Pathways to Proficiency

The Alignment of Language Proficiency Scales for assessing competence in English language

Acknowledgements

Contents

Introduction: background to the research

The immediate background to the work reported here is the accreditation of qualifications to the national qualifications framework (NQF): the process whereby awarding bodies submit their specification to the regulatory authorities for review against published criteria, in order to seek accredited status. Accreditation indicates that a qualification is fit for purpose at the appropriate level and that the awarding body has suitable systems in place to guarantee valid and reliable assessment. The accreditation system and the national qualifications framework enable users to see the relationship between accredited qualifications from different awarding bodies and at different levels, and hence assist them to make the appropriate choices for learning and progression.

Planning for the accreditation of general English language qualifications began in 2000. In consultation with awarding bodies, QCA invited the submission of all these qualifications at the same time, irrespective of whether they were primarily for users of English as a first or other language. It was also decided to define qualifications for speakers of other languages as the 'ESOL family', whether they had hitherto been regarded as EFL or ESOL qualifications, in acknowledgement that these boundaries were no longer clear-cut. The scope of the accreditation covered all qualifications available to candidates in England, dealing with competence in one or more modes of communication in English.

The outcome of these decisions was that from January 2001 a range of English-related qualifications was submitted to QCA, the great majority in the areas of basic skills adult literacy and ESOL. Qualifications in key skills communication, AS and A-level English Language had been accredited earlier.

Historically there have been no formal systems for relating ESOL or EFL qualifications used in England to qualifications primarily for native speakers. In some cases, informal 'equivalences' have grown up over time. The accreditation process brought these facts sharply to light. In 2001, for the first time, there were nationally agreed definitions of proficiency in English relating to the NQF: *the adult literacy standards*. These set out the skills and capabilities needed for Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing at three levels from Entry level (subdivided into Entry 1, Entry 2 and Entry 3) to Level 1 and Level 2 for all adult users of English, whether as a first or other language.

The *adult literacy standards* provided the starting point for the work described in this report, which set out to examine how these standards might be cross referred to other language proficiency scales used by awarding bodies to determine the levels of their qualifications. It must be stressed that the work described here is not about comparing qualification with qualification.

The research enquiry was concerned with scrutinising, comparing and ultimately cross-referring a selection of different scales for measuring language proficiency. In some cases these scales are designed to be applied to any modern language, not specifically English.

The research makes no assumptions about the needs of different groups of learners who might be aiming for the same level of competence. The research was not concerned with the teaching and learning required to achieve competence at particular levels, nor with how these might differ for ESOL users and first language users. Clearly the needs of students working at the same level are likely to differ, for example in terms of length of time required to achieve the level, most appropriate teaching styles and teaching materials.

QCA's original schedule for accreditation of English qualifications was timed to take account of the findings published in *A Fresh Start* [1]. That report recommended a national strategy and targets for basic skills, national standards, a national core curriculum based on these standards and a national system of qualifications. Subsequently, the Government's *Skills for Life* strategy has supported the development of all these. As well as the *national standards for adult literacy*,

there are now core curricula for literacy, numeracy and ESOL aligned to these standards, a pre-entry curriculum framework for literacy and numeracy, and newly accredited qualifications at Entry Level for adult literacy and numeracy, and national tests at Level 1 and Level 2.

A Fresh Start did not directly address the needs of people with first languages other than English. The subsequent report *Breaking the Language Barriers* [2], examined the needs of ESOL learners and made a series of recommendations designed to give them access to high quality, relevant English language provision leading to nationally recognised qualifications. The remit of the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit established within the DfES in 2000 includes language, as well as literacy and numeracy, and the Unit currently oversees a wide range of initiatives associated with ESOL.

These developments were just beginning at the time when the first sets of qualifications in ESOL were being considered for accreditation, and the ESOL curriculum had not yet been published. Qualifications submitted in the 'ESOL family' had to demonstrate their relevance to the needs of English language users living in this country by including some coverage of the skills, knowledge and understanding in the

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[1] A Fresh Start Improving literacy and numeracy.
The report of the working group chaired by Sir Claus Moser, DFEE, 1999

[2] DfES, 2000

adult literacy standards and the Key Skills Communication Specifications. Those qualifications submitted and accredited to date have all been existing qualifications which were able to make any necessary adjustments to meet these requirements. It has been agreed with awarding bodies that for the second round of accreditation in 2004, all qualifications in the ESOL family submitted at Entry 1 to Level 2 will include coverage of the ESOL curriculum at the appropriate levels.

In the meantime, as a result of the work reported here, it has been possible to accredit some ESOL qualifications at the appropriate level in the NQF, alongside qualifications designed for first language users with some confidence that they are 'broadly equivalent'. This is a significant step towards the long term aim of a transparent and progressive system of high quality qualifications in English language for all users in this country, whatever their language background.

The work reported here also has relevance for the future development and accreditation of adult literacy qualifications. In establishing a system of alignment across several sets of language scales it provides a basis for further development of shared understanding about what constitutes language performance at different levels. The research also paves

the way for future work in the context of adult literacy and ESOL qualifications collectively, for example in developing consistent interpretation of the standards in terms of expectations of performance at different levels and appropriate assessment tasks.

The common system of alignment of qualifications in English within the NQF, which this mapping research makes possible, does not mean that all qualifications will be the same, or that the same approaches to teaching and learning will necessarily be appropriate. Qualifications will continue to differ, for example in the extent of coverage of particular language modes, and in the content and emphasis provided for different client groups. However, such a system will make it easier for teachers and educational managers to select the most appropriate qualification and level for their students, and to plan for progression in English and in other disciplines.

QCA
August 2002

Section 1
How the language scales were aligned: the research methodology

1.1
The scope of the research

The investigation reported here was originally commissioned by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) as a preliminary to the accreditation of language qualifications in ESOL/EFL within the United Kingdom's *national qualifications framework*. The investigation examined the feasibility of aligning scales which describe language proficiency in various related sectors: adult literacy and communication, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)/English as an Additional Language (EAL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL).

Proficiency scales describe the language that can be expected of users at a specified number of levels. They consist of descriptors of what language users can do with the target language at each level. Scales have been in use for over 50 years for a variety of purposes: defining the language level needed to carry out a particular job, assessing a learner's current level of language proficiency, describing a learner's current level of proficiency, and comparing the levels of language examinations and qualifications. Such

scales have been used in a number of educational sectors: mother tongue, second/additional language, and foreign language. Language proficiency scales, even within the same sector, have rarely been systematically aligned with each other, so that it has been difficult to match the levels on one scale with those on others.

The questions which the research sought to answer were:

i) Is it possible to align the most commonly-used scales for describing language proficiency to enable cross reference between them?

ii) Given that the principal scales for literacy and communication in England (the *national adult literacy standards* and the *Key Skills Specifications*) are already linked to the *national qualifications framework* (NQF), is it possible to align other scales to these scales and hence to the NQF?

iii) Given that the *adult literacy standards* and the *Key Skills Specifications* describe proficiency in English at different levels for people living, studying and working in the UK, could language scales specifically designed

to describe performance in second or other languages be aligned to them, thus identifying some equivalence between different scales with different purposes and from different sectors?

iv) If these questions could be answered positively, could the alignments identified serve as a practical tool for assigning qualifications in English from various sectors to levels in the *national qualifications framework* (and hence relate them to the mainstream qualifications system of the UK), irrespective of whether qualifications were designed for native or non-native speakers of English?

To answer these questions it was necessary to find a way of aligning the European language scales to which most ESOL qualifications are mapped, to the national adult literacy standards and the Key Skills Communication Specifications, the scales now in place to measure communicative proficiency in English language in this country. The investigation concluded that such alignment of scales was feasible and the proposals were presented to QCA and the DfES in mid-2001. That report was then put out to consultation with Awarding Bodies and other interested parties in the autumn of 2001. The conclusions of the consultation have been taken into account in this report. The initial purpose of the research has already been fulfilled, in that the results of the 2001 report have been applied in accrediting ESOL qualifications to the NQF.

It is envisaged, however, that the methodology used in aligning the scales will be of interest to a range of readers, including language learners and users, teachers, examiners and other language professionals, admissions tutors in educational institutions and employers (see section 3.4.2 below).

1.2
Summary of research methodology

The research into the methods and feasibility of aligning various language scales was carried out in seven stages:

i)   data gathering and selection: appropriate scales and associated documentation were gathered and the principal scales to be investigated were identified

ii) establishing the bases for comparison

iii) preliminary alignment of the levels of different proficiency scales

iv) refinement of the initial alignments

v)   drafting of skills maps (Maps 3-6: listening, speaking, reading and writing)

vi) verification of alignment of levels

vii) summary of findings (Map 1: Overall Language Proficiency and Map 2: General Language Proficiency).

1.3
Investigation of the scales and the outcome

1.3.1 Data gathering and selection

The consultants' terms of reference stated that the scales of language proficiency to be investigated should include the most widely-used scales from three main sectors: adult literacy and key skills communication, English for Speakers of Other Languages/English as an Additional Language, and Modern Foreign Languages. These scales were then identified and collected. This involved obtaining the latest versions, some of which had been through several editions, as well as the associated literature (see Appendix).

The investigation was restricted to documents currently in use in various sectors of language education in the United Kingdom, and did not include scales from North America or Australia. Five scales were identified as being the most appropriate for the research. All come from the sectors identified and are in the public domain. This was felt to be important in assisting the objectivity and transparency of the exercise.

The five scales were:

- The national standards for adult literacy

- Key Skills Communication Specifications

- A language in common: assessing English as an additional language (QCA)

- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

- The National Language Standards

In addition, two scales, *The English-Speaking Union Framework* and *The Association of Testers in Europe Framework* were considered but omitted from the alignment maps because they are proprietary scales and not in the public domain in the manner of the others considered.

1.3.2
Bases for comparison

Initially, there was concern that the scales were too diverse for alignment to be possible, for the following reasons:

- **The sectors of language use described.** Some scales describe mother tongue proficiency, while others describe language used as an additional (second or foreign) language. Comparison of language proficiency across sectors had not previously been attempted.

- **The number of proficiency levels.**
  The number of levels in different scales ranged from five to eleven. It was also evident that several scales did not attempt to describe the full range of language proficiency, but instead concentrated on the middle-range with relatively little description at the upper and lower ends of language use.

- **The lack of common criteria of description.** While scales used in language assessment usually describe language according to clearly-defined criteria such as accuracy, range and so on, some of the scales investigated here describe general language proficiency without such explicit criteria.

- **Fullness of description.**
  The scales and their descriptors varied considerably in breadth and depth of description. The thinnest was set out on a single sheet describing proficiency in terms of the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking; others required several chapters or even complete manuals to describe various applications of the skills.

