



The specification for:

TLM Level 3 Certificate in Digital Tools and Applications

The Level 3 Certificate in Digital builds on the foundations established by our existing Level 1–2 and Level 2 Digital qualifications, offering a natural progression route for learners seeking to deepen their understanding of personal and strategic digital management. This qualification is designed to support learners in developing more advanced knowledge, skills, and behaviours relevant to both everyday digital based decision-making and broader use of tools and applications.

As part of a broader Level 3 programme, this Certificate version offers a focused introduction to key digital concepts and competencies, with an emphasis on practical application and academic understanding. It stands independently as a recognised qualification, while also forming the first stage of the Level 3 Diploma in Digital, which includes additional units for learners wishing to extend their learning further.

The Certificate is suitable for post-16 learners, adult returners, or those preparing for further study in Digital, Data or Cyber. It is structured to support a range of learning styles, with a flexible coursework component and a graded synoptic examination, ensuring both practical competence and academic rigour are assessed.

This is version 1.0 of the TLM Qualification, Level 3 Certificate in Digital Tools and Applications.

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1. For those in a hurry!

- 1.1 These qualifications are designed to support both formative and summative assessment methods. The assessment model enables differentiation by outcome, encouraging individuals to reach their full potential without the expectation that all learners will achieve the same grade at the same time. This approach promotes personal attainment and sustained motivation.

Learners are required to complete a coursework element prior to sitting the final examination. The coursework is competency-based, aligned with current research and best practice in workplace assessment. For the Certificate pathway, this is complemented by a synoptic academic examination designed to test broader knowledge and understanding.

Requiring completion of the coursework before the examination ensures learners are adequately prepared, reducing the risk of underperformance due to lack of engagement or readiness. This structure also provides a built-in incentive to complete the coursework.

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- 1.2 The Level 3 synoptic examination awards grades from E to A*, with the full grade range comprising A*, A, B, C, D, and E. Learners who demonstrate the required standard in their coursework, consistent with the Level 3 descriptor, become eligible to take the examination, where their performance will be graded accordingly.

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- 1.3 This dual approach offers a robust and valid assessment framework that combines practical competence with rigorous academic testing—at a lower cost than delivering traditional vocational and academic models separately. Research suggests that such an integrated model not only improves learner motivation but also supports improved outcomes by catering to both performance-approach goals (focused on demonstrating capability) and performance-avoidance goals (aimed at avoiding failure).

Procedures

- 1.4 The first thing to do is to arrange assessor training with TLM. TLM trains at least one assessor as Principal Assessor who must accept responsibility for standards within the Centre. The Principal Assessor can train and appoint assessors within the Centre as long as they are competent to take on the work and are willing to sign an agreement on the web site to uphold standards.
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- 1.5 TLM will provide initial training in the pedagogical model and using the supporting technologies to provide the evidence needed. The purpose is to get you started and then we provide on-going support to ensure you are confident and we can work as a professional partnership. We advise new Centres to do some coursework assessment early so that they can receive feedback and quickly become confident in doing routine coursework assessment. Our aim is to make this no more onerous than normal routine assessment that anyone would do as a normal part of the teaching job. This gives more time to focus on teaching and therefore to support raising attainment.
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2. Assessment Strategy

2.1 Level 3 Award (Annexe A)

Mandatory

- **Unit 1 – Improving Productivity Using IT**
- **Unit 4 – IT Security**

- 2.2 The assessment model has been designed to both motivate and support learners in achieving the highest possible grade while also promoting broader learning outcomes that may not be easily captured through traditional examination methods.

All learners must demonstrate core practical competence through the completion of coursework before becoming eligible to sit the final examination. The coursework element offers a high degree of flexibility, enabling learners to explore topics of personal or professional interest in greater depth. This personalised approach increases engagement and helps ensure learners are well-prepared for the examination, reducing the likelihood of underperformance.

- 2.3 In the Certificate pathway, the final qualification grade is determined by aggregating marks from both the units completed and the synoptic examination. Completion of the 2 units, plus the optional units to make up the credit total contributes a total of **40 marks**, while the examination carries a maximum of **60 marks**.

The overall grade boundaries for the Certificate and Diploma are as follows:

- **Grade E:** 55 total marks (40 from units + 15 from examination)
- **Grade D:** 60 total marks (40 + 20)
- **Grade C:** 65 total marks (40 + 25)
- **Grade B:** 70 total marks (40 + 30)
- **Grade A:** 75 total marks (40 + 35)
- **Grade A*:** 85 total marks (40 + 45)

This equates to an overall achievement range of **50% to 85%** across the combined assessment components

The examination will only be made available once the teacher or assessor at the centre has confirmed that the learner has met the required Level 3 standard across all coursework units, and when TLM has completed and agreed the formative sampling process.

- 2.4 Examination questions are structured to increase in complexity as the assessment progresses. This ensures appropriate differentiation, with higher-achieving learners—particularly those attaining the top-grade boundaries—demonstrating the kind of academic readiness typically required for progression to degree-level study

Examination Resits

- 2.5 Learners who successfully complete the coursework to the required Level 3 standard but do not achieve a minimum passing grade in the examination do

have a resit opportunity, providing them with an additional opportunity to meet the qualification requirements.

3. Summary of Qualification Specification

3.1 Level 3 Certificate

The Level 3 Certificate in Digital Tools and Applications

Qualification Title: TLM Level 3 Certificate in Digital Tools and Applications

Qualification Number: 610/7567/X

Qualification Level: Level 3

Total Credits: 30

Guided Learning Hours: 180

Total Qualification Time: 300

Assessment Methods: Coursework, E-assessment, Portfolio of Evidence, Synoptic Examination

3.2 Stage 1: Coursework – Practical Competence

Learners must demonstrate competence against the assessment criteria through their engagement with the training materials. The trainer-assessor will confirm that the learner meets the Level 3 descriptor using indicative criteria. TLM's external moderator will review the assessor's judgements and evidence, providing feedback.

