



# **Gower College Swansea**

## **ESSENTIAL SKILLS POLICY**

<b>Issue</b>	
<b>Review Date</b>	January 2017
<b>Originator</b>	Kay Morgan
<b>Location of Policy</b>	

## **1. Gower College Swansea's Essential Skills Commitment**

- 1.1 Gower College Swansea is committed to providing opportunities for learners and staff to develop their essential skills beyond their level at entry to the College and to gain external accreditation when relevant. For learners the College will ensure that these opportunities enable development that is sufficient for them to meet the demands of their programme of study, to support progression and provide the skills necessary for everyday life. For staff the College will ensure that these opportunities support staff to effectively carry out their job role and/or improve skills necessary for everyday life.
- 1.2 Gower College Swansea is committed to embedding essential skills through a "whole organisational approach" of assessment, delivery and support.

## **2. Scope**

### **2.1 Essential skills curriculum relates to:**

- Essential Skills qualifications (or replacement qualifications) up to level 3 in:
  - Communication
  - Application of Number
  - Information Communication Technology/Digital Literacy
- Key skills qualifications up to level 3 in:
  - Improving Own Learning and Performance
  - Working with Others
  - Problem Solving
  - The replacement Employability Skills qualification when introduced
- Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ)
- GCSE English Language, Welsh Language, Maths, Numeracy,
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications
- Relevant on-line qualifications
- Other relevant literacy, numeracy and IT qualifications.

### **2.2 Essential skills support relates to:**

- Literacy and Numeracy support
- Dyslexia support
- On-course skill development
- Study skills
- Learning Support Assistant/Educational Support Officer input
- On-line learning materials

### **3. Objectives**

- To accurately identify the learners' individual needs through the recruitment and assessment process.
- To help learners overcome any barriers to learning, improve their confidence, attendance, retention and attainment.
- To aim for learners to perform at an essential skill level which is appropriate for their programme of study.
- To provide a flexible and bilingual network of support for the development of essential skills.
- To develop bilingual delivery and assessment of essential skills curriculum where staff skills exist or can be developed.
- To ensure that effective strategies and resources are used to develop essential skills throughout the learning process for all learners with a particular focus on literacy/communication skills and numeracy skills.
- To provide appropriate essential skills curriculum as identified in the Learning Programme Directories or Work Based Learning Frameworks
- To provide opportunities for learners to develop their essential skills on a part-time basis through Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESOL programmes.
- To ensure the provision of an effective staff development programme for staff involved with the delivery and support of essential skills, including the embedding of literacy and numeracy skills for all delivery staff.
- To provide an appropriate CPD programme for staff to develop their own essential skills.
- To monitor and evaluate the participation rates, outcomes and effectiveness of essential skills curriculum delivery and support.
- To provide support to staff in helping learners improve their essential skills (especially literacy and numeracy) through aspects of teaching and learning.

### **4. Assessment of Learners' Essential Skills Needs**

- 4.1 All learners on full-time, Work Based Learning and substantive part-time programmes of 5 hours or more per week (not including leisure and hobby courses) will undertake an initial assessment (plus an ESOL entry 3 test if applicable) within 2 weeks of starting their programme. The results will be

shared with staff to aid the embedding of support provided by all staff. The results of the initial assessment will be included in the eILP and where appropriate additional support will be provided.

- 4.2 All ABE and ESOL students will have their skills assessed at an initial interview before starting their programme.
- 4.3 When the Welsh Essential Skills Test (WEST) becomes available, all full-time learners and Work Based Learners will undertake a diagnostic assessment within the first half term or 6 weeks of their start date
- 4.4 Starting with the September 2015 cohort, learners will be re-assessed at the end of their programme to measure distance travelled.
- 4.5 All learners are encouraged to disclose their needs and discuss their requirements with appropriate staff.

## **5. Development of Essential Skills through Essential Skills Curriculum Delivery**

- 5.1 All full-time learners will undertake either the Welsh Baccalaureate or the Essential Skills qualifications identified in the Learning Programme Directories ideally at a level beyond that of their initial assessment.
- 5.2 Learners undertaking the Foundation or National WBQ who do not have a grade C or above in English Language (or Welsh language) and Mathematics (Numeracy) will either work to re-sit these GCSEs or study Essential Skills Communication and Application of Number at level 2 (the Essential Skills alternative will only apply until September 2017)
- 5.3 Learners undertaking the Advanced WBQ who do not have a grade C or above in English Language (or Welsh language) and Mathematics (Numeracy) will work to re-sit these GCSEs to achieve at least a grade C
- 5.2 All full-time learners who are not studying the WBQ, particularly those on level 3 programmes who do not have GCSE grade C and above in English and Mathematics will be given every encouragement and opportunity to undertake these qualifications.
- 5.3 For learners on pre-entry and entry level programmes, essential skills development should be embedded across their entire curriculum.
- 5.4 Essential skills curriculum will be fully embedded into the main programme of study and discrete sessions will be delivered in the context of the main programme of study.
- 5.5 Essential skills curriculum will be delivered by one of the following:
  - Suitably qualified essential skills specialists.
  - GCSE specialists (for GCSE qualifications)

- Lecturers / assessors who have undertaken essential skills practitioner qualifications.
- Lecturers / assessors who have undertaken Essential Skills or WBQ awareness training and work with the guidance of essential skills specialists.