However, beneath this initial perception of difference were similarities of approach which made it possible to progress with the task. These similarities derive from what may be described as the British tradition of writing language scales. The Council of Europe (2001: 205) contrasts this tradition with the American/Australian tradition and characterises it as preferring positiveness, definiteness, clarity, brevity and independence of description. This common tradition means that descriptors are expressed in terms that facilitated comparison between one scale and another. In particular, it was found that all the scales described language proficiency in the following ways:

- **Orientation.** The scales were initially written for purposes of planning language learning at institutional, national or international levels, although some have subsequently been applied to language assessment.

- **Descriptive approach.** The scales take a purely descriptive approach, describing language proficiency at various levels in much the way that a thermometer describes temperature on a scale. This approach focuses on actual language performance, and seeks to eliminate subjective and relative concerns such as the length of time that learners have been learning, their age, intelligence or behaviour, or the linguistic distance between the learners' first language and the language they are learning.

- **Adult users.** With the exception of *A language in common* the scales describe language proficiency of adult users, that is the performance of users who are all cognitively mature.

- **Output models.** The scales describe language proficiency in terms of a competence-based output (the language user's performance in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking) rather than language input (the number of hours of tuition or the number of points on a language syllabus that the user had to master). Because of this output-based approach, all the scales investigated are framed in 'can-do' statements describing what language users are capable of in the target language.

- **Layered construction.** The scales take a variety of approaches to the presentation and description of the different layers of language proficiency. For example, the thinnest, the *Key Skills Communication* specifications are written for the learner and combine features from different layers of description on single A4 sheets for each level. The *adult literacy standards* provide amplification of the key skills and include considerably more detail about the skills involved in each language mode, at the same time bringing together features from different layers on a single A3 sheet per level. This explicitly multi-layered approach can also be seen in the *The National Language Standards* and *The Common European Framework*. All these scales, although they are written with different degrees of detail, include: some 'global' scale of language proficiency, derived scales describing performance according to skill (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and a third 'layer' describing performance in particular applications (e.g. speaking at meetings/discussions or writing letters). This multi-layered construction (called the 'hypertext analogy' by the Council of Europe (2000: 40)) can be represented in the following way:

Layer 1
Global language proficiency

Layer 2
Language skills
(reading, writing, listening speaking)

Layer 3
Applications (e.g. to writing)
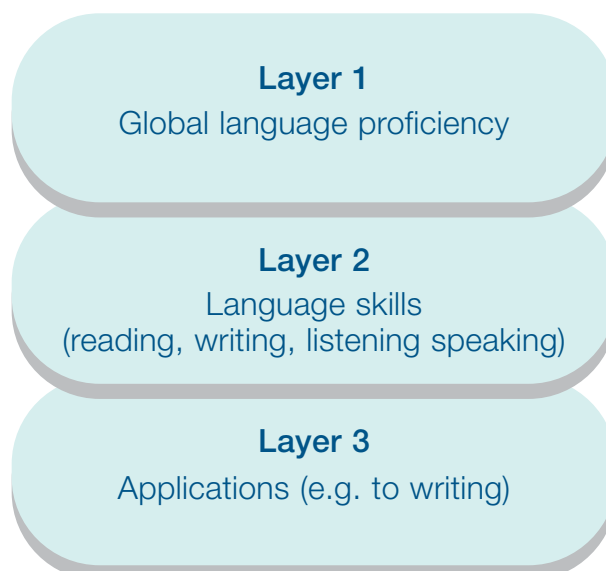
This approach means that all the scales offer aligned descriptions across a number of levels, even though the precise structure, amount of description and allocation of description between the three layers may differ somewhat. The user can, for example, find a general descriptor at a particular level at layer 1, then see how this is converted into a more detailed descriptor of a skill such as writing, at the same level, and then locate the applications of the skill, usually in layer 3. This process is set out below with illustrations from the standards for adult literacy for Entry 2 Writing, and from the Common European Framework, level A2, for Writing.

Layer 1
General Proficiency

E2
At this level, adults can:

- write to communicate information with some awareness of the intended audience

National standards for adult literacy, QCA 2000

Layer 2
Writing

An adult will be expected to:

- use written words and phrases to record and present information
- construct simple sentences and compound sentences using common conjunctions to connect tow clauses, eg as, and, but
- use adjectives
- use punctuation correctly, eg capital letters, full stops and question marks
- use a capital letter for proper nouns
- spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words
- produce legible text

National standards for adult literacy, QCA 2000

Layer 3
Applications

- in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives

National standards for adult literacy, QCA 2000

Layer 1
General Proficiency

A2

- Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (eg. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment)

- Can communicate in simple routine tasks requiring a simple direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters

- Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need

Common European Framework p.24

Layer 2
Writing

A2

- Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and' and 'but' and 'because'

Common European Framework p.61

Layer 3
Applications

CREATIVE WRITING

A2

- Can write about everyday aspects of his/her environment, eg people, places, a job or study experience in linked sentences

- Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences about their family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job

- Can write short simple, imaginary biographies and simple poems about people

CORRESPONDENCES

A2

- Can write very simple personal letters expressing thanks and apology

NOTES, MESSAGES and FORMS

A2

- Can take a short, simple message provided he/she can ask for repetition and reformulation. Can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need

Common European Framework p.62, 83, 84

All of the similarities of approach described above, in particular the layered nature of the scales, facilitated their comparison and enabled finer matching to be undertaken.

1.3.3
Preliminary alignment

As all scales include what has been termed layer 2: description of reading, writing, listening and speaking, they were scrutinised at this layer first and a preliminary alignment was drafted in a series of maps. This was achieved by establishing the initial match between the broad descriptors of each of the skills at layer 2 of each scale. The method for aligning the layer 2 descriptors of three different scales: *The adult literacy standards*, *The Common European Framework* and *The National Language Standards* is demonstrated in the following examples from the descriptions of writing at the lower end of the scales. The descriptors of the various lower levels

were placed side-by-side and scrutinised for similarities and differences at levels above and below. This would indicate preliminary alignment and a provisional answer to the question as to which levels of each scale (A1 or A2 on the *Common European Framework*; Levels 1 or 2 of the *National Language Standards*) should be aligned with Entry 2 of the *adult literacy standards*.

Adult literacy standards	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry level 2 An adult can:	**A1 Breakthrough** The writer can:	**Level 1:** The writer can:
▪ write a message to a colleague on work issues	▪ write simple isolated phrases and sentences	▪ write effectively to deal with predictable day-to-day activities
▪ write a brief letter or postcard		▪ write down routine facts and data related to predictable day-to-day activities
▪ use written words and phrases to record or present information		▪ write simple messages
▪ construct simple and compound sentences, using conjunctions to connect two clauses, eg as, and, but	**A2 Waystage** The writer can:	
▪ use adjectives	▪ write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like and, but and because	
▪ use punctuation correctly, eg capital letters, full stops and question marks		**Level 2:** The writer can:
▪ use a capital letter for proper nouns		▪ write effectively to deal with routine and daily activities
▪ spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words		▪ compile routine records using set phrases and structures
▪ produce legible text		▪ compose notes and short messages to fulfil routine and daily requirements
▪ use a simplified dictionary to find meanings and spell words		▪ compose correspondence using set phrases and structures
in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives		

The different scales offer different levels of detail in their descriptions of writing. However, during the scrutiny, it became clear that there were some key descriptors which suggested a preliminary equivalence between the scales at different levels. In this example, the comparison of key descriptors resulted in the preliminary alignment of the levels shown here:

Adult literacy standards	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry level 2 An adult can: ■ construct simple and compound sentences, using conjunctions to connect two clauses, eg as, and, but	**A2 Waystage** The writer can: ■ write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like and, but and because	**Level 1:** ■ write simple messages

This preliminary alignment was made across all of the four skills and an initial 'fit' was established.

1.3.4
Refinement

It was found that the preliminary alignment of layer 2 left gaps: one scale included more detail than another, or one gave exemplification that the others lacked. The multi-layered construction enabled detail to be recovered from layer 3 of the scales, so that more direct comparisons of the descriptors at layer 2 could be made. For example, the writing descriptors of one scale might be exemplified by reference to report writing, while the others made no mention of this; but references for report writing were included at layer 3 of the other scales. The placing of layer 3 detail alongside layer 2 enabled more direct comparisons to be made. In the illustration below (taken from Map 6: Writing Skills), the additional descriptors recovered from layer 3 are indicated in *italics*. It can be seen that the detailed descriptors on the three scales are now more comparable both in extent and delicacy.

Adult literacy standards

Entry level 2 An adult can:

- write a message to a colleague on work issues
- write a brief letter or postcard
- use written words and phrases to record or present information
- construct simple and compound sentences, using conjunctions to connect two clauses, eg as, and, but
- use adjectives
- use punctuation correctly, eg capital letters, full stops and question marks
- use a capital letter for proper nouns
- spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words
- produce legible text
- use a simplified dictionary to find meanings and spell words

in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives

Source: *QCA national standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000*

Common European Framework

A2 Waystage The writer can:

- write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like and, but and because
- write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need
- copy short sentences on everyday subjects, e.g directions how to get somewhere
- write with reasonable phonetic accuracy (but not necessarily fully standard spelling) short words that are in his/her oral vocabulary
- write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need
- write very simple personal letters expressing thanks and apology
- take a short, simple message provided he/she can ask for repetition and reformulation

Common European Framework, p.61, 83, 84, 89, 118

National Language Standards

Level 1: The writer can effectively:

- deal with predictable day-to-day activities
- write down routine facts and data related to predictable day-to-day activities
- write simple messages
- use the written form of the language in a limited range of standard formats, eg filling in standard forms or composing standard letters using stock phrases and formats
- use a small number of memorised sentences and individual words and set phrases, which he/she can substitute to adapt existing simple texts

The National Language Standards, p.107

1.3.5
Drafting of skills maps

From this refinement, the four skills maps (Map 3: Listening, Map 4: Speaking, Map 5: Reading and Map 6: Writing) were drafted, referencing direct quotations from the wording of the original scales. The alignment of the descriptors at all levels on these maps illustrates the fit of the various scales in a transparent way.

1.3.6
Verification

Further verification was sought by reference to other data. Although no previous attempts have been made to map *all* the scales examined in this research, there were some sources of information about more limited mapping of some of the scales, and these were consulted. Some of these were documents in the public domain (such as the *Association of British ESOL Examining Boards Framework*, published 2001) and others drew on professional knowledge. In addition, a summary of the first draft of the report, together with the maps showing the alignments, was circulated, to seek the views of awarding bodies and other interested parties, before a more extensive consultation took place. There were no suggestions that the alignment of the scales on any of the maps was incorrect or unacceptable.