This stage is not graded and serves as a flexible method for verifying core practical competence at the appropriate framework level.

3.3 Stage 2: Synoptic Examination – Academic Grading

Upon successful completion of the coursework, learners become eligible to sit the synoptic examination. This graded assessment measures broader academic knowledge and understanding and awards grades from A* to E based on performance.

This structure promotes learner confidence, encourages deeper learning, and supports progression through clear differentiation.

3.4 Units

Unit 1 – Improving Productivity Using IT

Unit 2 – IT Security for Users

4. Qualification Content

Mandatory	Optional (for reference)
 Unit 1 – Improving Productivity Using IT Unit 2 – IT Security for Users	A comprehensive and up to date list of optional units are available on the TLM website. Unit 3 Using Collaborative Technologies (6 credits) Unit 7 Word Processing Software (6 credits) Unit 28 Optimise IT System Performance (5 credits) Unit 40 Cloud Based Services and Applications (5 credits)

5. Transferable Skills

5.1 Key Subject Aims

The overarching aim of this qualification is to enable learners to develop the digital awareness and application skills necessary for managing digital systems effectively in both the short and long term. Subordinate aims include:

- Building knowledge of **personal digital management**, from everyday use of digital tools (e.g., cloud storage, file management, password managers) to strategic digital planning across life stages (e.g., curating digital portfolios, managing online presence, archiving personal data).
- Developing learners' understanding of **digital services, platforms, and stakeholders**, including software licensing, open-source vs. proprietary tools, platform interoperability, data ownership, and digital consumer rights (e.g., account deletion, data portability).
- Enhancing learners' ability to critically analyse **digital influences**, such as user interface design, algorithm-driven content, software update cycles, platform obsolescence, and the impact of automation on workflows and digital habits.
- Encouraging the practical application of knowledge through **scenario-based digital problem-solving**, including troubleshooting common software issues, optimising device performance, choosing appropriate tools for tasks, managing digital workflows, and collaborating across platforms.
- Supporting progression by fostering **transferable digital skills** relevant to employment (e.g., using productivity suites, project management tools, communication platforms), further study (e.g., online research methods, reference managers, learning management systems), and informed digital decision-making in daily life (e.g., evaluating app permissions, recognising phishing attempts, managing digital wellbeing).

5.2 Knowledge and understanding

To meet the demands of the qualification, learners will be expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- The changing role and function of **digital identity and online presence** in a connected economy, including modern authentication systems (e.g., single sign-on, biometrics, passkeys) and the impact of technological innovation on how we access and manage digital services.
- Key life stages and their **digital implications**, alongside the influence of economic, social, and technological factors on digital choices (e.g., selecting appropriate devices, platforms, and tools for education, work, or retirement).
- **Digital products and services**, including their features, benefits, user experience considerations, accessibility options, and

associated risks (e.g., data privacy, vendor lock-in, subscription management, security vulnerabilities).

- The role of **regulatory bodies and digital institutions** in safeguarding consumers and ensuring fair practices, including data protection authorities, platform oversight, content moderation standards, and enforcement of digital rights (e.g., right to repair, right to be forgotten).
- **Short- and long-term digital planning**, including managing digital subscriptions, maintaining software and hardware lifecycles, forecasting technology needs, archiving and backing up data, and developing strategies for handling unforeseen digital events (e.g., data loss, account compromise, platform shutdowns, technology obsolescence).

5.3 Skills

Learners will have opportunities to develop and demonstrate a range of key skills, many of which are assessed directly through coursework and examination.

These include:

- **Digital Information Analysis**
Analysing digital information and data to support informed decision-making (e.g., evaluating search results, interpreting data visualisations, assessing source credibility).
 - **Practical Digital Application**
Applying digital concepts in practical, real-world contexts (e.g., using productivity tools, automating repetitive tasks, troubleshooting common technical issues).
 - **Digital Risk Assessment**
Evaluating risk and reward in the use of digital products and services (e.g., balancing convenience against data privacy, assessing app permissions, identifying potential security threats).
 - **Digital Communication**
Communicating digital information clearly and appropriately for different purposes and audiences (e.g., creating presentations, writing professional emails, collaborating via digital platforms, tailoring content for different formats).
 - **Digital Self-Reflection**
Reflecting on personal digital behaviour and strategies to improve outcomes (e.g., managing screen time, optimising digital workflows, reducing digital distractions, improving information retention).
 - **Responsible Digital Conduct**
Demonstrating responsible digital conduct and awareness of
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ethical and legal obligations (e.g., respecting intellectual property, citing sources, maintaining confidentiality, following acceptable use policies, understanding copyright and licensing).

- **Digital Knowledge Transfer**

Transferring knowledge and skills across familiar and unfamiliar digital situations (e.g., adapting to new software interfaces, applying spreadsheet skills to data analysis tools, using problem-solving strategies across different platforms).

6. Support

Guidance and Assistance

- 6.1 All centres have an assigned Account Manager who will be pleased to help at any time. Our aim is to give professional assessors, most of whom are qualified teachers, the confidence to make judgements with a minimum of bureaucracy so that they can focus their time on maintaining their professional knowledge, skills and supporting learning through effective teaching rather than “chasing paper”.

