute to the management and delivery of the key skills programme?
- Does the enrichment programme reinforce and contribute to key skills development opportunities?
- Where and how are the wider key skills developed?
- Are learning development centres used effectively to develop key skills with individual students?
- Is the additional learning support programme designed to complement the key skills programme?
- How do we coordinate responsibilities across these areas so that the student experience is coherent?

6 How does our curriculum model enable us to move forward other curriculum objectives, for example:

- the development of tutorial programmes?
- target-setting?
- flexible learning strategies?
- the strategy for information learning technology (ILT)?
- plans for improvements in teaching and learning?
- strategies for raising retention and achievement?

7 Do we have a curriculum model for the wider key skills?

- Are staff and students clear about where and how the wider key skills will be developed and assessed?
- Have we allowed sufficient time for the wider key skills to be developed to meet the specifications at each level?

8 How well is our curriculum model supported by existing systems and routines, for example:

- our methodology for allocating resources?
- our methodology for allocating targets?
- our quality assurance processes?
- our management of information and examination processes?
- our marketing and publicity cycle?

9 How well is our curriculum model known and understood by staff?

- Is the curriculum model published?
- Can all staff explain how it works?
- What level of confidence do our staff have in our curriculum model and are they committed to making it work?
- Do we have a key skills development plan that has been shared with staff?

10 How well is our curriculum model understood by students?

- Can students explain how they will develop their key skills?
- Are students able to recognise key skills learning opportunities across all elements of their learning experience?
- Are students clear about their responsibility for tracking their progress?
- How do we equip students with the skills and resources to help them track and plan their key skills development?

Critical success factor 3

Establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities

Effective practice in key skills relies on many staff interacting successfully with each other and with the individual student. The more deeply key skills are embedded in the centre, the more people are involved in them in some way. Only if all staff know what their role and responsibilities are in the key skills programme, and how to carry them out effectively, will the student experience of key skills be positive.

Everyone with a responsibility for key skills, however limited, makes a contribution to the quality and quality assurance of the key skills programme and therefore the quality of the student experience. Thus each person involved in key skills, whether as a manager, specialist key skills teacher or subject teacher, as assessor, standards verifier or administrator, has an important role, even if it is part of another role, and each should be completely clear about their role and responsibilities and confident to carry them out.

Evidence from the most effective centres confirms that the role of the coordinator is vital for carrying through the centre plan to develop and embed key skills. An effective coordinator with sufficient experience, status and organising ability is essential, particularly in the early stages of key skills development. (The role of the coordinator is covered more fully in critical success factor 4: Coordinating activity within teams and across the centre.)

The range and scope of key skills roles and responsibility depend on the curriculum model your centre has chosen, but all models will include opportunities for students to learn the underpinning techniques, develop and demonstrate their skills, and be assessed and verified. It is useful to document roles and responsibilities against the continuum of key skills development to ensure the processes are well covered (see Appendix 1.)

As key skills become embedded in your centre roles may need to change to reflect their move from a developmental stage to a normal part of centre activity like any other part of the curriculum.

Questions for review and development

- 1 Are roles and responsibilities – from senior management to curriculum level –clearly defined and appropriate for the stage of development of key skills in our centre?**
 - Have we reviewed our staffing structure for key skills and taken action where necessary?

- Is there a revised staffing structure that sets out roles and responsibilities?
- How have the roles for basic skills and key skills been developed so that they are linked where necessary?
- Do all staff know and understand who is responsible for which stages of key skills development for students?
- Are there clear lines of responsibility between a senior manager and different levels of staff?

2 How are the roles of staff differentiated?

- Is there a key skills coordinator?
- Do we have key skills specialists, or consultants, or champions for each key skill?
- Have we underlined our expectation that every teacher is a 'key skills builder'?
- How long do we plan to have a key skills coordinator post and have we reviewed the role to ensure it is relevant to our development plans for key skills?

3 Does your key skills coordinator have the necessary skills to carry out his/her responsibilities effectively? For example:

- are they successful in motivating colleagues?
- is their leadership style appropriate?
- do they communicate effectively?
- do they work with systems and procedures effectively?

4 How effective is the role of the key skills specialist?

- How are they supporting subject specialists to integrate key skills into their teaching?
- What part of the continuum model are they responsible for?
- How does this role link with that of the basic skills specialists?
- What is the next stage of development for this role in relation to your centre plan for key skills?