1.3.7
Summary of findings

Two summary maps (Maps 1 and 2) showing overall alignment were drawn up from Maps 3-6. Map 1 shows only the broad alignment of each scale against the NQF, while Map 2 includes descriptors of general language proficiency. While it is realised that these are the maps which are likely to be most widely used, it is hoped that users will understand that they are the *least* detailed in terms of language applications, so may not be the maps that are most useful or relevant in all circumstances.

Section 2
Descriptions of the scales: the spectrum of language proficiency

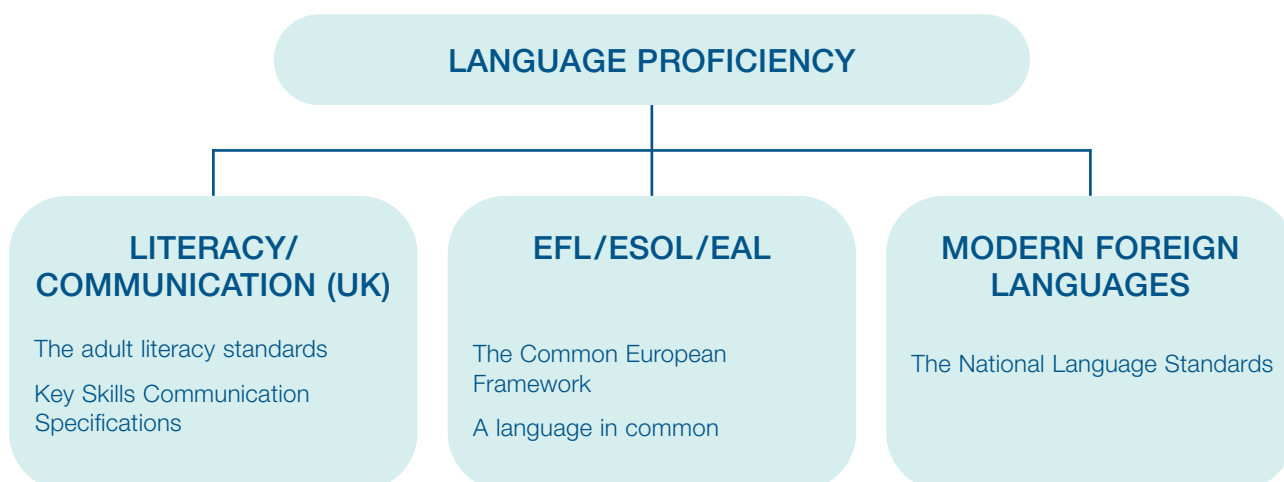## 2.1
Spectrum of language proficiency

The scales listed in 1.3.1 and 1.3.2, which are considered individually below, tend to concentrate on the broad range of proficiency within which most users' performance falls, whether in a first or other language, although there are some which offer description for the very top of the scale or for the beginner stage. For example, at Level 5, *Key Skills* describes a level of communicative competence commensurate with the demands of high level management or research. The *English-Speaking Union Framework* covers the full range of proficiency in its nine-level scale, but as this was ultimately not chosen for alignment, *A language in common* (QCA) was consulted for descriptions of the very earliest stages.

2.2
The scales

The scales cover language proficiency in the context of literacy and communication, English as a foreign or other language, other modern foreign languages:

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

LITERACY/ COMMUNICATION (UK)	**EFL/ESOL/EAL**	**MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**
The adult literacy standards	The Common European Framework	The National Language Standards
Key Skills Communication Specifications	A language in common	

Some of the scales have associated supplementary scales or literature, and these are referred to where appropriate.

It will also be noted that some scales refer to the UK (or England) alone, whereas others are European in scope.

2.3
The national qualifications framework (NQF)

This framework supplied the levels which were used as the basis for the alignment of the language scales. Established in 1999 it provides a structure within which all accredited qualifications in all subjects in the UK can be located. It has five principal levels [1-5], and below those, Entry 1-3. The following table displays the levels of the NQF alongside other relevant national standards:

National qualifications framework Level 5 (Higher level qualifications)	Key Skills Level 5		
National qualifications framework Level 4	Key Skills Level 4		
National qualifications framework Level 3 (e.g. A level)	Key Skills Level 3		
National qualifications framework Level 2 (e.g. GCSE grades A*-C)	Key Skills Level 2	Adult literacy standards Level 2	
National qualifications framework Level 1 (e.g. GCSE grades D-G)	Key Skills Level 1	Adult literacy standards Level 1	National Curriculum Level 5
			National Curriculum Level 4
E3		Adult literacy standards Entry 3	National Curriculum Level 3
E2		Adult literacy standards Entry 2	National Curriculum Level 2
E1		Adult literacy standards Entry 1	National Curriculum Level 1

The NQF does not set out to define competence or proficiency in particular subjects. Its aim is to provide a transparent system of cross reference to demonstrate how different types of qualification can be regarded as broadly equivalent in terms of level, for the purposes of progression and entry requirements to employment or further study.

Scales for assessing communication in English in the United Kingdom

2.4
National standards for adult literacy (QCA)

These were published by QCA in 2000 in order to 'specify the full range of skills required for an adult to communicate confidently, effectively and efficiently' (2000: 2). The standards are described at five levels and are aligned to the levels of the national qualifications framework, as demonstrated above.

Several important points need to be noted in relation to the *national standards for adult literacy* which affect their interpretation in the current research.

- The *standards* are written in 'plain English' for an intended audience of educational professionals rather than adult learners themselves, as is the case with most of the other scales surveyed.

- While 'literacy' is not explicitly defined in the *standards*, it includes spoken communication. It is described in terms of the four skills: reading, writing, speak to communicate and listen and respond. Reading and writing descriptors include text, sentence and word level skills.

- *The national standards for adult literacy* cover level 2 at the top end and begin at Entry 1, which corresponds to National Curriculum level 1. It is evident that Entry 1 in these *Standards*, like National Curriculum level 1, does not begin with the very earliest stages of learning a language. Some basic ability in spoken communication in English is assumed, which may be the result of being a native speaker, or may have been already acquired as a second language speaker. (See *A language in common* 2.3.2.d below)

- The standards were written to describe the levels of language competence needed by adult speakers of English living, working and studying in this country, whether English is their first language or not. They have now been used as the starting point for developing the *Adult Literacy Core Curriculum* (DfES/BSA 2001), designed for native speakers, and the *Adult Basic Skills ESOL Core Curriculum* (DfES/BSA 2001), which relates specifically to non-native speakers of English. Through these curricula, each related to the same standards, explicit links have been made between the proficiency levels of native and non-

native speakers of English in ways which were not possible before. Each curriculum is designed to cover the skills required by users of English in this country, taking account of differences in curriculum content, teaching and learning for ESOL and first language learners.

2.5
Key Skills Specifications (QCA)

These specifications in their current form were produced by QCA in 1999. At levels 1-4 they describe six skills, including Communication, which is the concern of this report. The *Key Skills Communication Specifications* were particularly useful in the investigation as, in effect, they extend to NQF levels 3, 4 and 5 (see Map 1).

- The *Key Skills Specifications* are addressed directly to post-16 learners rather than to professionals, as with the *adult literacy standards*. They make no reference to non-native speakers, but like the *adult literacy standards* describe the levels of competence required to do certain things in English, with the assumption that these apply to both native and non-native speakers in the context of education, employment and day-to-day living in this country

- The *Key Skills Communication Specifications* pre-date the *adult literacy standards* and influenced their preparation. At levels 1 and 2 the two scales have close overlap, though

written for different audiences. In this research, levels 3, 4 and 5 of the *Key Skills Communication Specifications* were regarded as an extension of the *adult literacy standards* beyond level 2, facilitating comparisons with other scales at the higher levels. At level 3 and 4, the *Communication Specifications* were closely referred to. At level 5 *Key Skills Communication* does not separate communication or literacy from other areas of competence, but it clearly describes a level of language attainment which is well beyond that of level 4. Level 3 and 4 of the Key Skills specification also provided the basis for the development of the *Subject Specifications for teachers of adult literacy and numeracy, DfES/FENTO 2001*, which set out the skills, knowledge and understanding for speaking, listening, reading and writing at levels 3 and 4.

- The *adult literacy standards* and *Key Skills Communication Specifications* were combined to make one overall scale for use in the Maps [Section 3], which goes from Entry 1 to level 4.

2.6
A language in common: assessing English as an additional language (QCA)

- *A language in common* (2000: 11-15) was consulted to give an indication of what descriptors at the lowest levels might look like. The booklet was published in 2000 and relates specifically to English as an additional language (EAL) within the school-based national curriculum. As such, it falls outside the scope of this report, which deals with adult scales. However, reference was made to it because it offers a description of levels of observable proficiency *below* national curriculum level 1. With minor adaptation, these could also be applied to describe adult proficiency in the earliest stages of learning English below NQF Entry 1 and may in future provide a starting point for descriptions of beginner levels for adults.

Scales referring to a range of languages

2.7
Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF)

The *Council of Europe Framework* describes six levels of foreign-language proficiency. The document was originally circulated in draft in 1996, with an updated draft in 1997. The final edition was published in 2001. The framework provides several dozen scales, ranging from general proficiency to narrow sub-skills such as 'transactions to obtain goods and services', all described at the same six levels. In the original edition, the levels were given labels such as 'Threshold' and 'Vantage', but these have been dropped in the published edition, although they are still widely used and are given here for reference (see Map 1).

Several points should be noted about the *Common European Framework*:

- levels refer specifically to proficiency in a language which is not the user's first language;

- levels of language proficiency are described without any relation to educational level. While this is similar to the other scales considered in this report, it is a departure from educational practice in many European countries;

- unlike other scales, it was not originally devised as a framework for assessment or for qualifications, although it is increasingly used as such. Indeed, many countries (including the United Kingdom) are now aligning proficiency in foreign languages at various educational levels to the CEF, often through the *European Language Portfolio* [LNTO/CILT 2002];

- although much of the Council of Europe's work was originally with adults, the scale makes little reference to vocational uses of language. It is, however, now frequently used to describe school-based proficiency/achievement;

- it includes very full and detailed descriptors which proved most useful in checking and refining the alignments with other scales;

- it provides a link between scales used only in England and a scale which is well-established and well-regarded across Europe, thus making the proposed alignments of levels of English proficiency intelligible to users beyond England.

2.8
The National Language Standards 2000 (LNTO)

The *National Language Standards 2000*, produced by the Languages National Training Organisation is one of many sets of national standards in a variety of vocational areas and skills, which have been produced by national training organisations and industry lead bodies. They are the second revision of standards originally published in 1993, and define standards for the vocational use of Modern Foreign Languages as applied to the use of these languages in the workplace.

