

Guidelines

# Level definitions for the Department of Education and Science VEC adult literacy returns



**NALA**

**National Adult Literacy Agency**  
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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# 1. Introduction

A key element of accountability in adult literacy is the annual Department of Education and Science (DES) VEC adult literacy returns, through which VECs report on activities and provide statistics on such issues as participation, services and accreditation, as well as assessments of level. These guidelines are intended to support the change in the definition of levels used to record and report on activity and participation in VEC adult literacy services in 2008 and onwards.

At the request of the DES, the Mapping the Learning Journey (MLJ) Mainstreaming Steering Committee submitted a report entitled 'Exploring Assessment for Accountability Purposes in Adult Literacy' in February 2007. This report recommended that the DES levels used in the VEC adult literacy return forms should be updated.

The DES have concluded that the current level descriptors used in the VEC adult literacy returns are no longer suitable and a more appropriate reference is to the National Framework of Qualifications and the national standards of the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) Levels 1-3. The DES commissioned NALA to produce guidelines to support this change, in consultation with the MLJ Mainstreaming Steering Committee and FETAC.

In recognition of the planning and preparation implications for VEC reporting systems, these guidelines are produced in September 2007, and supported by a briefing session for Adult Education Officers (AEOs) and Adult Literacy Organiser (ALOs).

Following this introduction:

- Section 2 of the guidelines sets out the background and the context for change.
- Section 3 outlines the overarching National Framework of Qualifications (NFO) and the development of standards and awards by FETAC.
- Section 4 describes assessment practices in adult literacy, and identifies key developments including MLJ and Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE) programmes. It also makes connections between these developments and the overarching National Framework of Qualifications and FETAC.
- Section 5 sets out the definitions of levels to be used in VEC adult literacy returns for 2008 and afterwards.

- Section 6 provides guidelines to support the assignment of levels by VECs for the purposes of reporting adult literacy activity and participation to the DES, including indicative level summaries.
- Section 7 is a glossary to support the reader.

## 2. Background

There has been significant development of adult literacy policy and services since the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1997 by the Organisation For Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)<sup>1</sup>. This research identified 1 in 4 of Irish adults as being at the lowest of the five literacy levels surveyed. The publication of IALS moved adult literacy towards the forefront of public policy and onto the agenda for national planning. The DES produced the first White Paper on Adult Education, Learning for Life, in 2000, identifying adult literacy as a top priority in adult education, and set out a National Adult Literacy Programme which laid out future priorities. This was supported by national planning policy including the National Development Plan 2000-2006, and the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion.

Adult literacy was the subject of a dedicated report from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science ‘Report on adult literacy’ (May 2006), and the issue remains a consistent feature of national plans.

**Towards 2016**, the ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 -2015, prioritises adult literacy in the area of adult education. It references the expanding role of adult literacy development, family literacy, the implementation plan of the national adult literacy advisory group published by NALA<sup>2</sup> and the role of the VECs, and commits to considering appropriate support structures in this area and to expanding participation.

**The National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013** allocates €2.2 billion for the further education sub-programme with priorities on addressing low literacy levels in the adult population and the large number who have not completed upper secondary education. The NDP commits to continued support for the Workplace Basic Education Fund and to addressing low qualification levels in the workforce.

**The National Skills Strategy**, as presented in the 5th Report from the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs 2007, entitled ‘Tomorrows Skills’, outlines skill needs for a competitive economy up to 2020. It identifies

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1 International Adult Literacy Survey, OECD 1997

2 This refers to the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan (NALA, 2004).



targets including the upskilling of 70,000 individuals from NQF levels 1 and 2 to level 3, and of 260,000 individuals from level 3 up to levels 4 and 5. It also recommends that literacy should be prioritised and embedded into all publicly funded education and training provision in so far as possible.

### **The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAP Incl)**

set a target to reduce the proportion of the population aged between 16 and 64, with restricted literacy to 10%-15% by 2016.

Funding for adult literacy has increased considerably, and the adult literacy budget totalled €26 million in 2007, compared to €1.1 million in 1998. People who wish to develop their literacy and numeracy skills have a broader range of options available. Participation in VEC adult literacy services increased from 5,000 to 40,000 students over the same period. There have also been a number of qualitative improvements in the service provided. The VEC adult literacy services now provide a range of services including 1:1 tuition, group tuition, Family Literacy, Return to Education programmes for Community Employment (CE) participants, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), ITABE, and workplace basic education programmes.