There is often a confusion between bureaucracy and rigour, since unnecessarily complex bureaucracy can actually detract from rigour by obscuring the importance of the outcomes.

- 6.2 TLM provides support through cloud-based systems. Providing assessment grades and the management of certification through the Centre Management Site is mandatory and all assessors are provided with training in its use. It is simply a matter of recording learner competence against the unit criteria as the evidence is collected and claiming a certificate on behalf of the learner when a unit has been fully assessed.
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- 6.3 Learners will have access to a dedicated online resource platform designed to support their coursework journey. This system includes integrated competency testing tools to help learners assess their understanding and readiness, while also providing teachers with valuable insights into learner progress.

Learners can upload and link evidence directly to assessment criteria across one or multiple units, with assessors able to accept, reject, or comment on submissions—creating a transparent and auditable trail. Moderators and verifiers can access this evidence in real time, making the process significantly more efficient than traditional paper-based methods. Built-in progress tracking allows monitoring by unit or criterion, and the platform can be integrated with any standards-compliant VLE or e-portfolio system already in use by centres.

Training and free support are available from your Account Manager.

The aim is to streamline the assessment process, reduce administrative overhead, and maximise time spent on teaching and learning.

- 6.4 Telephone and e-mail support are available to all Centres.
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7. Registration & Procedures

Registration

- 7.1 TLM's flexible registration model allows centres to enrol learners at times that suit their delivery schedules, with no late entry charges. There are no additional fees for learners who need to resubmit unit evidence that initially does not meet the required standard, supporting an inclusive and developmental approach to assessment. However, learners who need to resit the graded synoptic examination will be subject to a standard resit fee.

This model helps reduce overall costs for centres while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

There are no fees for replacement certificates or verification of certificates because all certificates can be directly authenticated against TLM's secure database.

For details of current fees please contact us or refer to the web site.

Internal standardisation

- 7.2 The Principal Assessor has the ultimate responsibility for consistency in assessment standards within a centre. All assessors have signed a contract agreeing to uphold standards and should therefore co-operate with the Principal Assessor and Account Manager at TLM to ensure that standards across the centre are consistent.

It is advisable to send unit evidence to TLM early to check that it is at the right standard so that there is time to make any adjustments necessary to the course and learner expectations.

TLM will generally check a higher quantity of work from new assessors and feedback to ensure that they are confident to make appropriate judgements over time. This reduces risk and improves efficiency in the longer term.

Authentication

- 7.3 All assessors must take reasonable steps to ensure that any unit evidence submitted by learners is a true reflection of the learner's competence.

This is in keeping with the assessor undertaking to uphold and maintain standards in the contract with TLM.

- 7.4 Certificates can be easily authenticated online by entering the certificate number or scanning the QR code printed on the certificate.

This service is free of charge and encourages routine verification, which helps strengthen overall security.

When authentication is not quick and accessible, the risk of certificate fraud increases significantly.

With the growing sophistication of technologies—especially AI-powered image generation—creating highly convincing forgeries is becoming easier and more

common, making robust authentication methods more important than ever.

8. Other Considerations

Access arrangements and special requirements

- 8.1 All TLM's qualifications are intended to be accessible, as widely as possible. There is an extensive policy documented on the web site at <https://tlm.org.uk/policy-download-centre/>. Centres should contact TLM if they have any questions related to accessibility issues.

Language

- 8.2 The language for provision of this qualification is currently English only. This will only change if we have a significant demand in another language that is sufficient to cover the additional costs involved.

Malpractice

- 8.3 TLM has comprehensive policies and procedures for dealing with malpractice.

These are documented with links on the web site at <https://tlm.org.uk/policy-download-centre/>

Assessors should be familiar with these policies and make them clear to candidates.

Assessors should inform their account manager if they suspect any instance of malpractice that could have a material effect on the outcome of any assessments, either for themselves or colleagues.

This is part of the upholding of standards that is part of the contract with TLM.

Equality of opportunity

- 8.4 TLM promotes equality of opportunity through policies and procedures.

These are again documented in detail on the web site at <https://tlm.org.uk/policy-download-centre/>

Resources, Support and Training

- 8.5 A key objective of this Digital qualification is to equip learners with the skills to meet their digital information and digital resource needs using tools that are freely and legally available online. This approach supports national priorities around inclusion and equal access to opportunity.

While many learners and institutions remain reliant on proprietary software, our online learning platform provides structured support and practical resources to guide a gradual transition towards open and accessible tools—through education, digital literacy, and informed decision-making.

Annexe A

Level 3 Certificate in Digital - Unit assessment - coursework guidance

The **Level 3 learner** has knowledge and understanding of facts, procedures and ideas in an area of study or field of work to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Holder can interpret relevant information and ideas. Holder is aware of a range of information that is relevant to the area of study or work.

AND/OR

Holder can select and use relevant cognitive and practical skills to complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems. Holder can identify how effective actions have been. Holder can identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions.

Moderation/verification: The assessor should keep a record of assessment judgements made for each candidate and make notes of any significant issues for any candidate. They must be prepared to enter into dialogue with their Account Manager and provide their assessment records to the Account Manager through the on-line mark book. They should be prepared to provide evidence as a basis for their judgements should it be required by the Principal Assessor or their Account Manager/external moderator. Before authorising certification, the Account Manager must be satisfied that the assessor's judgements are sound.