- 5 How effective is the role of the personal tutor in managing individual students' key skills programmes?**
- Has the job description of personal tutors been revised?
 - Does the personal tutor have responsibility for key skills through constructing learning plans with students and for tracking progress. Is this built into the tutorial role?
 - Are the wider key skills developed as a regular part of the tutorial?
 - Are personal tutors clear about their responsibility in relation to other colleagues?
- 6 Are subject teachers clear about their role in the stages of skills development?**
- Are they responsible for teaching basic techniques?
 - What evidence is there that they are building skills in their main programme teaching?
 - Is it clear when they are responsible for developing and delivering an assessment assignment?
 - Are they using the documentation for tracking key skills?
- 7 How do we monitor how effectively the roles and responsibilities for key skills are carried out?**
- Do all staff with any responsibility for key skills have clear objectives for key skills development to work to?
 - What evidence have we that key skills are included in the normal performance review process?
 - How well do staff development opportunities relate to the roles and responsibilities in the key skills programme?

Critical success factor 4

Coordinating activity within teams and across the centre

A coordinated approach to the implementation of key skills achieves consistency in the quality of key skills delivery, systems and administration. A well-coordinated key skills programme benefits staff and students and contributes to the quality of the key skills experience for students. The role of the key skills coordinator is crucial for embedding key skills across the centre; they play a major part in managing change, coordinating activities and developing effective team-working. In effective centres structures and systems have been set up and common documentation and procedures developed; this has increased efficiency and ensured that the programme is manageable across even the largest of institutions.

Questions for review and development

1 Are our coordinator's responsibilities allocated effectively?

- Is the key skills coordinator clear about his/her objectives?
- Do the formal structures and systems support the coordinator's work or do they rely on informal channels and personal skills to meet the objectives?
- Has the coordinator got direct access to the senior manager responsible for key skills? Are there clear reporting lines?
- Has the coordinator been given sufficient status, time and resources to carry through our plan to develop and embed key skills?
- Does the coordinator have input to the middle management groups responsible for curriculum planning and development?
- Is there a need to review and redefine the coordinator's responsibilities in line with the development plan for key skills?

2 How effective is the support received by our key skills coordinator?

- Does their line manager regularly review activities?
- Is there access to a professional development programme to develop their management skills?

- 3 Do we have a team approach to key skills?**
- What teams have been developed?
 - Is effective support provided for team-work across AVCE, AS/A2 and other post-16 programmes?
 - How are the activities of different teams coordinated?
- 4 Are the methods used to communicate with staff appropriate and effective?**
- How are staff kept regularly informed about developments?
 - Are their views listened to and due account taken of them?
 - How is good practice shared?
 - How is success identified and celebrated?
 - How is communication maintained, up, down and across the organisation?
- 5 How effective are the common systems and administration for supporting key skills coordination?**
- How far have we developed common, documented systems and administrative processes?
 - Are our IT systems for action-planning, progress, achievement-tracking and sharing materials working?
 - How well is the common guidance on curriculum planning and materials design working?
 - How effectively are the test entry arrangements coordinated?
- 6 How far are key skills embedded into our normal centre management and coordination procedures? For example, the procedures for:**
- disseminating up-to-date information?
 - organising the schedule for carrying out assignments and assessment?
 - marketing to parents, students, employers and higher education?
 - self-assessment and follow-up action on quality issues?

- 7 What arrangements are in place to coordinate the following and are they working effectively? For example:**
- initial assessment and induction?
 - curriculum mapping of key skills in main programmes?
 - assessment regimes?
 - internal verification?
 - standards moderation?
 - the system and schedule for internal verification?
 - internal and external liaison and the organisation for external tests?
- 8 Do subject specialists, key skills specialists and coordinators meet together and review how well the programme is working?**
- Is there a fixed meeting time?
 - Are there common agendas for course team reviews, which include key skills?
 - Are all relevant staff invited to the meetings? Are they attending?

Critical success factor 5

Delivering effective teaching and learning

The central focus of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) is on the learner, and effective teaching and learning are judged in terms of:

- how well teaching and training meet individuals' needs and course or programme requirements
- how well learners learn and make progress.

Effective practice is where learning is relevant to each individual and learners value the skills they develop and understand their importance. Learners need to receive clear guidance on their choice of key skills, and effective initial assessment and induction should lead to the development of an individual learning plan, with realistic targets, which is subject to regular review. Senior managers need to ensure that government expectations are met and that relevant opportunities are provided for key skills development for all young people – increasingly including the wider key skills. Students will not be convinced of the value of key skills if teachers and managers are not convinced and induction is your big chance to convince them that key skills are worthwhile.

It is important to review teaching and learning methods and share good practice across the organisation to enhance learner achievement. The consensus view is that learner motivation is greater if key skills are integrated within mainstream programmes but this is less easy for Application of Number (AoN) and Information Technology (IT) than for Communication and the wider key skills. Underpinning skills are not acquired incidentally and need to be explicitly taught and supported. Effective learning recognises the continuum of basic and key skills and the need for discrete support, constructive feedback and encouragement to enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Effective teaching interests, inspires and challenges. It involves relevant and motivating opportunities for students to develop skills and practise them in a range of contexts as well as preparing for external tests. A sharper focus on individual needs and more differentiated delivery requires a wider range of resources that are easily accessible to both teachers and learners.