Other VEC programmes provide literacy, either as a discrete or integral element, including the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC), Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) and Youthreach programmes. Literacy is also provided in many other settings and contexts, including services provided by FAS (for example Community Training Centres and the Skills for Work programme), the Prison Education Service, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Congress Centres, local authorities, the National Learning Network, community development and education, and NALA distance education initiatives.

With the increases in public attention, funding, services available and participation, there is a growing imperative to inform future policy development and a greater focus on accountability. There are medium term plans for the development of a Further Education Management Information System (FEMIS), as outlined in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (page 250). This system would combine current reporting systems and streamline reporting from statutory providers to the DES in electronic format. It may also address concerns that current systems are not sufficiently robust to comprehensively collect and report on the range of data needed to identify the progress of literacy students. A key element of accountability in adult literacy is the annual VEC adult literacy returns, through which VECs report on activities and provide statistics on such issues as participation, services and accreditation, as well as assessments of level.

These guidelines are an effort to further enhance these reports. The recent introduction of ITABE, with a pre-course and post course assessment process, is another example of the increased focus on accountability.

### **3. Statutory developments in qualifications and standards**

There have been a number of landmark developments in assessment and certification of learning in recent years. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 set out a structure for the development, recognition and award of education and training qualifications in the state.

#### **The National Framework of Qualifications - NFQ**

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was established in 2001 under the Qualifications Act. One of its primary functions is to establish and maintain the National Framework of Qualifications. The National Framework of Qualifications is a 10 level framework of standards for accreditation purposes, launched in October 2003. It is a system that incorporates awards made for all kinds of learning, wherever it is gained.

Each level has a specified level indicator, setting out a range of standards according to eight sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence as defined by the NQAI. For example, Doctorate awards are at Level 10, Honours Degrees at levels 8 and Higher Certificates (such as the Higher Certificate in Literacy Development) are at Level 6. The previous NCVA National Foundation Certificate and the Junior Certificate awards have been placed at Level 3, and Levels 1 and 2 are new levels.

#### **FETAC**

The Qualifications Act also provided for the establishment of the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) as the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland. FETAC gives people the opportunity to gain certification for learning in education or training centres, in the work place and in the community and has specific responsibilities for the development and certification of awards at Levels 1 to 6. FETAC have developed a range of processes with stakeholders and providers, including quality assurance, standard development and programme validation, to allow for awards to be made at the various levels. While awards continue to be made at levels 3 to 6, the first awards at level 1 and 2 are expected to be made in 2008.



With the availability of awards at the new levels 1 and 2, it is expected that the numbers of students participating in certified courses, as well as the numbers achieving awards, in adult literacy services will increase from 2008 onwards. This information will contribute significantly to accountability as well as to an understanding of progression within adult literacy generally. However, accreditation is not a requirement of participation in adult literacy, and it is vital that participants continue to take part in adult literacy learning activities with an option of accreditation.

**Table 1 NFQ sub-strands of Knowledge Skill and Competence at levels 1, 2 and 3**

<b>Sub-strands of knowledge, skill and competence</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>
Knowledge - Breadth	Elementary knowledge	Knowledge that is narrow in range	Knowledge moderately broad in range
Knowledge - Kind	Demonstrable by recognition or recall	Concrete in reference and basic in comprehension	Mainly concrete in reference and with some comprehension of relationship between knowledge elements
Know-how and skill - Range	Demonstrate basic practical skills, and carry out directed activity using basic tools	Demonstrate limited range of basic practical skills, including the use of relevant tools	Demonstrate a limited range of practical and cognitive skills and tools
Know-how and skill - Selectivity	Perform processes that are repetitive and predictable	Perform a sequence of routine tasks given clear direction	Select from a limited range of varied procedures and apply known solutions to a limited range of predictable problems
Competence - Context	Act in closely defined and highly structured contexts	Act in a limited range of predictable and structured contexts	Act within a limited range of contexts
Competence – Role	Act in a limited range of roles	Act in a range of roles under direction	Act under direction with limited autonomy; function within familiar, homogeneous groups
<i>Competence – Learning to Learn</i>	Learn to sequence learning tasks; learn to access and use a range of learning resources	Learn to learn in a disciplined manner in a well-structured and supervised environment	Learn to learn within a managed environment
Competence – Insight	Begin to demonstrate awareness of independent role for self	Demonstrate awareness of independent role for self	Assume limited responsibility for consistency of self-understanding and behaviour