General Information

The Level 3 qualification has the following characteristics for learners:

- Achievement at RQF level 3 (EQF Level 4) reflects the ability to select and use relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. It includes taking responsibility for completing tasks and procedures and exercising autonomy and judgement subject to overall direction or guidance.
 - Use understanding of facts, procedures and ideas to complete well-defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Interpret relevant information and ideas. Be aware of the types of information that are relevant to the area of study or work.
 - Complete well-defined, generally routine tasks and address straightforward problems. Select and use relevant skills and procedures. Identify, gather and use relevant information to inform actions. Identify how effective actions have been.
 - Take responsibility for completing tasks and procedures subject to direction or guidance as needed.
- The specification for the Level 3 award provides an outcome framework for assessment and is not intended to dictate any particular context for learning and so can be used with any age range of adults.

Requirements

- Standards must be confirmed by a trained Level 3 Assessor
- Assessors must as a minimum record assessment judgement as entries in the TLM Centre Management System.
- **Please refer to the Assessment Strategy for full details of the assessment process.**
- A range of learning approaches may be needed to meet the diverse needs of learners, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- Once a learner has demonstrated secure competence against all criteria in a unit, they are eligible to receive a unit certificate. Completion of all mandatory units entitles the learner to enter the synoptic examination.

- For learners new to formal education or Digital, we recommend a minimum of 180 guided learning hours to complete the Certificate. However, centres may exercise discretion to reduce this where appropriate, taking prior learning and experience into account. The emphasis is on outcomes—what matters is whether the learner can reliably and independently meet the assessment criteria.

Level 3, Unit 1 – Improving Productivity Using IT

1. Plan, select and use appropriate IT systems and software for different purposes	1.1 I can explain the purpose for using IT 1.2 I can analyse the methods, skills and resources required to complete the task successfully 1.3 I can analyse any factors that may affect the task 1.4 I can critically compare alternative methods to produce the intended outcome 1.5 I can develop plans for using IT for different tasks and purposes, including contingencies 1.6 I can select and use appropriate IT systems and software applications to produce effective outcomes 1.7 I can explain why different software applications could be chosen to suit different tasks, purposes and outcomes 1.8 I can explain any legal or local guidelines or constraints which apply to the task or activity
2. Evaluate the selection and use of IT tools to make sure that activities are successful	2.1 I can critically compare the strengths and weaknesses of own and other people's final work 2.2 I can review ongoing use of IT tools and techniques and change the approach as needed 2.3 I can evaluate and test solutions to make sure they match requirements and are fit for purpose 2.4 I can be prepared to give feedback on other people's selection and use of IT tools 2.5 I can explain different ways to make further improvements to work
3. Devise solutions to improve the use of IT tools and systems for self and others	3.1 I can evaluate the productivity and efficiency of IT systems and procedures used by self and others 3.2 I can research and advise on ways to improve productivity and efficiency 3.3 I can develop solutions that make a demonstrable improvement to the use of IT tools and systems

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| | <p>3.4 I can test solutions to make sure that they work as intended</p> <p>3.5 I can recommend improvements to IT systems and procedures that increase productivity</p> |
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Level 3, Unit 4 – IT Security for Users

1. Select, use and develop appropriate procedures to monitor and minimise security risk to IT systems and data	1.1 I can evaluate the security issues that may threaten system performance 1.2 I can select, use and evaluate a range of security precautions to protect IT systems and monitor security 1.3 I can evaluate the threats to system and information security and integrity 1.4 I can manage access to information sources securely to maintain confidentiality, integrity and availability of information 1.5 I can explain why and how to minimise security risks to hardware, software and data for different users 1.6 I can apply, maintain and develop guidelines and procedures for the secure use of IT 1.7 I can select and use effective backup and archiving procedures for systems and data
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In addition to the mandatory units, there are a wide range of optional units to make up the overall credits and centres can choose the most suitable ones, including ones that align with industry certifications, in order to suit their skills and local needs.

Example Optional Unit

Level 3, Unit 5 – Spreadsheet Software

1. Use a spreadsheet to enter, edit and organise numerical and other data	1.1 I can identify what numerical and other information is needed in the spreadsheet and how it should be structured 1.2 I can enter and edit numerical and other data accurately 1.3 I can combine and link data from different sources 1.4 I can store and retrieve spreadsheet files effectively, in line with local guidelines and conventions where available
2. Select and use appropriate formulas and data analysis tools and techniques to meet requirements	2.1 I can explain what methods can be used to summarise, analyse and interpret spreadsheet data and when to use them 2.2 I can select and use a wide range of appropriate functions and formulas to meet calculation requirements 2.3 I can select and use a range of tools and techniques to analyse and interpret data to meet requirements 2.4 I can select and use forecasting tools and techniques
3. Use tools and techniques to present, and format and publish spreadsheet information	3.1 I can explain how to present and format spreadsheet information effectively to meet needs 3.2 I can select and use appropriate tools and techniques to format spreadsheet cells, rows, columns and worksheets effectively 3.3 I can select and use appropriate tools and techniques to generate, develop and format charts and graphs 3.4 I can select and use appropriate page layout to present, print and publish spreadsheet

	information 3.5 I can explain how to find and sort out any errors in formulas 3.6 I can check spreadsheet information meets needs, using IT tools and making corrections as necessary 3.7 I can use auditing tools to identify and respond appropriately to any problems with spreadsheets
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Teacher Guidance Notes

This section provides a brief summary of guidance for each assessment criterion within the unit, offering teaching points and areas of focus to support effective delivery.

This summary is not exhaustive and will be supported by a comprehensive suite of additional materials, including teacher handbooks, exemplar activities, and interactive content, all accessible via our dedicated online learning platform.

These resources are intended to aid both teaching and learning, and to provide practical tools for assessment preparation and learner progression.