Questions for review and development

1 How do we determine which key skill each student will aim for and at what level?

- Do we establish students' prior achievement in each key skill and take account of proxy qualifications and exemptions?

- Do we establish their potential achievement and set individual targets to ensure that all students achieve Level 2 in all three key skills?
- Do we identify individual needs for support?
- Do we identify individual starting points?
- Do we identify individual learning styles?
- Do we use this information in individual learning plans to match learning needs and long-term goals?

2 Do we have an integrated and student-centred induction programme which includes an introduction to key skills with an explanation of why they are important?

- Does it clarify the value of and short-, medium- and long-term benefits of key skills development?
- Do learners understand the language and structure of the key skills units, how key skills are delivered and assessed and the standards required?
- Do learners understand their route and their responsibility for completing their portfolios?
- Is an individual learning plan agreed which includes clear objectives for key skills development that learners understand?
- Is it successful in motivating learners?

3 How effectively do we identify opportunities for key skills teaching and learning?

- Are we identifying as many opportunities as possible for key skills development in students' main programmes of study?
- Are teaching and learning opportunities clearly identified in schemes of work and lesson plans?
- How are we going to monitor and review progress made with schemes of work?
- Are there plans for further embedding key skills in subject teaching?

- 4 How effective are teaching and learning across the key skills continuum?**
- Are basic skills and the underpinning techniques for each of the key skills effectively taught and reinforced?
 - Are there adequate opportunities to build and practise skills?
 - Are appropriate opportunities provided to apply and demonstrate skills?
 - Are learners effectively prepared for the external tests?
- 5 How effective are our teaching and learning strategies?**
- Do students experience a range of teaching strategies?
 - How do we accommodate different learning styles?
 - How do we motivate students to achieve their key skills goals?
 - How are we promoting and disseminating good practice in teaching and learning?
- 6 Do our assessment and feedback arrangements support effective learning?**
- Do students receive formative feedback on their performance?
 - Are the assessment opportunities we provide well timed?
 - Do learners understand the purpose of the assessment and are they clear about assessment criteria?
 - How and when do we record and review progress with the student?
- 7 Are our learning resources high quality, accessible and appropriately used?**
- Are our learning resources relevant and appropriate to a range of levels and individual needs?
 - Are they easily accessible to individual learners?
 - Are they shared across the centre?
 - Are they accessible online and is there adequate access to computers, software packages and technical support?

- Is use made of the internet, the Key Skills Support Programme resources index and other databases to locate appropriate learning resources?
- Is use made of the wide range of learning resources available from the Key Skills Support Programme, awarding bodies and commercial publishers?
- Are learning resources subject to regular review and development?

8 How do we promote learner autonomy?

- Are students asked to assess their strengths and weaknesses and identify their needs?
- Do students understand the purpose of each learning activity?
- Do they have opportunities to act independently?
- Do they have opportunities to select their own materials?
- Do they reflect on what they have done?
- Do they check their own progress?
- Are challenging and realistic targets negotiated for students to achieve?
- Are they encouraged to develop the key skill of Improving Own Learning and Performance?

9 How do we monitor and review the effectiveness of our teaching and learning strategies?

- Do we modify learning activities and programmes in the light of student feedback?
- Do we modify them in the light of staff feedback?
- Do we modify them in the light of student achievement?

Critical success factor 6

Establishing clear assessment procedures

The most important thing about assessment from the students' point of view is whether they pass. Pass rates in the tests improve as candidates are better prepared but the logistics of internal and external assessment for large numbers of students need careful management, and portfolio completion remains an issue. Good practice requires robust and reliable systems that run smoothly and students need an overview of their assessment route and to know what they are responsible for. In effective centres students are able to recognise and track their achievement and receive effective support in portfolio-building. They are given the opportunity to prepare for and take the external test at the right level and the right time.

Portfolios need to be developed, completed and assessed at the right standard. The challenge is to ensure that students value key skills achievement, that assessment is to national standards, and that standards are consistent across centres. Awarding bodies are responsible for ensuring that the quality of assessment is to national standards and standardisation and internal verification are to external requirements. They are also a crucial aspect of quality agendas and critical to raising standards and achievement. Effective centres take care to disseminate feedback and ensure that actions are carried out to support quality improvement.

Good practice requires well-trained staff with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and the development of common systems and procedures for internal and external assessment, standards moderation and internal verification. Assessors should aim to be qualified in the key skill at least at the level at which they are assessing and to have appropriate assessor qualifications. In effective centres systems and procedures have been reviewed to relieve the assessment burden and assessment arrangements have been streamlined. The emphasis is on the quality rather than the volume of portfolio evidence and there is a more flexible response to individual needs.