The Standards define proficiency in the target language at five levels, aligned to the *national qualifications framework* levels in the context of Modern Foreign Languages rather than for mother-tongue English, and were related originally to the competency statements of the UK National Vocational Qualifications. While the standards describe proficiency levels primarily of non-native speakers, their use to confirm or accredit mother-tongue proficiency for defined work purposes is approved by the Languages National Training Organisation.

Several points need to be highlighted in the context of this report with regard to the *National Language Standards*:

- their developers consulted the *Common European Framework* to define the stages of progression [*The*

National Language Standards in Action LNTO 2001:30]. This provides some link between the scales written for use in England, and the European scale, which assisted the processes of alignment;

- they were specifically designed to assess competence in any language other than the user's first language; this includes any foreign, second/additional, community (eg Bengali, Turkish) or indigenous language (eg Welsh, Gaelic). Their application is thus wider than the other scales originating in England, and rather different to the CEF;

- they are described in terms of the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking (layer 2) which are then expanded in a series of tables of 'typical attainments' in specific application (layer 3) thus facilitating comparison with the other scales;

- they provide the basis for National Vocational Qualifications language units in foreign languages. These have a level by level correspondence within the NQF (ie an NVQ unit at level 2 is at level 2 in the NQF). In the context of the mapping reported here, all alignments to the NQF have been made by comparison to levels of language skills *in English*. The effect of this is that the levels of the *National Language Standards* do not have the same one to one correspondence with the levels of the NQF when applied to English, as Maps 1 to 6 demonstrate.

Scales outside the public domain

2.9
Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE)

ALTE was established in 1990 as an association between various language test providers across Europe. ALTE developed its own Framework of five (later six) levels and subsequently aligned these with the levels of the *Common European Framework*.

Points to be noted:

- The ALTE scale is designed to be used for foreign languages and not with native speakers. It describes language proficiency regardless of educational level.

- The 2001 version of the scales relates both to general proficiency in the four skills and to social/tourist, work and study applications.

- Although the levels of the ALTE scale have been aligned with those of the Council of Europe (see *Common European Framework* 2001: 248-49), the descriptors of the two scales are different and the relationship between the two is not necessarily obvious to the user.

ALTE is generally restricted to one examination provider per language and other providers may not use the ALTE scale. The ALTE English-language member is the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). The *ALTE Framework* can be used only by members of the Association and is thus not in the public domain. For this reason, it was not included in the maps in this report.

2.10
The English-Speaking Union Framework (ESU)

This is a scale describing foreign-language proficiency at nine levels, covering the full range of proficiency from beginner to educated bilingual. It was originally published both as a book and a chart in 1989, and further editions of the chart were published in 1993 and 1997. The charts provide a single scale describing general language proficiency; the original book gave 20 further scales describing proficiency in the four skills and social, business and academic/study applications. The aim was to provide a framework on to which the principal EFL/ESOL examinations could be mapped. The examinations providers represented formed themselves into the Association of British ESOL Examining Boards (ABEEB) in 1989.

Although authorised translations of the *ESU Framework* have been published and the scale has been widely distributed, it is not strictly in the public domain as only members of ABEEB may align their examinations with its levels. For this reason, it was not included in the maps in this report.

Section 3
Maps illustrating the alignment of scales and levels

3.1
Demonstrating how skills and levels align

Rather than a single map showing the alignment of the various scales, a series of maps has been produced illustrating different language layers and skills. In part, this reflects the methodology of the research. More importantly, it is believed that different users will find the detailed alignment of descriptors of different aspects of language useful. The alignment of the levels of the scales to those of the *national qualifications framework* is consistent throughout all the maps and all modes of language use:

NQF level	Map 1 overall alignment	Map 2 overall proficiency	Map 3 Listening Skills	Map 4 Speaking Skills	Map 5 Reading Skills	Map 6 Writing Skills
Level 5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Level 4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Level 3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Level 2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Level 1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Entry 3	Entry 3	Entry 3	Entry 3	Entry 3	Entry 3	Entry 3
Entry 2	Entry 2	Entry 2	Entry 2	Entry 2	Entry 2	Entry 2
Entry 1	Entry 1	Entry 1	Entry 1	Entry 1	Entry 1	Entry 1

The six maps included here are as follows:

Map 1: Overall alignment of language proficiency scales

This provides an overview of the alignment to the *national qualifications framework* of the five general language proficiency scales under consideration:

- *The national standards for adult literacy*
- *Key Skills Communication Specifications*
- *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*
- *The National Language Standards*
- *A language in common*

Map 2: General language proficiency

This map aligns the descriptors of general language proficiency from the four main scales under consideration [the first four from the list above] to the *national qualifications framework* from Entry 1 to Level 5.

The same principles of organisation as used in Map 2 are applied in Maps 3 to 6. Here the four scales, arranged to make three overall scales by combining *Key Skills* and the *adult literacy standards*, are aligned to each other and to the NQF in terms of the detailed skills associated with each language mode

Map 3: Listening Skills

Map 4: Speaking Skills

Map 5: Reading Skills

Map 6: Writing Skills

3.2
General principles

The maps show the alignment of the various language proficiency scales. As detailed in section 1.3, this alignment is based solely on a scrutiny of the descriptors used in the scales to define proficiency levels. No external reference to examinations or qualifications offered by awarding bodies was made. The subsequent location of ESOL qualifications on the levels of the NQF for purposes of accreditation was carried out separately, at a later date, by QCA.

The maps align existing scales designed and constructed by different organisations for different educational sectors. They do not introduce any new scales or descriptors, and do not attempt to construct an 'anchor' scale to which all other scales could be related. Given the international nature of languages and the international currency of language qualifications, any attempt to construct such an 'anchor' scale was considered beyond the scope of this investigation. Moreover it was judged that the composite scales presented here should serve such a purpose.

3.3
What the maps show

The maps enable users to see the alignment of the levels of various scales under consideration. Users who are interested in particular aspects or skills of language can consult the appropriate maps to determine comparisons and equivalences. In order to provide detail and transparency, the maps quote the descriptors used in the scales and, at the foot of the columns, provide page references for these quotations.

MAP 1: General language proficiency scales

QCA				Council of Europe Framework [5]	National Language Standards [6]
National qualifications framework [1]	National standards for adult literacy [2]	Key Skills [3]	National curriculum [4]		
Level 5		(Level 5)			
Level 4		Level 4	8 ↑ National curriculum levels ↓ 2	(C2.2)	
Level 3		Level 3		C2 Mastery	Level 5
Level 2	Level 2	Level 2		C1 Operational Proficiency	Level 4
Level 1	Level 1	Level 1		B2 Vantage	Level 3
Entry level	Entry level 3			B1 Threshold	Level 2
	Entry level 2			A2 Waystage	Level 1
	Entry level 1		Level 1 Secure/Threshold	A1 Breakthrough	(Entry)
Pre-entry [7]			EAL Step 2		
			EAL Step 1		

Notes:

1 In the national qualifications framework, levels 4 and 5 represent higher-level qualifications, A levels are at level 3, GCSE grades A-C at level 2 and GCSE grades D-G at level 1.

2 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *National standards for adult literacy and numeracy*, 2000: British national standards published as part of the adult basic skills strategy in order to specify the full range of skills required for an adult to communicate confidently, effectively and efficiently.

3 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *Key Skills Units*, 2000: These specify a range of key skills, including communication, required to operate effectively at the respective levels.

4 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, *A language in common*, 2000: National guidance relating to performance of speakers of English as an Additional Language (EAL) within the school-based UK national curriculum.

5 Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, Cambridge University Press, 2001: Descriptions of six levels of foreign language proficiency offered as international standards.

6 Languages National Training Organisation, *The National Language Standards*, 2000: British national standards for the vocational use of foreign languages (including English as a Foreign Language).

7 There are no qualifications at pre-entry level; however the Pre-entry Curriculum Framework for literacy and numeracy provides clear milestones to enable learners to progress towards Entry 1, accreditation at pre-entry level is available if appropriate to the learner.

MAP 2: General language proficiency

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Key Skills Specification Level 4 At this level an adult can: - develop a strategy for using communication skills over an extended period of time. - take the lead role in a group discussion about a complex subject. - write extended documents about complex subjects. - evaluate your overall strategy and present the outcomes from your work. **Key Skills Specification Level 3** At this level an adult can: - contribute to a group discussion about a complex subject. - make a presentation about a complex subject. - read and synthesise information from extended documents about a complex subject. - write different types of documents about complex subjects.	**C2 Mastery** The language user can: - understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. - summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. - express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. - [Mastery is not intended to imply native or near-native competence].	**Level 5** The user at this level: - *is accepted socially as native or near native speaker.* - is competent in the full range of complex language tasks across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. - has a command of idiom and grammatical structures which permits expression of the finest nuances. - applies a significant range of language strategies from an extensive repertoire, continuously updated to meet changing requirements. - has interactive skills which allow complete and harmonious control of any discussion and constant review of its content and direction.
Level 2 An adult can: - listen and respond to spoken language, including extended information and narratives, and follow detailed explanations and multi-step instructions of varying length, adapting response to speaker, medium and context. - speak to communicate straightforward and detailed information, ideas and opinions clearly, adapting speech and content to take account of the listener(s), medium, purpose and situation. - engage in discussion with one or more people in a variety of different situations, making clear and effective contributions that produce outcomes appropriate to purpose and topic. - read and understand a range of texts of varying complexity, accurately and independently. - read and obtain information of varying length and detail from different sources. - write communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly and effectively, using length, format and style appropriate to purpose, content and audience.	**C1 Operational Proficiency** The language user can: - understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts and recognise implicit meaning. - express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. - use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. - produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	**Level 4** The user at this level: - is competent in a broad range of complex language tasks in the user's specialist area, performed in a wide variety of contexts in which flexibility of linguistic adaptation is essential. - has fluency interrupted only by the most conceptually difficult topics and the user can interact skilfully in discussion, contributing to and helping to maintain coherence.
Level 1 An adult can: - listen and respond to spoken language, including information and narratives, and follow explanations and instructions of varying lengths, adapting response to speaker, medium and context. - speak to communicate information, ideas and opinions, adapting speech and content to take account of the listener(s) and medium. - engage in discussion with one or more people in familiar and unfamiliar situations, making clear and relevant contributions that respond to what others say and produce a shared understanding about different topics. - read and understand straightforward texts of varying length on a variety of topics accurately and independently. - read and obtain information from different sources. - write to communicate information, ideas and opinions clearly using length, format and style appropriate to purpose and audience.	**B2 Vantage** The language user can: - understand the main ideas of complex texts on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. - interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either part. - produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	**Level 3** The user at this level: - is competent in a varied range of language tasks, both factual and expressive, performed in a variety of contexts. - has a repertoire which is wide and adaptable to the unexpected and grasp of the grammatical system is mainly secure.
Entry 3 An adult can: - listen and respond to spoken language, including straightforward information and narratives, and follow straightforward explanations and instructions, both face-to-face and on the telephone. - speak to communicate information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics, using appropriate formality, both face-to-face and on the telephone. - engage in discussion with one or more people in a familiar situation, making relevant points and responding to what others say to reach a shared understanding about familiar topics. - read and understand short, straightforward texts on familiar topics accurately and independently. - read and obtain information from everyday sources. - write to communicate information and opinions with some adaptation to the intended audience.	**B1 Theshold** The language user can: - understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. - deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken. - produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. - describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.	**Level 2** The user at this level: - is competent in a limited range of tasks, performed in familiar work and social contexts. - has a repertoire equal to most routine language tasks and the user has sufficient grasp of grammar to cope with some non-routine tasks.