5.6 All staff involved with the delivery and assessment of essential skills must attend the relevant internal support network meetings.

## **6. Essential Skills Support for Learners**

### **6.1 For Identified Learners**

Learners with an assessment score below level 1, will be offered additional literacy/numeracy support provided by specialist staff through a range of methods, such as:

- One to one support.
- In class support.
- On-line resources.
- Study skill support.

This will be achieved by:

- Identifying individual barriers to learning.
- Providing a broad range of support tailored to the individual needs of the learner and recorded on the e-ILP.
- Negotiating individual learning plans with learners.
- Reviewing and evaluating learner' progress.
- Helping learners to produce meaningful action plans, review and set achievable targets.
- Providing on-going support and guidance for learners to progress.
- Providing a broad and balanced range of experiences to enable all learners to develop their skills.

### **6.2. For All Learners**

As part of the focus on literacy and numeracy skills, the College has set an expectation that all staff should be responsible for supporting the development of literacy and numeracy skills in all classes with all learners. This is supported by:

- The use of on-line and paper literacy and numeracy tool kits supported by specific sections on the Teachers Zone, which provides a range of ideas and resources for staff.
- Use of the College-wide Literacy Marking Code as part of course teams marking protocols.

- INSET activities to raise staff awareness of the importance of skills development and advice on embedding literacy and numeracy into course teaching.
- Involvement of the Teaching and Learning Team to help lecturers produce materials to support literacy and numeracy development, e.g. subject-specific desktop dictionaries and guidance on effective assignment writing.
- Communication of outcomes of initial assessment/diagnostic results to staff to inform strategies and differentiation.

Learners who have not been identified as requiring support by the initial assessment can access the support mechanisms through self or staff referral.

## **7. Essential Skills of Staff**

- 7.1 The College is committed to providing opportunities for all staff to improve their essential skills regardless of their role in the College, through self-assessment and the availability of an appropriate and flexible CPD programme.

- 7.2 Recruitment of new staff:

The majority of staff will undergo a literacy and numeracy skills assessment as part of the selection process (exemptions will be very limited and will be identified in the job specification)

For delivery staff and staff in assessor roles it is expected, as a minimum standard, that they will achieve level 2 in both literacy and numeracy., Skills may be required at a higher level for delivery of certain specified curriculum

Where individual delivery or assessing staff do not meet the minimum requirement they must commit, as part of their job offer, to undertake a staff development programme and achieve the required level by the end of their probationary period. This will necessitate re-assessment.

For non-delivery roles, the minimum level of essential skills will be identified in the job specification where appropriate.

Where it is deemed not necessary to have a minimum essential skill level, staff will still be offered a development programme to address any essential skills deficits but this will not be tied into their job offer.

### 7.3 Existing Staff

For 2015/16 all staff will be given every encouragement to self-assess their literacy and numeracy skills and make use of identified learning opportunities and materials to improve their skills.

When the Welsh Essential Skills Test becomes available this will provide the main mechanism for assessment and follow up learning.

The College will work to develop a clear CPD programme with flexible routes to support staff in developing their skills.

At the end of 2015/16 the College will review the success of this approach and amend as necessary to maintain the necessary momentum for improvement.

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities

- *Vice Principal Academic Services*: to lead on policy and strategic implications.
- *Senior Curriculum Managers*: to ensure policy is implemented within curriculum areas and consistency applied.
- *Operational Curriculum Managers*: to be responsible for the delivery and outcomes of all essential and key skills within their curriculum areas and promote the embedding of literacy and numeracy skills development by all delivery staff. Ensure initial screening and diagnostic testing for identified student groups is arranged and implemented
- *Learner Support Manager*: to be responsible for the initial screening and diagnostic testing and ensuring identified students receive appropriate support.
- *Essential Skills Co-ordinator*: to monitor the quality of assessment, to communicate curriculum changes, advise on delivery models and liaise with outside agencies and external verifiers.
- *Quality Manager-Teaching and Learning Development*: to monitor literacy and numeracy development across the delivery of all course and deliver appropriate CPD to support lecturing staff to implement literacy improvement.
- *Head of Human Resources*: to oversee the relevant aspects of the recruitment process and develop and implement a CPD programme.

## **9. Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements**

- 8.1 The Essential Skills Co-ordinator will oversee the provision of essential skills curriculum across the College, providing a support and quality assurance mechanism and will provide yearly reports.
- 8.2 The appropriateness of the essential skills curriculum offer will be monitored by the curriculum planning process led by the Vice Principal Academic Services
- 8.3 Essential skills will be a regular agenda item in Faculty management, College Quality Group and Curriculum/Quality Management Group meetings.
- 8.4 The outcomes of the essential skills curriculum will be monitored as part of the quality cycle alongside the main programme qualifications.
- 8.5 Learners' progress in essential skills will be monitored as part of the regular review of progress undertaken by the personal tutor.
- 8.6 The Learner Support Manager will complete a yearly report on the need, take up and effectiveness of specialist support.
- 8.7 The effectiveness of the embedded support provided by all delivery staff across all curriculum will be monitored via the quality cycle and the successful achievement of literacy/communication and numeracy qualifications where delivered.