Questions for review and development

1 What responsibilities do we give to students?

- Do students map their route to completing their portfolio?
- How do we encourage students to take responsibility for their portfolios?
- Are students involved in recording and tracking progress?
- Do we provide them with appropriate time and support for portfolio building?

- Are students set clear targets including a target date for taking the test?

2 Are assessors confident and competent to assess to national standards?

- Do assessors have appropriate expertise to understand the full implications of the key skills qualifications?
- Are there assessors who are competent to assess portfolio evidence for each level of the key skills the centre is delivering?
- Is there consensus among teachers and assessors about the standards required at each of the key skills levels?
- Is there a rolling development programme to increase staff skills in assessment?
- Do staff have the opportunity to achieve the key skills qualifications and/or assessor qualifications?

3 Are roles and responsibilities relating to the assessment processes clear?

- Is it clear who is responsible for coordinating arrangements and liaising with the awarding body?
- Is full use made of advice from the awarding body?
- Do staff understand their responsibility for contributing to the assessment process?

4 Is assessment timely and effective in promoting learning and achievement?

- Do staff and students have an overview and make effective use of assessment evidence?
- Is work assessed at the earliest opportunity to enable students to revise or replace work?
- Are students given positive feedback on the standards they should aim for and helped to identify what they need to do to improve?
- Are students effectively supported as they build their portfolios?

- 5 What common systems and procedures support assessment and how effectively are they used?**
- How do we track student progress and achievement?
 - How do we ensure that systems are clearly understood by both staff and students?
 - Are the results of assessment effectively fed into the tracking system?
 - How well do recording and tracking procedures feed into internal verification and external moderation procedures?
 - How can systems and procedures be streamlined and the amount of paperwork be reduced?
- 6 Are there effective arrangements to standardise internal assessment?**
- Are meetings arranged to standardise assessment?
 - Are arrangements supported by common systems and documentation?
 - Are appropriate staff, for example key skills specialists, involved?
 - Is assessment consistent across the centre?
 - Where there are inconsistencies how do we ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken?
 - Is full use made of moderation meetings held by awarding bodies?
- 7 How well are internal verification arrangements working?**
- Is adequate time allocated for the systematic verification of students' work and the sampling of portfolios?
 - Are internal verifiers competent and do we have the number we need?
 - Do they have the authority to ensure all assessors follow the standards and procedures consistently?
 - Do internal verifiers check the key skills content of assignment briefs?

- Is the frequency of the verification of assignments and sampling of portfolios adequate?
- Are assessment decisions sampled from all programmes through an internal standards moderation procedure?
- Is there a rolling development programme to increase staff skills in verification and the number of qualified internal verifiers?
- Is the internal verification of key skills part of the centre's key skills policy and procedures? Is it aligned to internal verification procedures for other programmes?
- How is feedback disseminated?

8 How effective is our response to external standards moderation?

- Are portfolios presented to meet the requirements of the awarding body with a clear indexing system that indicates where key skills evidence can be found?
- How do we ensure that the paperwork and arrangements for the visit of the standards moderator are in place?
- How is feedback disseminated?
- How do we ensure that any action required is carried out?

9 What arrangements have been made to support external assessment?

- Are students well prepared for the external tests?
- Is effective use made of chief examiners' reports to support test revision?
- How do we ensure that students are entered for external tests at the right level and only when they are ready?
- How do we avoid giving students too many tests during the peak examination period?
- Are there clear procedures to support examination entries and has adequate account been taken of the numbers of entries involved?
- Have adequate resources been allocated?
- Are test results communicated effectively to students and staff?

Critical success factor 7

Using resources efficiently and effectively

Effective centres recognise the resource implications for delivering a key skills programme. In colleges delivery of key skills is through LSC funding identified as a part of an entitlement or enrichment programme for 16–18-year-old students and this enables some investment to be made in an effective teaching and learning strategy.

At the same time you will wish to optimise all available and existing resources to ensure that a widespread key skills programme is managed efficiently as well as effectively. Many colleges have aligned their resources for delivering basic skills and key skills. Others have created skills development centres and many effective centres have structured the tutorial programme to support the delivery, tracking and portfolio-building stages.

In effective centres there is a transparent methodology for allocating budgets for key skills that is consistent with other curriculum areas and a costed development plan that enables staff to plan for quality improvement.

Questions for review and development

- 1 Do we have information on the cost implications of implementing our curriculum model?**
 - Are any new teaching costs identified?
 - What are the ongoing staff development costs?
 - What are the costs involved in managing the documentation processes?
 - What are the costs involved in purchasing or developing resources?
 - What are the costs involved in registration and certification?
 - Are there any additional costs for the delivery of the wider key skills?