Unit 1 – Improving Productivity Using IT (5 Credits)

1. Candidates will plan select and use appropriate IT systems and software for different purposes

1.1 I can explain the purpose of using IT

Candidates should be able to fully explain the purpose of their work and why using IT adds value to it in some way or ways.

Evidence: will be provided directly from the presentation of work in web pages that has clear purpose and describes the purpose of the work.

Additional information and guidance

Candidates might describe the audience at which they are targeting their work and any aspects of the work that makes it particularly suitable for the audience e.g. "I presented a science investigation using a web page with links to references so that a future employer can see the quality of my work simply by knowing the URL". "I used a public web page to collaborate with my friends in producing an information page about the local environment because it enabled us to work together effectively. It also made it easy for other people to contribute and made the results easy to link to other similar sites". They should be able to fully explain the key characteristics of writing formally on a web page to present part of an e-portfolio as opposed to the style used for chat and instant messaging of friends. The candidate will show evidence of understanding relevance in relation to purpose. Information that is irrelevant to a task will not support its purpose and inaccurate or biased information could be against the purpose. The main difference between L2 and L3 is that in L3, the quality of explanation needs to be explicit and clarity of understanding, whereas in L2 it is enough to describe the purpose e.g. from a list of options or other supporting structures. Their documented web pages, blogs and/or files should contain detailed explanations in keeping with the guidance here.

1.2 I can analyse the methods, skills and resources required to complete the task successfully

Candidates should be able to systematically analyse a task and match needs to resources. They should be able to describe and explain the methods, skills and resources they need in some detail.

Evidence: will be provided directly from the presentation of work in web pages that has clear purpose and describes and explains the methods skills and resources relevant to successful completion.

Additional information and guidance

For example, as a method of presenting information to a general audience, using web pages is often a better choice than desktop presentation software. In a web page, the information is permanently and immediately available to the intended wide audience and this information can be linked to related information in other pages. They might need skills related to e.g. preparing images for use on-line so they are suitable sizes and load quickly on low bandwidth connections. They can describe and explain issues related to copyright (PLTS) and accessibility if they intend others to use the information they prepare. They should have a detailed analysis in each instance. The resources needed could include time, software, hardware or new learning and expertise. Again evidence of analysis and explanation will differentiate from Level 2.

1.3 I can analyse any factors that might affect the task

Candidates should be able to analyse and explain a range of factors that could affect the way they carry out their tasks.

Evidence: Evidence from content of their web pages describing these factors and considerations in their planning

Additional information and guidance

Have they have considered the time the task is likely to take, any copyright issues in obtaining suitable resources, cost of resources and any e-safety and/or relevant security considerations? This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. The factors considered simply have to be credible and useful in the planning process. Again, being able to critically analyse the factors and relate them to the task is a Level 3 characteristic.

1.4 I can critically compare alternative methods to produce the intended outcome

Candidates should be able to show a range of alternative plans and actions in order to complete the task.

Evidence: Evidence from content of their web pages describing these factors and considerations in their planning

Additional information and guidance

A key skill in planning IT projects to consider is that something will almost always go wrong. At this level, candidates need to show that they have analysed and understood the nature of their IT project to such a degree that they can react in a timely manner to problems that occur. They need to analyse and compare the options available to them and rate them in terms of suitability and be ready to use the best options as required.

1.5 I can develop plans for using IT for different tasks and purposes, including contingencies

Candidates should be able to provide clear and structured plans for tasks and at least one project of 30 or more hours with built in contingencies.

Evidence: A documented plan that supports a project presented in a digital format e.g. a web page, document file or IT planning software.

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should have planned a project of some complexity scoping the information flow. For example, designing a structure for an e-portfolio with a title page linking to subjects of interest, listing the information sources needed for input, the software tools they will use for processing information to include in their portfolio and the intended audience for their finished product. They should provide evidence that they have considered costs and where relevant the file formats generated by the tools in order to make information widely accessible. Will their work force other people to have to buy software in order to access it? Planning should consider such issues to avoid problems later on when the project has been completed (PLTS)

Plans should typically be based on an aim, some specific objectives and/or SMART (Specific Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-limited) targets. Candidates should realise the importance of objectives and targets that can be rationally evaluated rather than vague statements of aim. An example in the context of an e-portfolio might be to provide 3 screen sized pages for 3 subjects by 31st July. Resources required are 30 hours of time and access to the Drupal Content Management System. Plans should include concise descriptions of the methods and actions needed for success and these can relate directly to the range of assessment criteria in this section. Contingency plans should also be detailed and included as well as how and why they would come into play.

1.6 I can select and use appropriate IT systems and software applications to produce effective outcomes

Candidates should have sufficient breadth of experience to make an informed choice about the IT systems and software to use. An awareness of the suitability should be explicit.

Evidence: Evidence from content of their web pages and day to day working files indicating effective results and appropriately selected supporting resources.

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should show evidence of making appropriate choices between different applications or systems in order to complete a project of some complexity. For example they might choose a vector drawing program to originate diagrams rather than use a raster (bitmap) graphics program because of the greater flexibility in handling and scaling shapes. They might choose open source applications for lower cost or ethical reasons. They might choose web based systems for ease of linking to other information sources or sharing resources with others. A legitimate reason for choosing a particular system could be that it is the only one available but candidates should be encouraged to question why this is the case given

the growing list of freely accessible tools and resources on-line.

1.7 I can explain why different software applications could be chosen to suit different tasks, purposes and outcomes

Candidates should explain in detail and show a deep understanding of the tools they choose and their suitability to the end goal.

Evidence: Evidence from documented evaluations

Additional information and guidance

They can also point out weaknesses in the tools and alternatives that they might have adopted with hindsight taking account of feedback from their peers and others. The evidence must show a strength and depth in their understanding across the range of tools they use and not just superficial understanding.