MAP 2: General language proficiency (continued)

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry 2 An adult can: ■ listen and respond to spoken language, including straightforward information, short narratives, explanations and instructions. ■ speak to communicate information, feelings and opinions on familiar topics. ■ engage in discussion with one or more people in a familiar situation to establish shared understanding about familiar topics. ■ read and understand short straightforward texts on familiar topics. ■ read and obtain information from short documents, familiar sources and signs and symbols. ■ write to communicate information with some awareness of the intended audience.	**A2 Waystage** The language user can: ■ understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). ■ communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. ■ describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.	**Level 1** The user at this level: ■ is competent in a limited range of predictable and simple language tasks, using mainly set expressions and simple combination of these. ■ is capable of some rehearsed grammatical manipulations.
Entry 1 An adult can: ■ listen and respond to spoken language, including simple narratives, statements, questions and single-step instructions. ■ speak to communicate basic information, feelings, and opinions on familiar topics. ■ engage in discussion with another person in a familiar situation about familiar topics. ■ read and understand short texts with repeated language patterns on familiar topics. ■ read and obtain information from common signs and symbols. ■ write to communicate information to an intended audience.	**A1 Breakthrough** The language user can: ■ understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. ■ introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. ■ interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	
Sources: QCA, *Key Skills Units 3 and 4, 2000* QCA, *National standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000*	Council of Europe, *Common European Framework, 2001*: p.24, 36	Languages National Training Organisation, *The National Language Standards, 2000*: p.23

Level 3 and 4 of the Key Skills specification also provided the basis for the development of the Subject Specifications for teachers of adult literacy and numeracy, DfES/FENTO 2001, which set out the skills, knowledge and understanding for speaking, listening, reading and writing at levels 3 and 4.

See also the 'Communication in foreign languages' section of the European Commission's *Concept document of the Commission expert group on 'Key Competencies'*, March 2002.

MAP 3: Listening scales

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Key Skills Specification Level 4 An adult can: - listen and respond perceptively to others. - evaluate information obtained from discussions with others, identifying opinion, possible bias and distortion of information when making judgements.		
Key Skills Specification Level 3 An adult can: - listen and respond sensitively to others.	**C2 Mastery** The listener: - has no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast native speed. - can follow specialised lectures and presentations employing a high degree of colloquialism, regional usage or unfamiliar terminology.	**Level 5** The listener can effectively: - understand any kind of speech, whether live or recorded, at normal or faster than normal speed, on both familiar or unfamiliar topics with little difficulty. - obtain information from complex and specialised language. - extract facts and data from complex and specialised language. - abstract ideas and theories from complex and specialised language. - identify the evaluative content of complex and specialised language.
Level 2 An adult can: - listen for and identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations on a range of topics. - listen to, understand and follow lengthy or multi-step instructions and narratives on a range of topics and in a range of contexts in a wide range of formal and social exchanges.	**C1 Operational Proficiency** The listener can: - understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her own field, though she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. - recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts. - follow extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. - follow most lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease. - extract information from poor quality, audibly distorted public announcements, eg in a station, sports stadium. - understand complex technical information, such as operating instructions, specifications for familiar products and services.	**Level 4** The listener can effectively: - obtain information about complex work tasks. - listen to language varying in complexity and technicality to identify work-related requirements. - listen to language varying in complexity to identify others' opinions and values. - extract complex information from a wide range of spoken sources and cope with everyday language, live or recorded, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics. - follow lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease, extracting both information and arguments as well as identifying the apparent attitudes and emotions of the speakers. - handle a range of familiar accents and colloquialisms.
Level 1 An adult can: - listen to spoken language, including information and narratives, of varying length. - listen for and identify relevant information from explanations and presentations on a range of straightforward topics. - listen for and understand explanations, instructions and narratives on different topics in a range of contexts. - provide feedback and confirmation when listening to others. - follow and contribute to discussions on a range of straightforward topics. in formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**B2 Vantage** The listener can: - understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social, academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influences the ability to understand. - understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. - follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar and the direction of talk is sign-posted by explicit markers. - follow the essentials of lectures, talks and reports and other forms of academic/professional presentation which are propositionally and linguistically complex. - understand announcements and messages on concrete and abstract topics spoken in standard dialect at normal speed. - understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. - understand documentaries, live interviews, talk shows, plays and the majority of films in standard dialect.	**Level 3** The listener can effectively: - obtain information about varied work tasks. - extract specific details from a variety of sources. - identify information, ideas and opinions from a variety of sources. - understand most everyday spoken language covering both familiar and less familiar material, including specific details from, and the general meaning of, a range of conversations, announcements, messages, instructions and directions, including extended broadcast and recorded material spoken at a normal speed.

MAP 3: Listening scales (continued)

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry 3 An adult can: ■ listen to and follow the gist of explanations, instructions and narratives in different contexts. ■ listen for detail in explanations, instructions and narratives in different contexts. ■ listen for and identify relevant information and new information from discussions, explanations and presentations. ■ listen to and respond appropriately to other points of view. in familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**B1 Theshold** The listener can: ■ understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job-related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent. ■ understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives. ■ follow a lecture or talk within his/her own field, provided the subject matter is familiar and the presentation straightforward and clearly structured. ■ understand simple technical information, such as operating instructions for everyday equipment. ■ follow detailed directions.	**Level 2** The listener can effectively: ■ obtain information about routine and daily activities. ■ listen for specific details from familiar and directly accessible sources. ■ listen for general information from familiar and directly accessible sources. ■ understand simple everyday spoken language, including manipulated forms of set expressions with some less familiar elements. ■ obtain both specific details from, and the general meaning of, a range of conversations, announcements, messages, instructions and directions spoken at normal speed. ■ cope with common survival situations involving travel, accommodation and obtaining goods and services. ■ obtain common numerical, social facts and simple data from public announcements and broadcasts.
Entry 2 An adult can: ■ understand the main points on the local and national news on television and radio. ■ listen for and follow the gist of explanations, instructions and narratives. ■ listen for detail in short explanations, instructions and narratives. ■ listen for and identify the main points of short explanations or presentations. ■ listen to and follow short, straightforward explanations and instructions. ■ listen to and identify simply expressed feelings and opinions. ■ follow the gist of discussions. ■ follow the main points of a discussion. in straightforward formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**A2 Waystage** The listener can: ■ understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. ■ understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment) provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. ■ catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements. ■ understand simple directions relating to how to get from X to Y, by foot or public transport. ■ identify the main point of TV news items reporting events, accidents, etc. where the visual supports the commentary. ■ follow changes of topic of factual TV news items, and form an idea of the main content.	**Level 1** The listener can effectively: ■ obtain information about predictable and simple language tasks. ■ listen for easily recognisable data and facts. ■ listen for easily recognisable information for action. ■ understand simple everyday spoken language. ■ obtain specific details from announcements and messages spoken clearly at deliberate speed, with little or no sound interference. ■ follow simple instructions and directions ■ understand the gist of simple conversations on familiar matters. ■ follow brief and first-contact encounters, eg reception and retail transactions.
Entry 1 An adult can: ■ listen for relevant information in a public announcement at a station, eg platform number. ■ follow an instruction from a supervisor. ■ follow verbal instructions made to a group, eg in a keep-fit class. ■ listen for the gist of short explanations ■ listen for detail using key words to extract some specific information. ■ follow single-step instructions in a familiar context. ■ listen to requests for personal information. ■ listen when participating in simple exchanges and everyday contexts.	**A1 Breakthrough** The listener can: ■ follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning. ■ understand instructions addressed carefully and slowly to him/her and follow short, simple directions. ■ understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker. ■ understand questions and instructions addressed carefully and slowly to him/her and follow short, simple directions.	
Sources: QCA, Key Skills Units 3 and 4, 2000 QCA, National standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000	Council of Europe, Common European Framework, 2001: p.66 + 67, 71, 75	Languages National Training Organisation, The National Language Standards, 2000: p.27, 31 & 32, 35, 39, 43