2 Have we allocated sufficient resources to deliver the key skills programme effectively?

- Have we adequately funded the delivery of all stages of the programme from initial assessment to internal verification?
- Are the wider key skills delivered entirely through the entitlement programme or do we need to identify additional guided learning hours?
- Is our methodology for allocating resources consistent with other elements of the curriculum?
- Are budget holders clear about their targets and resource allocations to deliver key skills?

3 Are we managing the initial assessment process efficiently?

- Are there opportunities to standardise the processes for initial assessment for learning support and key skills?
- Have we reviewed the efficiency and effectiveness of our current initial assessment model?

4 Is our model for teaching underpinning techniques cost-effective?

- How efficiently are we deploying our specialist key skills staff?
- Have we maximised group sizes and enabled students to join classes at the appropriate key skill level?

5 Are we adequately funding opportunities for students to practise and build their key skills?

- Are we using all available opportunities in the student's learning programme to develop and practise key skills, for example through subject areas, in the tutorial programme and during enrichment activities?
- Are our existing resource-based learning and development centres being used effectively to help students gain experience and support?
- Have we trained our learning resources support staff in key skills so that they can help students practise and develop their skills?

- 6 How efficiently are we managing the stages for assessment?**
See also critical success factor 6: Establishing clear assessment procedures, page 19.
- Have we agreed targets for the completion and achievement of key skills qualifications?
 - Have we designed tutorial or course timetables effectively to include portfolio development and management?
 - Have we allocated sufficient resources to enable staff to carry out the process and achieve consistency of standards?
 - What impact have the external tests had on accommodation and resources?
- 7 Have we maximised opportunities to use common curriculum resources?**
- Have we reviewed published materials and budgeted for building up a stock of exemplary material?
 - Do we exploit the materials available through the internet effectively, for example the KSSP materials?
 - Does our structure facilitate the sharing of resources across curriculum areas?
 - Should we fund the development of further generic materials to be delivered cross-college through the tutorial and enrichment programme?
- 8 What is the impact of introducing the key skills programme on our physical resources?**
- Does our information learning technologies (ILT) strategy take account of the key skills programme?
 - How does our curriculum model affect use of space?
 - Do we maximise the use of learning development centres?
- 9 Have we created a costed development plan?**
- Do we plan to increase the key skills offer to more students?
 - Have we budgeted for essential staff development or for the appointment of new specialist staff?

- Do our development plans for learning centres include the key skills dimension?
- Does our ILT development plan include the key skills dimension?
- Is the development plan understood by all key staff?

At this time the most up-to-date information on the LSC funding of key skills in colleges is: Learning and Skills Council (2002). *Key skills in Annex D: A to Z of rates considerations in the funding guidance for further education in 2002/03*. Available on LSC website www.lsc.gov.uk/news_docs

and

Learning and Skills Council (2002) *104 to 111 of ILR audit guidance for further education in 2002/03*. Available on www.lsc.gov.uk/news_docs/ILRAuditGuidance.pdf

Critical success factor 8

Embedding quality assurance

Key skills play a major role in driving up standards and achievement. In effective centres comprehensive quality assurance arrangements ensure that the quality and standard of all provision, including key skills, is reviewed and continuously improved.

An effective quality assurance framework consists of three elements.

- Setting quality standards and targets:
 - targets around enrolment, retention and achievement of the qualification
 - targets for developing the delivery of the programme.
- Self-assessment to determine strengths and weaknesses of provision through evidence gained by:
 - obtaining views – by asking students, employers, parents, teachers and other stakeholders
 - observing the learning and teaching of key skills
 - benchmarking performance against other centres
 - measuring performance against targets
 - external inspection, for example, through OFSTED or the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).
- Improvement plans:
 - recognising strengths and planning to disseminate good practice
 - identifying weakness and detailing actions to achieve improvement
 - feeding into strategic and operational plans.

Centres will be particularly concerned to be able to provide evidence of the quality of key skills provision against the Common Inspection framework (CIF). More information on inspection may be found on the 'quality' pages of the Key Skills Support Programme website at www.keyskillssupport.net Colleges may also be required to provide evidence of the quality of their key skills programmes for their regular provider reviews with the local Learning and Skills Councils.

Although self-assessment and review are often regarded as a preamble to inspection, it is important to emphasise that these are processes that can drive up standards and help centres to improve what they are doing continuously, irrespective of whether an inspection is imminent. The purpose of quality assurance is both to 'prove' and 'improve'.

Questions for review and development

1 How effectively do we use data to establish achievement targets?

- Do we set targets for registration and completion of key skills programmes?
- Do we set targets for retention and achievement for each key skill level?
- Do we use data from initial assessment to inform targets at centre level and at course team level?
- Do we use benchmarking data about achievement in comparable centres?