1.8 I can explain any legal or local guidelines or constraints which apply to the task or activity

Candidates should demonstrate that they can describe and explain the legal and local guidelines and constraints that apply to the activity. These should be reasonably detailed summaries of say the acceptable use policy and copyright as a minimum.

Evidence: Evidence from documented descriptions

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should demonstrate that they abide by any local acceptable use policy and that they can describe and explain the main aspects of the policy. They should make a declaration that they license their work for free use and that it is their own work and any sources of information are referenced to their owner. They should not use copyright tools or information without first gaining permission (or have it provided directly in the license). Any further local constraints can be included in this work but some description of the AUP and copyright should be present. They should demonstrate a good working knowledge of laws that apply to their projects. A video or verbal explanation to show this would be acceptable here.

2. Candidates will evaluate the selection and use of IT tools to make sure that activities are successful

2.1 I can critically compare the strengths and weaknesses of own and other people's final work

Candidates should be able to provide evidence of reviewing their own work and focusing on areas for improvement where weakness is perceived, as well as appreciating the strengths. They should also be able to critically cross-reference their work to other people's work.

Evidence: Written recorded evidence in web pages or day to day document files describing their work and the work of others

Additional information and guidance

One way to approach this would be for the candidate to maintain a Blog as a diary supporting their work. They can use the TLM learner site for this purpose or their own resources as long as evidence is accessible to the Account Manager for moderation and verification. Putting together their e-portfolio or providing a digital resource or service to the community are suitable activities that can be reviewed and documented in a Blog. As they work their way through their project, they should have milestones where they stop and reflect on the quality achieved and address any areas that could be improved. If working as part of a collaborative team, this process can be shared to make it more effective for all concerned. If learners are using some project management or tracking tool, this will assist with the process and give them reminders.

2.2 I can review ongoing use of IT tools and techniques and change the approach needed

Evaluation should include a description of the IT tools and their fitness for purpose. This can be organised as an analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

Evidence: Evidence from documented description conforming to the criterion and guidance

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should be able sufficiently competent and comfortable with the applications they are using to be able to modify their techniques in order to perform more effectively and efficiently as they progress through their work. For example, they might use feedback mechanisms to see if people understand outputs such as graph choice. If these choices do not work, then they should be able to change the output in order to make the material more accessible. If they are collecting data, such as a survey, but it is clear thorough an initial test that the input mechanism is clumsy, this can be quickly rectified through their understanding of the application that created it.

2.3 I can evaluate and test solutions to make sure they match requirements and are fit for purpose

Candidates should provide evidence that they have tested their solutions against pre-assessed targets.

Evidence: Evidence from documented test procedures and feedback

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should have developed a specification of their project based on the needs of their clients or customers. These requirements can act as a testing framework to make sure that the system is fit for purpose and achieves the objectives they set out to solve. They can evaluate the performance against these and see if any improvements can be made for the next iterations, whether they do this work, or someone else. In some cases, end-users can be used in the testing process to get valuable feedback to act upon.

2.4 I can be prepared to give feedback on other people's selection of IT tools

Candidates should be able to work collaboratively to receive and give feedback on projects where multiple participants are working together

Evidence: Evidence from feedback forms or discussion forums

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should be introduced to the notion that many IT projects work on team based approaches. Modern design models, such as Agile Development or similar. Candidates may be dependent on other developers for part of their final project, as will other members of the team be on their work. They should be comfortable acting on colleague's comments and criticisms of their work for improvement, as well as being able to return their own comments. At all stages, they should be looking at their choice of tools and be prepared to change these should they be not meeting the quality levels they were expecting.

2.5 I can explain different ways to make further improvements to work

Based on describing strengths and weaknesses of outcomes in relation to their planned intentions, candidates should comment on how they might exceed the requirements defined in their plans.

Evidence: Evidence from third party feedback, analysis of strengths and weaknesses and any other relevant documented descriptions conforming to the criterion and guidance

Additional information and guidance

Candidates should show evidence that they are sufficiently comfortable with the full extent of their projects such that they can make improvements at all stages. This may be specific to the IT, but might also be in processes and work rates, if necessary. It may not be their particular area of development, but they might have some design based ideas for the graphics team, or think of a better way to display web based scripting elements. It does not need to be detailed, but show that they understand the complete nature of the projects they are working on.

3. Candidates will devise solutions to improve the use of IT tools and systems for self and others

3.1 I can evaluate the productivity and efficiency of IT systems and procedures used by self and others

The candidate should be able to identify how IT tools might make achieving ICT based solutions more efficient to increase productivity for themselves and others.

Evidence: Evidence of review through documentation of evaluation in web pages and/or day to day files.

Additional information and guidance

For example, sending e-mail can be more efficient than talking to someone when all that is required is a specific piece of information. Discussing the details of how to use a new software tool by e-mail or text messaging is likely to be a lot less efficient than a spoken conversation and so review should include discriminating use of ICT. Other factors such as the lack of expression and remoteness of technology can lead to "flame wars" that would reduce efficiency.

Information entered directly into a web page can be much more efficient than making a word processed file and attaching it to the page. Firstly there is no need for word processing software, secondly the information is immediately available to users without having to download a file and having software for opening and viewing it. Social networking can be very powerful, but it can also be a major distraction to the focus required for efficient working.

They might have discussed this in forums or verbally to form their views and so assessors might provide a witness statement or video to acknowledge this.

3.2 I can research and advise ways to improve productivity and efficiency

The candidate should provide evidence that they have researched and found examples of working methods that improve efficiency.