MAP 4: Speaking scales

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Key Skills Specification Level 4 An adult can: ■ take a lead role in group discussions, clearly structuring what he/she says, and using appropriate vocabulary, intonation and emphasis to make his/her points. ■ make an oral presentation about complex points, organising and clearly presenting information to suit purpose, subject and audience. **Key Skills Specification Level 3** An adult can: ■ contribute to a group discussion about a complex subject, making clear and relevant contributions in a way that suits purpose and situation. ■ create opportunities in a discussion for others to contribute when appropriate. ■ make a presentation about a complex subject, speaking clearly and adapting the style to suit the purpose, subject, audience and situation. ■ structure a presentation so that the sequence of information and ideas may be easily followed. ■ use a range of techniques to engage the audience, including effective use of images.	**C2 Mastery** The speaker can: ■ produce clear, smoothly flowing well-structured speech with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. ■ hold his/her own in formal discussion of complex issues, putting an articulate and persuasive argument, at no disadvantage to native speakers. ■ understand any native speaker interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond his/her own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a non-standard accent or dialect.	**Level 5** The speaker can speak effectively: ■ *with fluency approaching that of a native speaker.* ■ to deal with complex and specialised tasks. ■ to exchange highly-specialised information and advice. ■ to present arguments and debate pros and cons. ■ to contribute to meetings. ■ to contribute to complex group discussions. ■ to deliver unscripted presentations.
Level 2 An adult can: ■ speak clearly and confidently in a way which suits the situation. ■ respond to detailed or extended questions on a range of topics. ■ respond to criticism and criticise constructively. ■ make requests and ask questions to obtain detailed information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. ■ express clearly statements of fact, explanations, instructions, accounts, descriptions using appropriate structure, style and vocabulary. ■ present information and ideas in a logical sequence and provide further detail and development to clarify or confirm understanding. ■ adapt contributions to discussions to suit audience, context, purpose and situation. ■ support opinions and arguments with evidence. ■ use strategies intended to reassure, eg *body language and appropriate phraseology*. in a wide range of formal and social exchanges.	**C1 Operational Proficiency** The speaker can: ■ give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on complex subjects, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. ■ easily keep up with the debate, even on abstract, complex, unfamiliar topics. ■ argue a formal position convincingly, responding to questions and comments and answering complex lines of counter-argument fluently, spontaneously and appropriately.	**Level 4** The speaker can speak effectively to: ■ deal with complex work tasks. ■ exchange information to fulfil complex work tasks. ■ present and respond to different lines of reasoning.
Level 1 An adult can: ■ make contributions relevant to the situation and the subject. ■ speak clearly in a way which suits the situation. ■ make requests and ask questions to obtain information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. ■ respond to questions on a range of topics. ■ express clearly statements of fact, explanations, instructions, accounts and descriptions. ■ present information and ideas in a logical sequence and include detail and develop ideas where appropriate. ■ follow and contribute to discussions on a range of straightforward topics. ■ respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions. ■ use appropriate phrases for interruption. in formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**B2 Vantage** The speaker can: ■ give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail. ■ give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples. ■ participate actively in routine and non-routine formal discussion. ■ contribute, account for and sustain his/her opinion, evaluate alternative proposals and make and respond to hypotheses.	**Level 3** The speaker can speak effectively to: ■ deal with varied work tasks. ■ ask for and provide instructions and information relating to varied work tasks. ■ contribute to varied work-related discussions. ■ exchange opinions on varied work-related matters. ■ give spoken presentations on work-related topics. ■ sustain a discussion involving opinions and ideas beyond the mere exchange of facts, and support his/her views as necessary. ■ contribute to routine business discussions and present information informally at meetings.

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry 3 An adult can: - speak clearly to be heard and understood using appropriate clarity, speed and phrasing. - use formal language and register when appropriate. - respond to a range of questions about familiar topics. - express clearly statements of fact and give short explanations, accounts and descriptions. - make requests and ask questions to obtain information in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. - make contributions to discussions that are relevant to the subject. - respect the turn-taking rights of others during discussions. in familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**B1 Threshold** The speaker can: - reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within his/her field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points. - take part in routine formal discussion of familiar subjects which is conducted in clearly articulated speech in the standard dialect and which involves the exchange of factual information, receiving instructions or the discussion of solutions to practical problems.	**Level 2** The speaker can speak effectively to: - deal with routine and daily activities. - ask for information to carry out routine and daily requirements. - provide information to carry out routine and daily requirements. - establish and maintain spoken contact with others for routine purposes. - express spoken opinions on familiar and routine work and social topics.
Entry 2 An adult can: - speak clearly to be heard and understood in straightforward exchanges. - make requests and ask questions to obtain information in everyday contexts. - respond to straightforward questions. - express clearly statements of fact and short accounts and descriptions. - ask questions to clarify understanding. - make appropriate contributions to the discussion. in straightforward familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**A2 Waystage** The speaker can: - give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list. - generally follow changes of topic in formal discussion related to his/her field which is conducted slowly and clearly. - exchange relevant information and give his/her opinion on practical problems when asked directly, provided he/she receives some help with formulation and can ask for repetition of key points if necessary.	**Level 1** The speaker can: - deal with predictable day-to-day activities. - ask for information to deal with predictable day-to-day activities. - provide information to deal with predictable day-to-day activities. - carry out familiar and repetitive work tasks, including simple social exchanges. - use a well-rehearsed set of expressions and vocabulary relevant to the occupational context. - manipulate the grammar of some recurring sentence forms.
Entry 1 An adult can: - ask for instructions to be repeated if necessary. - respond to requests for personal information. - speak clearly to be heard and understood in simple exchanges. - make requests using appropriate terms. - ask questions to obtain specific information. - make statements of fact clearly - speak in simple exchanges and everyday contexts. in simple and familiar formal exchanges connected with education, training, work and social roles.	**A1 Breakthrough** The speaker can: - produce simple mainly isolated phrases about people and places. - understand questions and instructions addressed carefully and slowly to him/her and follow short, simple directions. - ask people for things, and give people things. - ask and answer questions about themselves and other people, where they live, people they know, things they have.	
Sources: QCA, *Key Skills Units 3 and 4, 2000* QCA, *National standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000*	Council of Europe, *Common European Framework, 2001*: p.58 + 75, 78, 79, 81	Languages National Training Organisation, *The National Language Standards, 2000*: p.51, 55, 60, 69, 73, 77

MAP 5: Reading scales

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Key Skills Specification Level 4 An adult can: • identify relevant sources and research information for planning purposes. • read and synthesise information by identifying the various arguments.		
Key Skills Specification Level 3 An adult can: • read and synthesise extended documents about complex subjects. • select and read material that contains the needed information. • identify accurately and compare the lines of reasoning and main points from the texts and images.	**C2 Mastery** The reader can: • understand and interpret critically virtually all forms of the written language including abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings. • understand a wide range of long and complex texts, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning.	**Level 5** The user at this level can: • *extract accurately information of a highly specialised nature from a wide range of written sources, with no more difficulty in understanding than a native speaker.* • respond appropriately to all manner of documents, including those of a complex and specialised or sensitive nature. • extract information from either a single source or a range of sources in order to complete complex occupational tasks. • make expert and sophisticated use of dictionaries and other reference sources, being quick to grasp fine distinctions. in a wide range of material including specialist, technical documents.
Level 2 An adult can: • trace and understand the main events of continuous descriptive, explanatory and persuasive texts. • identify the purpose of a text and infer meaning which is not explicit. • identify the main points and specific detail. • read an argument and identify the points of view. • read critically to evaluate and compare information, ideas and opinions from different sources. • use organisation features and systems to locate texts and information. • use different reading strategies to find and obtain information, *eg skimming, scanning, detailed reading.* • summarise information from longer documents. • read and understand technical vocabulary. • use reference materials to find the meanings of unfamiliar words. in a wide range of text types.	**C1 Operational Proficiency** The reader can: • understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of specialty, provided s/he can reread difficult sections. • understand in detail a wide range of lengthy, complex texts likely to be encountered in social, professional or academic life, identifying finer points of detail including attitudes and implied as well as stated opinions.	**Level 4** The user at this level: • can deal with most texts, both general and technical, relating to every expected type of work situation. • can extract detailed information promptly from texts of a routine nature. • can reliably deal with the most complex material within his/her own field. • can scan complex texts rapidly in order find relevant information. • can 'read between the lines' in order to draw inferences and conclusions from texts where analyses and opinions are implicit rather than explicit. • may need to be sensitive to the cultural context or stylistic conventions of the text. • can make expert and sophisticated use of dictionaries and other reference sources. in all manner of documents, including those of a complex or sensitive nature enabling him/her to carry out responsible tasks.
Level 1 An adult can: • trace and understand the main events of continuous descriptive, explanatory and persuasive texts. • recognise how language and other textual features are used to achieve different purposes, eg to *instruct, explain, describe, persuade.* • identify the main points and specific detail, and infer meaning from images which is not explicit in the text. • use organisation and structural features to locate information, *eg contents, index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs.* • use different reading strategies to find and obtain information. • use reference material to find the meaning of unfamiliar words. in reports, instructional, explanatory and persuasive texts.	**B2 Vantage** The reader can: • read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. • read with a broad reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low frequency idioms. • scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details. • obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialised sources within his/her field. • understand specialised articles outside his/her field, provided he/she can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology.	**Level 3** The user at this level: • can deal with most texts, both general and technical, relating to routine work situations. • can operate in a work situation in which the foreign language is the normal medium of communication, as well as handling incoming documents from an external foreign language source. • can scan texts for required details and bring together information, ideas and opinions from different parts of the text in order to draw appropriate conclusions. in documents with a variety of formats and registers, dealing with topics of a mainly familiar nature and whose content is mainly literal, though occasional implicit meaning might need to be extracted.

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry 3 An adult can: ■ trace and understand the main events of chronological, continuous descriptive and explanatory texts of more than one paragraph. ■ recognise the different purposes of texts at this level. ■ recognise and understand the organisational features and typical language of instructional texts, eg *use of imperatives/second person*. ■ understand the main points and ideas and predict words from context. ■ understand and use organisational features to locate information, eg *contents, index, menus*. ■ skim read the title, headings and illustrations to decide if material is of interest. ■ scan texts to locate information. ■ obtain specific information through detailed reading. ■ relate an image to print and use it to obtain meaning. ■ recognise and understand relevant specialist key words. ■ read and understand words and phrases commonly used on forms. ■ use a dictionary to find the meaning of unfamiliar words. ■ use first and second place letter to find and sequence words in alphabetical order. in texts such as forms, notes, records, e-mails, narratives, letters, diagrams, simple instructions, short reports.	**B1 Threshold** The reader can: ■ read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension. ■ scan longer texts in order to locate desired information, and gather information from different parts of a text, or from different texts in order to fulfil a specific task. ■ identify the main conclusions in clearly signalled argumentative texts. ■ recognise the line of argument in the treatment of the issue presented, though not necessarily in detail.	**Level 2** The user at this level: ■ can understand texts on familiar, routine matters, and obtain both specific details and the gist of written and printed communications of a more extended nature than at level 1. ■ can reliably advise on the content of messages and documents. ■ can handle material containing both facts and opinions. ■ has sufficient grasp of sentence structure to understand meaning beyond that signalled by familiar set phrases. ■ can demonstrate the ability to skim and scan longer texts to pick out items relevant to his/her task or appreciate the overall gist. ■ can use a dictionary or similar reference source, demonstrating enough grammatical knowledge to see the connection between a text word and its dictionary entry form. in public and work-related signs and notices, straightforward general and work-related articles, reports and correspondence, compressed texts on routine familiar topics, and simple journalistic sources.
Entry 2 An adult can: ■ trace and understand the main events of chronological and instructional texts. ■ recognise the different purposes of texts at this level. ■ identify common sources of information. ■ use illustrations and captions to locate information. ■ read and understand words on forms related to personal information, eg *first name, surname, address, postcode, age, date of birth*. ■ recognise high frequency words and words with common spelling patterns. ■ use phonic and graphic knowledge to decode words. ■ use a simplified dictionary to find the meaning of unfamiliar words. ■ use initial letters to find and sequence words in alphabetical order. in texts such as public signs and notices, lists, forms, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives, letters and diagrams.	**A2 Waystage** The reader can understand: ■ short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consist of high frequency everyday or job-related language. ■ short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.	**Level 1** The user at this level: ■ can understand simple texts on familiar, everyday matters, and obtain specific details about such matters from signs, notices and other everyday sources. ■ can handle material consisting mainly of high frequency daily or job-related language. ■ can identify key points from a range of simple written or printed material whose overall context was clear, and convey to others or act appropriately on, such information. ■ can use a dictionary or similar reference source, though not necessarily to locate variant forms (eg verb forms differing markedly from the infinitive).
Entry 1 An adult can: ■ follow a short narrative on a familiar topic or experience. ■ recognise the different purposes of texts at this level. ■ possess a limited, meaningful sight vocabulary of words, signs and symbols. ■ decode simple, regular words. ■ recognise the letters of the alphabet in both upper and lower case. in texts such as public signs and notices, lists, forms, records, simple narratives.	**A1 Breakthrough** The reader can understand: ■ very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.	
Sources: QCA, *Key Skills Units 3 and 4, 2000* QCA, *National standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000*	Council of Europe, *Common European Framework, 2001:* p.58 + 75, 78, 79, 81	Languages National Training Organisation, *The National Language Standards, 2000:* p.51, 55, 60, 69, 73, 77