2 How effectively do we use data to establish targets for improvement in the delivery of key skills?

- Do we use value-added measures to demonstrate the effectiveness of key skills in raising achievement in main subject areas?
- Do we have targets for improving lesson grades for key skills?
- Do we use data about progression to higher education?
- Do we include 'soft' targets, for example around the views of students and staff on the value of key skills?
- Do we set targets for our development plans for the curriculum model?

3 How do we establish responsibility for setting, monitoring and achieving key skills targets?

- How are targets for key skills agreed at course team level?
- Is responsibility for monitoring and working towards the achievement of targets clearly allocated and understood?
- Does the responsibility lie with personal tutors, course teams, specialist key skills teams, key skills coordinator, managers?
- Is the monitoring of targets for key skills included in quality assurance routines?

4 How does our quality assurance framework enable us to assess the quality of key skills provision in the centre?

- Do we have comprehensive quality assurance systems and processes that include key skills?
- Is documentation included in course handbooks?
- Is a review of key skills systems and documentation included in quality assurance exercises?
- How do we know that all staff understand the systems and documentation?
- Are we able to draw together the evidence to report upon the quality of each key skill across the centre?

5 How comprehensive is the evidence we collect for self-assessment?

- Have we identified possible sources of evidence based around the Common Inspection Framework?
- Have we included key skills in the self-assessment processes so that we are able to grade the quality of provision for each key skill?
- Do we gain evidence through seeking the views of key stakeholders: students, teachers, employers, parents?
- Do we observe the learning and teaching of key skills?
- Are we able to identify strengths in teaching and learning?
- Do we gather all the information we need to produce an effective improvement plan?

6 How effective is our process for gathering qualitative evidence?

- How do we assess the effectiveness of our activities for promoting key skills?
- How do we seek the views of students about key skills, for example through focus groups?
- How do we gain the views of other key stakeholders?
- What methods do we use to assess the impact of successful key skills programmes upon achievement in the main programme?

- How do we assess the effectiveness of our curriculum model for key skills?

7 How do we observe the quality of learning and teaching of key skills?

- Do we have a shared understanding about effective teaching and learning strategies and have we trained our observation team?
- Is it appropriate to include members of the key skills development team in the lesson observation team?
- Have we adapted our lesson observation documentation to include key skills?
- Do we observe learning that takes place outside the classroom, for example in learning development centres, in tutorials and through the entitlement curriculum?

8 How effective are our action plans in improving the quality of key skills provision?

- Are quality improvements clearly identified at strategic, operational and course team level?
- Do the outcomes of the self-assessment process feed into strategic and development plans for curriculum, staff development and resources?
- Are responsibilities for leading improvements clearly identified and resourced?
- Do we ensure that effective practice is identified and disseminated?
- Do we regularly monitor the implementation of our action plan?

9 Where is the outcome of the assessment of the quality of key skills provision reported?

- Is the quality assurance review of key skills included in the schedule of cross-centre quality meetings, for example, reporting to the quality committee or a management review group?
- Are key skills highlighted in the full centre self-assessment report?
- Does the governing body receive reports about the quality of key skills?

Critical success factor 9

Delivering appropriate staff development

Staff development plays a crucial role in promoting greater awareness and understanding of key skills, increasing levels of competence and confidence and generating more positive attitudes. Student attitudes to key skills are heavily influenced by staff attitudes and effective centres have made a major investment in staff development. They have demonstrated the importance of targeting the specific needs of different groups and of providing ongoing support.

Many believe that following a certificated programme or taking the key skills units is a highly effective approach to staff development. Where teachers have taken a key skills qualification, their eyes have often been opened to what is involved. Key skills training should be based on standards; the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) has identified standards for basic skills teachers and it is good practice to draw the two strands together.

Effective centres have used a wide range of approaches to staff training and development. Much has been achieved through informal partnerships between mainstream teachers and key skills specialists, and flexible delivery has been an important ingredient of successful practice. Key skills specialists have acted as coaches and mentors; good use has been made of key skills networks and training programmes and material provided by the Key Skills Support Programme. As managers, you will want to review the effectiveness of different strategies in developing the staff skills and monitor the impact on practice.

Questions for review and development

- 1 How do we obtain information on training needs and how is it used?**
 - Do we use a range of methods to identify training needs including questionnaires, staff meetings, course reviews, classroom observation, self-evaluation and appraisal?
 - Do we assess staff competence and confidence in their own key skills?