Evidence: Evidence of descriptions through documentation in web pages and/or day to day files.

Additional information and guidance

Examples might be to use a typing tutor to improve keyboard efficiency, use of keyboard short cuts, recording a macro to automate a process or getting a web browser to save often used details like name and addresses. They might describe how they organise their folders so the most often needed files are most readily available or change user interface characteristics. They might use bookmarking for files - note for machines with multiple users, bookmarking web sites are a clear advantage. They might use on-line collaborative tools instead of desktop tools or they might use shared resources such as open clip art and Wikipedia on the "Give a brick get a house" principle.

3.3 I can develop solutions that make a demonstrable improvement to the use of IT tools and systems

The candidate should have adopted some of their own practical solutions for personal productivity as a result of exploring the ways that ICT can be used to communicate, collaborate and share ideas. They should be able to show the level of improvement as a result.

Evidence: Evidence through documentation in web pages and/or day to day files of them changing the way they work in response to feedback, evaluation and review.

Additional information and guidance

They should have some clearly improved ways of working from regular use of keyboard short cuts, bookmarking useful sites, greater use of web pages instead of word processors to present and organise information. This should be witnessed by the assessor and/or supported by portfolio evidence. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss productivity with peers and share ideas about the most effective techniques, favourite short-cuts and working methods.

3.4 I can test solutions to make sure that they work as intended

The candidate should routinely check their work to make sure they actually produce the outcome intended as their work progresses.

Evidence: Evidence through documented evaluation.

Additional information and guidance

There should be few instances of bad formatting, spelling errors, or other obvious errors that could be eliminated by simple checks. Encourage groups to check and assess each others' work and to receive feedback graciously when others find errors. Fix errors directly or find out how to. The candidate should routinely check their work to make sure they actually produce the outcome intended as their work progresses.

3.5 I can recommend improvements to IT systems and procedures that increase productivity

The candidate should be competent in all aspects of IT such that they can spot inefficiencies in most instances and recommend improvements based on their knowledge and experience.

Evidence: Evidence through documented evaluation and blogs

Additional information and guidance

Candidates at this level should be reasonably well experienced users of IT and will have worked on complex projects and applications. All of this skill and experience, as well as their confidence, should allow them to see weaknesses in systems, including theirs and others, and recommend ways to improve them. They should see where procedures are creating issues and slowing down projects and be able to see all areas of a project from the perspective of an IT manager to see how to improve things.

Unit 4 – IT Security for Users (3 Credits)

1. Candidates will select, use and develop appropriate procedures to monitor and minimise security risk to IT systems and data

1.1 I can evaluate the security issues that may threaten system performance

Candidates should be able to evaluate any IT system and list and describe the main threats.

Evidence: will be provided by guidelines and portfolios.

Additional information and guidance

Most IT systems are threatened by the same types of security issues, but perhaps in different amounts. The main types of threat are physical: people breaking in, physical damage to hardware, or existential, which are external threats such as hacking, malware, viruses and other Internet born problems. Some of the threats might not be that obvious. It is estimated that millions of home computers are infected with Botnets and the users are unaware of their presence. In 2004, a number of these machines were controlled remotely to launch an attack on US government sites such as the White House website. All of these additional pieces of unwanted software cause performance issues on machines and the servers that are linked to them. If a device is compromised and sending out spam, this volume will slow down servers up the line as they try to process the extra communication volume. Other elements need to be explored and described and some idea of their overall impact shown with examples.

1.2 I can select, use and evaluate a range of security precautions to protect IT systems and monitor security

Candidates should be able to explain, with examples, some tools that will minimise problems.

Evidence: will be assessor observations and student portfolios.

Additional information and guidance

Depending on whether the candidates are protecting one machine or a network, will determine what systems and tools they evaluate and use. Most modern operating systems have some type of software defence. A home or school network will also have some type of hardware defence, such as firewalls or filters. They might also look at stronger measures such as root kit detectors on servers such as Fail2ban which looks for rogue code installs and isolates and removes them. Monitoring tools are also available and many open source ones monitor thousands of servers such as Nagios. They should address the basic security issues above such as physical and external and give examples of how these can be addressed effectively.

1.3 I can evaluate the threats to system and information security and integrity

Candidates should be able to evaluate the different kinds of threat and rate the need to stop them which will therefore inform further action.

Evidence: will be provided by candidate feedback and assessor observations

Additional information and guidance

Evaluating some of these threats might sometimes mean prioritising them in terms of their likelihood and potential damage. It is likely that the data help on a local school system may not be as tempting and valuable to criminals as the bank in the town centre. None the less, candidates need to show that they can make these judgements based on their knowledge and gathered evidence. It may be useful to carry out a security audit and note down the threats, how they are currently dealt with, if there are room for improvements and any other relevant suggestions.

1.4 I can manage access to information sources securely to maintain confidentiality, integrity and availability of information

Candidates should show an understanding of roles, responsibilities and access rights on networks to aide security.

Evidence: will be portfolio evidence.

Additional information and guidance

Related to 1.3 above, an audit of the type of data and the way it is accessed will give more detail to a security exercise. The school's central data-base, for example, might be the most important aspect of the school system so will need the most detailed protection or range of systems. Related to other units, such as Unit 3, they should show that they know what access rights, roles and permissions are required by people in a complex network to maintain integrity and confidentiality. They should also have some understanding of availability, for example should data be accessible outside of the local network. If so, how can it be carefully protected.

1.5 I can explain why and how to minimise security risks to hardware, software and data for different users

Candidates should be able to explain roles and responsibilities and threats to software and hardware.