MAP 6: Writing scales

National Language Standards

Level 5
The writer can effectively:
- use the written form at the *highest professional, commercial or administrative levels.*
- write highly-specialised texts.
- compile reports and produce technical specifications and product literature to a publishable standard.
- exchange highly specialised and complex correspondence.
- present and debate written arguments on complex matters, using language to persuasive effect.
- write texts intended for publication.
- write with fluency and sensitivity on a wide range of matters, using a number of different registers.

Level 4
The writer can effectively:
- deal with complex work tasks.
- exchange correspondence using language of varied complexity and technicality.
- compile reports, draft product information and write with some fluency on a variety of matters.
- convey information, ideas and opinions in writing.
- use a wide range of vocabulary and a secure grasp of grammar to ensure that his/her written production is both accurate and appropriate.
- write for different audiences, showing sensitivity to the situation as necessary.

Level 3
The writer can effectively:
- deal with varied work tasks.
- write correspondence to deal with a variety of factual and expressive requirements.
- write factual and expressive summaries to fulfil varied work requirements.
- produce written accounts, containing both factual information and opinions, with appropriate content and organisation.
- produce writing of varying lengths and for varying purposes, with some degree of facility in adapting writing within a familiar range of styles and subject matter to different readerships.
- write with a high degree of accuracy within this textual range, although having regular recourse to routine reference sources to do so.

Common European Framework

C2 Mastery
The writer:
- write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
- produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works.
- provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.

C1 Operational Proficiency
The writer:
- can write clear, well-structured texts on complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
- can express him/herself with clarity and precision, relating to the addressee flexibly and effectively.
- layout, paragraphing and punctuation are consistent and helpful.
- spelling is accurate, apart from occasional slips of the pen.

B2 Vantage
The writer:
- can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.
- can express news and views effectively in writing and relate to those of others.
- produce clearly intelligible continuous writing which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions.
- accurate but may show signs of mother tongue influence.
- can write an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.
- evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.

National standards for adult literacy

Key Skills Specification Level 4
An adult can
- establish opportunities for writing over an extended period of time.
- write extended documents, structuring the material and presenting arguments and information in a logical sequence, ensuring that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate.
- organise and clearly present relevant information, illustrating by drawing comparisons, providing examples that relate to the interests of the reader(s) and using images to illustrate complex points.

Key Skills Specification Level 3
An adult can:
- write different types of documents about complex subjects.
- select and use a style of writing that is appropriate to the purpose and complex subject matter.
- organise relevant information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary when appropriate.
- ensure that his/her text is legible, and the spelling, grammar and punctuation accurate, so that the meaning is clear.
- synthesis the key information in a form that is relevant to the reader's purpose.

Level 2
An adult can:
- plan and draft writing.
- judge how much to write and the level of detail to include.
- present information and ideas in a logical or persuasive sequence, using paragraphs where appropriate.
- use format and structure to organise writing for different purposes.
- use formal and informal language appropriate to purpose and audience.
- use different styles of writing for different purposes, eg *persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, technical vocabulary.*
- construct complex sentences.
- use correct grammar, eg *subject-verb agreement, correct and consistent use of tense.*
- use pronouns so that their meaning is clear.
- punctuate sentences correctly and use punctuation accurately, eg *commas, apostrophes, inverted commas.*
- spell correctly words used most often in work, studies and daily life, including familiar technical words.
- proof-read and revise writing for accuracy and meaning.
- produce legible text.
- in a wide range of documents.

Level 1
An adult can:
- plan and draft writing.
- judge how much to write and the level of detail to include.
- present information in a logical sequence, using paragraphs where appropriate.
- use language suitable for purpose and audience.
- use format and structure for different purposes.
- write in complete sentences.
- use correct grammar, eg *subject-verb agreement, correct use of tense.*
- punctuate sentences correctly and use punctuation so that meaning is clear.
- spell correctly words used most often in work, studies and daily life.
- proof-read and revise writing for accuracy and meaning.
- in documents such as forms, records, e-mails, letters, narratives, instructions, reports, explanations.

National standards for adult literacy	Common European Framework	National Language Standards
Entry 3 — An adult can: • write to communicate information and opinions with some adaptation to the intended audience. • write a letter to a local newspaper, magazine or newsletter. • write a short memo or letter to colleagues. • write down directions. • plan and draft writing. • organise writing in short paragraphs. • sequence chronological writing. • write in complete sentences. • use correct basic grammar, eg *appropriate verb tense, subject–verb agreement.* • use punctuation correctly, eg *capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks.* • spell correctly common words and relevant key words for work and special interest. • proof-read and correct writing for grammar and spelling. • produce legible text. • use a dictionary to find word meanings and spellings. in documents such as forms, notes, records, e-mails, letters, narratives, simple instructions, short reports.	**B1 Threshold** — The writer: • can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. • can convey information and ideas on abstract as well as concrete topics, check information and ask about or explain problems with reasonable precision. • can write personal letters and notes asking for or conveying simple information of immediate relevance, getting across the point he/she feels to be important. • can produce clearly intelligible continuous writing which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions. • spelling, punctuation and layout are accurate enough to be followed most of the time.	**Level 2** — The writer can effectively: • deal with routine and daily activities. • compile routine records using set phrases and structures. • compose notes and short messages to fulfil routine and daily requirements. • compose correspondence using set phrases and structures. • write simple letters, faxes and e-mails on familiar subjects, using largely standard formats and language. • produce sequences of statements to explain simple operations or convey instructions. • produce continuous short texts with linked sentences to report events and set out simple ideas. • produce correct text independently, combining mainly set phrases and familiar language which he/she can adapt using simple grammatical manipulation.
Entry 2 — An adult can: • write a message to a colleague on work issues. • write a brief letter or postcard. • use written words and phrases to record or present information. • construct simple and compound sentences, using conjunctions to connect two clauses, eg *as, and, but.* • use adjectives. • use punctuation correctly, eg *capital letters, full stops and question marks.* • use a capital letter for proper nouns. • spell correctly the majority of personal details and familiar common words. • produce legible text. • use a simplified dictionary to find meanings and spell words. in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records, e-mails, simple narratives.	**A2 Waystage** — The writer: • write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like *and, but* and *because.* • write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need. • copy short sentences on everyday subjects, eg directions how to get somewhere. • write with reasonable phonetic accuracy (but not necessarily fully standard spelling) short words that are in his/her oral vocabulary. • write short, simple formulaic notes relating to matters in areas of immediate need. • write very simple personal letters expressing thanks and apology. • take a short, simple message provided he/she can ask for repetition and reformulation.	**Level 1** — The writer can effectively: • deal with predictable day-to-day activities. • write down routine facts and data related to predictable day-to-day activities. • write simple messages. • use the written form of the language in a limited range of standard formats, eg filing in standard forms or composing standard letters using stock phrases and formats. • use a small number of memorised sentences and individual words and set phrases, which he/she can substitute to adapt existing simple texts.
Entry 1 — An adult can: • write his/her own name and address on an official form/for an employer. • write a short message to a family member, partner, flatmate or friend. • write greetings cards accurately. • use written words and phrases to record or present information. • construct a simple sentence • punctuate a simple sentence with a capital letter and full stop. • use a capital letter for personal pronoun 'I'. • spell correctly some personal key words and familiar words. • write the letters of the alphabet using upper and lower case. in documents such as forms, lists, messages, notes, records	**A1 Breakthrough** — The writer can: • write simple isolated phrases and sentences. • ask for or pass on personal details in written form. • copy familiar words and short phrases, eg simple signs or instructions, names of everyday objects, names of shops and set phrases used regularly. • spell his/her address, nationality and other personal details. • write numbers and dates, own name, nationality, address, age, date of birth or arrival in the country, etc such as on a hotel registration form.	
Sources: QCA, *Key Skills Units 3 and 4, 2000* QCA, *National standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000*	Council of Europe, *Common European Framework, 2001:* p.61 + 62, 84, 118	Languages National Training Organisation, *The National Language Standards, 2000:* p.107, 111, 116, 121, 126

Section 4
Next steps

4.1
Uses of the maps

To date most use has been made of Map 1, the overall alignment of the different scales to the NQF. Map 1 has enabled QCA to cross refer the levels to which awarding bodies said their ESOL qualifications were mapped, usually from the *Common European Framework* and/or the *National Language Standards*, to the NQF.

In order to do this with some confidence it was necessary to have the underpinning detailed mapping which is provided by Maps 2 to 6. These maps have demonstrated that the skills alignments across the scales are robust. Responses to the consultation on the draft report showed that people welcomed the precise and detailed nature of the mapping of language skills, and the fact that it is possible to track back the exact source of the descriptors through the references at the bottom of Maps 2 to 6.

A further outcome of the mapping has been that it is now possible to indicate some broad equivalence between accredited ESOL qualifications and other qualifications in English which are aimed primarily at native speakers. Qualifications in English language placed at the same level in the NQF by application of Map 1 can be regarded as being broadly equivalent in terms of level of language skills, irrespective of their client groups.

It is anticipated that this will assist in making progression in English language much clearer to a wider group of users than in the past.

Some other applications of the maps for different users are suggested below.

- **Teachers** can refer to the levels and descriptors of language proficiency as a guide when placing students on programmes, planning their achievement targets, and advising them on the choice of qualifications at appropriate levels. They can also use the level descriptors for the internal evaluation of students' progression and for planning courses in conjunction with the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum*.