- 2 Does the staff development plan make appropriate provision for key skills?**
- Does the plan reflect the centre's priorities and development plan for key skills?
 - Is it based on the identified needs of different groups including curriculum managers, key skills coordinators, key skills specialists, subject teachers and tutors?
- 3 How are key skills included in arrangements for staff induction and appraisal?**
- How are new staff introduced to their responsibilities for key skills?
 - Are key skills discussed in lesson observation and appraisal interviews?
 - Do staff have personal development plans that reflect their training needs?
- 4 Is effective use made of a range of staff development approaches?**
- Are there opportunities for staff to develop their own key skills and achieve a qualification?
 - Are key skills embedded within other INSET provision?
 - Are there opportunities for online learning?
 - Are key skills included in teacher education programmes?
 - Are partnerships fostered between key skills specialists and other teachers?
 - Are there coaching and formal mentoring arrangements?
 - Are there opportunities for staff to work together or for peer observation?
 - How is networking encouraged?
- 5 How is expertise shared between key skills specialists and other teachers?**
- Do key skills specialists work with basic skills teachers and exchange expertise?

- Do key skills specialists work with departments and course teams to review schemes of work?
- Do key skills specialists work with department and course teams to develop learning materials and assignments?
- Do key skills specialists provide guidance for staff and students on assessment and portfolio building?

6 How effective is the use made of external organisations?

- Do appropriate staff attend events and is information effectively disseminated?
- How is the Key Skills Support Programme used?
- What use is made of local, regional and national networks and support groups?
- What links are there with other centres?

7 How effective are our arrangements to review and evaluate staff development and training?

- How do teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the training and development they undertake?
- How is relevant information cascaded within the centre?
- How do we evaluate the cost and impact of different training and development activities to inform future planning?