Evidence: will be candidate portfolios and assessor feedback.

Additional information and guidance

Each part of a network will have different threats and therefore different needs. The main threats to hardware will be physical. Most servers in a school, or local computers, for example, will be locked up in some way. In small school, they often deploy secure steel cabinets to lock up their gadgets. The software risks need to be protected from hacking and bad software installations. many organisations have specific policies about software patches and updates as some code can be badly made or compromised and lead to problems. Access to data also needs to be controlled. many schools desktop computers only allow access to controlled areas of the network and some may not allow external USB drives to be used as these can be used to load dangerous software. The software itself is usually controlled by only allowing certain roles to be able to execute code.

1.6 I can apply, maintain and develop guidelines and procedures for the secure use of IT

Candidates should be create guidelines and follow them, as well as instruct others how to

Evidence: will be assessor observations and feedback from network managers.

Additional information and guidance

It might be useful if candidates can assist a local primary school or local business in order to assist them in their security policies and procedures. The candidates can carry out an audit as part of other criteria and develop documents and procedures based on their findings. These can then be implemented and tracked for effectiveness.

1.7 I can select and use effective backup and archiving procedures for systems and data

Candidates should be able to backup and archive systems.

Evidence: will be assessor or network manager feedback.

Additional information and guidance

Various backup and archive procedures need to be investigated and explored and the most effective ones implemented and commented on. The procedures should be carefully explained in terms of their effectiveness and any additional concerns highlighted. One aspect of backups is that they can be very time consuming. If a large system goes down and it was many GB in size, even a fast server and network will take hours to re-build from this data back-up.

Accessibility Policies

TLM firmly believes that every learner should have an equal chance to excel in their studies and assessments, regardless of any disabilities they may have. To achieve this goal, TLM has developed a comprehensive and well-structured reasonable adjustment policy that is specifically tailored to cater to the needs of learners with disabilities. This policy is not only an essential aspect of TLM's commitment to inclusivity but also an integral part of creating a diverse and accessible learning environment.

The reasonable adjustment policy is designed to support learners with disabilities in various ways. It encompasses a range of accommodations, such as providing additional time for examinations, offering alternative formats for study materials, permitting the use of assistive technology, arranging for sign language interpreters, and ensuring accessible physical facilities. The implementation of these reasonable adjustments is meticulously carried out to ensure that they meet the individual needs of each learner, acknowledging the unique challenges they may face.

TLM is dedicated to making the reasonable adjustment process transparent and easily accessible for all stakeholders. Thus, the details of the policy are made readily available to all, including learners, educators, and TLM Centres. These details can be found on TLM's official website, ensuring that everyone is well-informed about the support and accommodations available to learners with disabilities.

Additionally, TLM Centres play a crucial role in facilitating this process. They are empowered to submit requests for other reasonable adjustments on behalf of learners, based on their specific requirements and circumstances.

TLM firmly believes that promoting a culture of inclusivity and understanding is fundamental to fostering an environment where learners can thrive, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. By continuously evaluating and refining its reasonable adjustment policy, TLM ensures that it remains up-to-date with the best practices in the field of inclusive education.

TLM Qualifications is deeply committed to its duty as an awarding organisation to provide reasonable adjustments for learners with disabilities in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. By adhering to its comprehensive reasonable adjustment policy and collaborating closely with TLM Centres, TLM strives to create a learning landscape that supports and empowers all learners, ensuring they can reach their full potential and achieve academic success.

TLM Accessibility Policy: <https://tlm.org.uk/policies/general-requirements-for-regulated-qualifications/#3>

TLM reasonable adjustment policy: <https://tlm.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments-and-special-considerations-policy-2/>

TLM reasonable adjustments request form: <https://tlm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TLM-RASC-form-1.docx>

TLM reasonable adjustments request form: <https://tlm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TLM-RASC-form-1.docx>

Alignment with the CASLO Approach

This qualification has been developed in accordance with the principles of the CASLO (Competency and Skills-Led Outcomes) approach, ensuring each unit is clearly defined by specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Outcomes are expressed in terms of observable knowledge, skills, and behaviours, supporting transparency, clarity, and learner-focused planning for curriculum design, delivery, and assessment.

While CASLO qualifications are typically associated with a mastery model—where all outcomes must be achieved for a pass—we have adopted a blended model that combines competency-based coursework, E-assessment, or a portfolio of evidence with a graded synoptic examination.

This structure reflects a progression-focused approach while still maintaining the rigour and learner-centred values inherent in CASLO.

Learners must first complete a competence-based coursework component, demonstrating their ability to meet the learning outcomes in realistic contexts. Evidence may be collected holistically, allowing learners to demonstrate achievement across multiple outcomes through integrated activities. This supports:

- flexibility in delivery and learner pacing
- the reinforcement and application of knowledge across units
- inclusivity for learners with varied backgrounds, particularly adult returners or those with mixed prior learning

Upon successful completion of the coursework, E-assessment, or a portfolio of evidence learners become eligible to sit the graded synoptic examination, which assesses their broader academic understanding and ability to apply knowledge in unfamiliar scenarios.

Grades from A* to E provide clear differentiation and support progression to higher-level study or employment.

We acknowledge potential challenges within rigid mastery models—such as the risk of overall failure due to narrowly missing a single criterion—and have mitigated these through strong internal quality assurance, formative assessment opportunities, and supportive moderation processes.

By combining competency-based assessment with an academic grading structure, this qualification remains true to the CASLO philosophy of confirming meaningful learning outcomes, while offering a more supportive and scalable model of assessment that reflects both real-world practice and educational progression.