- **Learners and language users** can refer to the scales to assess their own language progress and targets in conjunction with the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum. Working with a tutor, learners can define the language levels of their targets, goals and activities. An example of this can be found in the *European Language Portfolio* (CILT/LNTO 2002), in which learners can use excerpts from the *National Language Standards* and the *Common European Framework* to record their own language-learning progress, experience and targets, aligning their achievement against national and international standards, as a step towards managing their own learning.

- **Course planners** can use the scales to define levels of difficulty, to identify suitable texts, tasks and exercises, and to provide guidance for the coverage of skills and content.

- **Admissions tutors** can define the language requirement of educational courses by reference to the standards identified by the levels. In particular, English-language entry requirements for Further and Higher Education can be set by determining qualifications at the appropriate NQF level. Tutors will also be able to locate national and international qualifications on the maps and so decide whether any qualification that claims alignment to any of the scales fulfils their requirements.

- **Employers** will find the competency or 'can-do' statements valuable in forming a view of what recruits and employees should be able to do in the English language, given their formal language qualifications. So, for example, an employer can define the target language level for any job their company, and applicants' language qualifications can be matched against these levels as part of the short-listing procedure. An important consideration, however, will be the 'currency' of the qualification: if it were awarded more than a year or so previously, the employer would normally expect evidence of language maintenance in the workplace or through refresher courses.

- **Awarding bodies** can use the maps to help them identify the levels of their existing qualifications, and as a starting point when designing new ones. The scales can also be used to inform the setting of papers at appropriate levels of challenge and to help define appropriate tasks for testing the chosen skills at a particular NQF level.

- **Publishers** commissioning materials to support teaching and learning will also find the maps helpful to refer writers to for targeting texts, tasks and activities to particular levels and skills.

4.2 Future plans and possibilities

The uses above are merely illustrative applications. Different users are likely to find other applications over time. Possible spin-off developments in the future could include:

- illustrating the skills described in the maps with exemplars of expected inputs (texts that learners at each level might be expected to handle) and outputs (samples of learners' spoken and written performance at each level). A follow-up project looking at exemplars for writing from Entry 1 to Level 2 is currently underway;

- extending the work from adult learning to the learning of English by secondary and primary school age groups, which would require consideration of issues

of maturity and cognitive development. Each year there are many young learners who enter the UK school system at different points, with little or no English, suggesting an on-going need for appropriate levels, descriptors and possibly qualifications for these age groups;

- building on the cross-boundary nature of this work, which links different sectors of education and language use: adult native-speaker literacy and communication, English as a second/additional language, English as a foreign language, and Modern Foreign Languages. It is anticipated that in the second round of accreditation of adult literacy and ESOL qualifications, the mapping will extend common ground and help to establish more secure equivalence of qualifications in English;

- bringing English and MFL specialists together to consider whether application of the descriptions in the maps could help develop a system of equivalence between qualifications in English in England and qualifications in other modern languages;

- investigating whether the alignment of levels described in this report could be applied to some of the other community languages spoken in England, to facilitate the development of a wider spectrum of qualifications and enable those speakers to gain credit for their first language skills.

Section 5 Summary and conclusions

At the start of this investigation several research questions were posed (page 7), each of which has been addressed in the course of the report.

i) Is it possible to align the various commonly-used scales for describing language proficiency and so enable some cross reference between them?

    Yes: the maps included in this report enable users to see the alignment of levels across all of the scales that are commonly used in the UK and in Europe.

ii) Is it possible to align other scales with the adult literacy standards and the *Key Skills Communication Specifications* and hence to the NQF?

    Yes: the user can now align the levels of all the commonly used scales to the National qualifications framework via the maps.

iii) Is it possible to align language scales specifically designed to describe performance in second or other languages to, the *Standards* and *Specifications* designed for all speakers living, studying and working in this country, thus identifying some equivalence between different scales with different purposes and from different sectors?

Yes: although the scales investigated were originally designed for different purposes and different language sectors, it has been possible to align their levels through the can-do statements, which were found to share underlying principles of construction and description.

iv) Given that these alignments could be made, would it be possible to use them to assign qualifications in English from various sectors to levels in the *national qualifications framework*, thus relating them more closely to the mainstream qualifications system of the UK whether were designed for first language speakers or speakers of other languages?

Yes: the alignments illustrated in this report have enabled QCA and the major awarding bodies to assign NQF levels to a range of qualifications in the EFL/ESOL/EAL sectors, and these awards are now being offered with assigned NQF levels. In the second round of accreditation in 2004, the existence of the maps alongside the ESOL curriculum will enable awarding bodies to develop direct linkages between the content and coverage in qualifications for ESOL candidates, the curriculum and the NQF assigned level.

In addition:

- the maps offer greater detail about the language skills associated with each level than has been available in the past for those designing qualifications in English language, literacy or communication primarily for native speakers;

- the effect should be that in future these qualifications will reflect this increased shared knowledge of what constitutes performance in English at different levels;

- this should encourage confidence that there is genuine equivalence between adult literacy and ESOL qualifications in terms of level of demand, although they may be oriented to the needs of different client groups.

Finally, it is hoped that, longer term, this work will underpin widespread understanding and acceptance of the value of accredited qualifications for all learners of English and that possession of these qualifications will help all native speakers and speakers of English as a second language to progress, and take full advantage of the opportunities for education and employment in this country.

Appendix
List of standards, scales and associated literature

1   **The national qualifications framework**
    QCA, CCEA, ACCAC, 2000

2   **The national standards for adult literacy**
    QCA, 2000

3   **Key Skills Specifications**
    QCA, CCEA, ACCAC, 1999 and 2000

4   **A language in common: assessing English as an additional language**
    QCA, 2000

5   **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages:
    Learning, teaching, assessment**
    Council of Europe/Cambridge University Press, 2001

    and

    The European Language Portfolio
    Council of Europe/Languages National Training Organisation/Centre for Information
    on Language Teaching and Research, 2002

6   **The National Language Standards 2000**
    Languages National Training Organisation, 2000

    and

    The National Language Standards in Action,
    Languages National Training Organisation, 2001

7   **The ALTE Framework**
    The Association of Language Testers in Europe, 2001

8   **The English-Speaking Union Framework**
    Longman/English-Speaking Union, 1989

9   **Adult ESOL Core Curriculum**
    The Basic Skills Agency/Department for Education and Skills, 2002

10 **Adult Literacy Core Curriculum: including spoken communication**
    The Basic Skills Agency/Department for Education and Skills, 2001

Key to abbreviations

ABEEB	Association of British ESOL Examining Boards
ACCAC	Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales
ALTE	Association of Language Testers in Europe
BSA	Basic Skills Agency
CCEA (now CEA)	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CEF	Common European Framework
CILT	Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESU	English-Speaking Union
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
LNTO	Languages National Training Organisation
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NQF	National qualifications framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

pull-out-and-keep poster
Pathways to Proficiency:
Mapping different language assessment scales
The alignment of language proficiency scales

Mapping different language assessment scales

QCA				Council of Europe Framework [5]	National Language Standards [6]
National qualifications framework [1]	National standards for adult literacy [2]	Key Skills [3]	National curriculum [4]		
Level 5		(Level 5)			
Level 4		Level 4	National curriculum levels 8 ↑ ↓ 2	(C2.2)	
Level 3		Level 3		C2 Mastery	Level 5
Level 2	Level 2	Level 2		C1 Operational Proficiency	Level 4
Level 1	Level 1	Level 1		B2 Vantage	Level 3
Entry level	Entry level 3			B1 Threshold	Level 2
	Entry level 2			A2 Waystage	Level 1
	Entry level 1		Level 1 Secure/Threshold	A1 Breakthrough	(Entry)
Pre-entry [7]			EAL Step 2		
			EAL Step 1		

Notes:

1   In the national qualifications framework, levels 4 and 5 represent higher-level qualifications, A levels are at level 3, GCSE grades A-C at level 2 and GCSE grades D-G at level 1.

2   Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, national standards for adult literacy and numeracy, 2000: British national standards published as part of the adult basic skills strategy in order to specify the full range of skills required for an adult to communicate confidently, effectively and efficiently.

3   Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Key Skills Units, 2000: These specify a range of key skills, including communication, required to operate effectively at the respective levels.

4   Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, A language in common, 2000: National guidance relating to performance of speakers of English as an Additional Language (EAL) within the school-based UK national curriculum.

5   Council of Europe, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Cambridge University Press, 2001: Descriptions of six levels of foreign language proficiency offered as international standards.

6   Languages National Training Organisation, The National Language Standards, 2000: British national standards for the vocational use of foreign languages (including English as a Foreign Language).

7   There are no qualifications at pre-entry level; however the Pre-entry Curriculum Framework for literacy and numeracy provides clear milestones to enable learners to progress towards Entry 1, accreditation at pre-entry level is available if appropriate to the learner.

The alignment of language proficiency scales

Purpose

The map shows the alignment of the principal scales used to describe adult literacy and English language proficiency. All the scales are aligned to the levels of the UK *national qualifications framework* (NQF). The levels of the NQF apply to all qualifications in the United Kingdom and are not restricted to languages.

Origin

The map, and the research which underpinned it, was originally commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 2001 as a tool to enable ESOL qualifications to be accredited through alignment to the *national qualifications framework*. The accreditation took place from January to August 2002. The majority of English language qualifications offered by British awarding bodies are aligned to one or more of the scales on Map 1. In this way, qualifications in English as a second, additional or foreign language can be aligned to the *national qualifications framework*.

Scales

The map aligns five scales of adult literacy, communication and English to the *national qualifications framework*. Brief details of all of these scales are given beneath the map.

Uses

The map is relevant to a range of groups concerned with English language proficiency:

- **Teachers** will find the maps useful when placing students on programmes and planning their achievement targets, and in advising them on appropriate qualifications.

- **Learners** can refer to the scales to assess their own language progress and targets.

- **Awarding bodies** can use the maps to identify the levels of their existing qualifications, and as a starting point when designing new ones, and examiners can use the scales to inform the setting of papers at appropriate levels of challenge.

- **Admissions tutors** can define the English language requirement of educational courses by reference to the standards identified by the levels.

- **Employers** will find the competency or 'can-do' statements valuable in forming a view of what recruits and employees should be able to do in English, given their formal language qualifications.

- **Education materials writers** and **course planners** can use the scales to define levels of difficulty, to identify suitable texts, tasks and exercises, and to provide guidance for the coverage of skills and content.

Further information

A copy of the report from which the map is taken can be obtained from: QCA Publications, PO Box 99, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 25N, order line 01787 88 4444. Details of all publications can be found at: http://www.qca.org.uk/cgi-bin/qcashop.

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