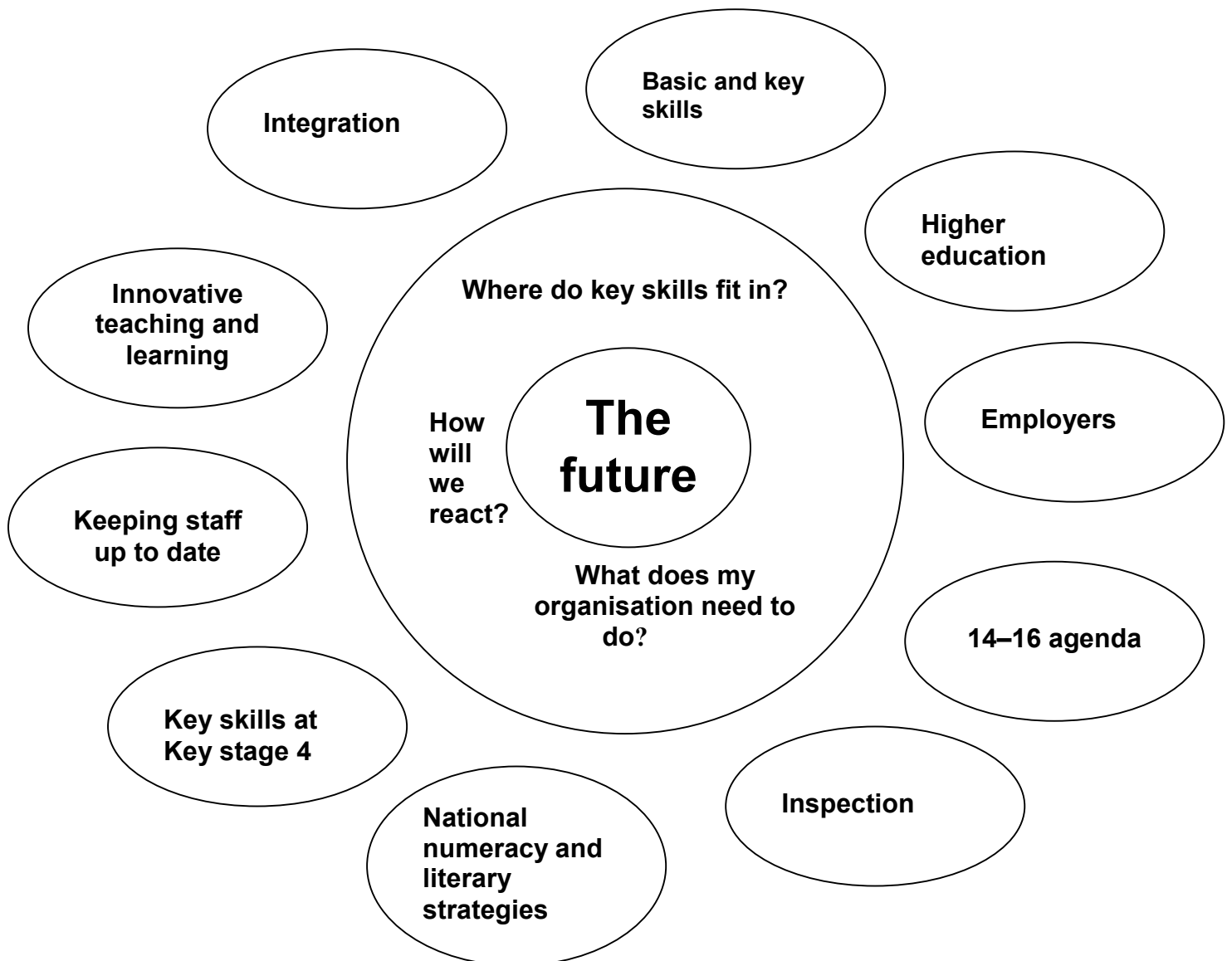
Critical success factor 10

Reviewing and planning ahead

We have included this as the tenth critical success factor because looking ahead is an important part of the senior manager's role.

Below we have identified some of the national initiatives and issues most likely to have links to key skills and to affect the subjects and courses you are offering. They provide an agenda for further discussion along with the other issues that you will identify at a local level.

The Key Skills Support Programme provides updates on these issues through its newsletters and the regular email updates.



Appendix 1

Teaching and learning: a continuum of skills development

What you need to know



acquiring basic techniques

➔ With guidance/teacher lead

What you need to know



practising/building skills

➔ Gaining confidence

What you need to do



demonstrating/assessing
application of skills

➔ Independent learner

Appendix 2

The spiky profile

- Does your curriculum model enable students to develop the key skills they need to succeed on their primary programme?
- Have your course/ subject/departmental teams identified the essential, underpinning key skills in their curriculum areas?
- Does initial assessment help you to ensure that all students are taught the key skills they need to succeed on their primary programme?

Use the model  the next two pages to help your course teams identify the level of key skills essential to their programmes.

CORE CURRICULUM – LITERACY				TUTORIAL	CORE CURRICULUM – NUMERACY		
Read and synthesise information from two extended documents about complex subjects	Proofread and re-draft so that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate.	Write an extended document about a complex subject using an image	Listen and respond sensitively to others, and develop points and ideas	Select and use different ways of learning to improve own performance LEVEL 3	Carry out multi-stage calculations with numbers of any size	Use powers and roots	Select and use appropriate methods to illustrate findings, show trends and make comparisons
Read critically to evaluate information/compare information, ideas and opinions from different sources	Spell correctly most often used words, including familiar technical words	Judge how much to write and the level of detail to include. Present information and ideas in a logical or persuasive sequence using paragraphs	Present information in a logical sequence and provide further detail to confirm/ clarify understanding	Use action points to help manage time well and complete tasks, revising the plan when needed. LEVEL 2	Add, subtract, multiply and divide decimals up to three places.	Work out dimensions from scale drawings (eg 1:20)	Find the mean, median and mode, and use them as appropriate to compare two sets of data
Use organisational and structural features to locate information (eg contents, index, menus, subheadings and paragraphs)	Spell correctly words used most often in work, studies and daily life	Proofread and revise writing for accuracy and meaning	Respond to questions on a range of topics	Check that you are clear about what needs to be done and how to show success LEVEL 1	Add, subtract, multiply and divide using efficient written methods	Work out the area of rectangles	Extract and interpret information (eg in tables, diagrams, charts and line graphs)
Obtain specific information through detailed reading. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of unfamiliar words.	Spell correctly common words and relevant key words for work and special interest.	Organise writing in short paragraphs	Follow and understand the main points of discussion on different topics Make relevant contributions to the subject Respect turn taking rights	Arrive on time with appropriate materials in a range of situations. Keep a record of what has been completed over a period of three weeks ENTRY LEVEL 3	Add and subtract using three digit whole numbers.	Round sums of money to the nearest £ and 10p and make approximate calculations.	Extract numerical information from lists, tables, diagrams and simple charts
Read and understand words on forms related to personal information. Read high frequency words with common spelling patterns.	Spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words.	Use capital letter, full stops and question marks correctly Use a capital letter for proper nouns	Make requests/ask questions to obtain information in everyday contexts	Perform a range of straightforward tasks without direct supervision ENTRY	Read, write, order and compare numbers up to 100	Read and understand time displayed on analogue and 12-hour digital clocks in hours, half-hours and quarter hours.	Extract information from lists, tables, simple diagrams and block graphs.

				LEVEL 2			
Read and recognise simple sentence structures	Write the letters of the alphabet using upper and lower case.	Construct a simple sentence	Listen and respond to requests for personal information	Follow simple instructions ENTRY LEVEL 1	Read and write numbers up to 10, including zero	Relate familiar events to: times of the day; days of the week; seasons of the year.	Extract simple information from lists
Reading	Spelling	Writing	Speaking and listening	Planning and personal organisation	Number	Measures, shape and space	Handling data