## 4. Assessment in adult literacy practice

### Initial Assessment

There is no nationally consistent formal procedure for initial assessment currently in use in adult literacy services, and practice varies. A wide variety of tools and materials are used<sup>3</sup> and Adult Literacy Organisers (ALOs) have developed their own processes. There is however a common approach in terms of the ethos and principles underlying initial assessment as informal, adult friendly, and carried out by initial interview with the ALO. “Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work”<sup>4</sup> provides a useful statement of the underlying principles and the philosophies that inform practice.

Initial assessment practice typically:

- is based on the informed judgement of the ALO;
- identifies the motivation of the student and their reasons for coming to a literacy service;
- provides an initial informal assessment of literacy need in terms of reading, writing, and spelling, and often numeracy, computer skills and English For Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- identifies what the student can do, and what they would like to do;
- assists the matching of students to group or 1:1 tuition appropriate to the availability, times, level, interests, and comfort of the student as far as possible;
- supports tutors in terms of a starting point and indications about students levels, goals and interests, and contributes to individual learning plans; and
- gathers statistical information and profile required by the VEC and DES, and supports the assignment of level within the VEC annual adult literacy returns.

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3 including the Basic Skills Agency initial assessment tools, Schonell Reading and Spelling tests, Rosenthal diagnostic tools, and word lists including Dolch Lists.

4 NALA 2005

## **Assessment for teaching and learning purposes - Formative assessment**

Formative assessment is an integral part of literacy practice and is essential to the learner centered ethos that characterises literacy services. Formative assessment is a core feature of training programmes for literacy practitioners. Mapping the Learning Journey (MLJ) was introduced as a framework to capture and support formative assessment for teaching and learning purposes, based on practice in the field and international research.

MLJ is an assessment framework for teaching and learning developed by NALA between 2000 and 2003. It involved significant research, piloting and consultation, and is being mainstreamed by 30 VEC adult literacy services, prison education services and FAS CTCs. MLJ has 4 cornerstones. One of these relates to knowledge and skill, while the other three cornerstones (critical awareness, range of applications, and fluency and independence) address issues of confidence and personal development so integral to adult literacy development. While MLJ provides a system for identifying and recording progress in relation to teaching and learning, it was not designed for accountability or accreditation purposes and is not compatible as it stands with such a purpose.

Supports for curriculum development and assessment practice are integrated into the professional qualifications and training for ALOs and other literacy practitioners through the NALA/Waterford Institute of Technology Accreditation Project, as well as adult education courses and qualifications in universities such as NUI Maynooth and Dublin City University. There is also non-accredited training for literacy practitioners. For example, the 2005 ALO Forum explored capturing progress, particularly around soft skills, in adult literacy work.

## **Assessment for accreditation**

Literacy services have been involved to date in assessment for certification purposes mainly through FETAC Level 3 and previously the NCVA National Foundation Certificate (Level 3). Literacy services also prepare students for state exams including the Junior (Level 3) and Leaving Certificates (Levels 4 and 5). The latter usually in the context of consolidating literacy skills and independence and facilitating progression. The availability of certification at Levels 1 and 2 is expected to increase the numbers of students participating in programmes leading to accreditation, and all adult literacy services are expected to provide this option.



FETAC have developed processes for certification of learning that require providers to gain agreement for their quality assurance systems and validation approval for programmes. The quality assurance process includes assessment policies and procedures, including the accreditation of prior or experiential learning or APEL. Similarly, the validation process also requires providers to address assessment of learning on programmes submitted to FETAC.

### **Assessment for accountability**

Recording progress in adult literacy services involves the student, tutor and ALO, and, for accountability purposes, the adult education officer and the VEC reporting to the DES. Collating and reporting progress within the DES VEC adult literacy returns has been largely based on participation in, and achievement of, FETAC accreditation. However, there is currently no reference to the progression made by students, the inputs or services provided or the length of time involved, except in the case of the Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education (ITABE) programmes. Begun in 2006, ITABE programmes involve 6-hours literacy tuition per week for 14 weeks. The process requires a pre-programme and post-programme assessment based on detailed checklists for reading, writing, speaking and listening and numeracy, completed by the practitioner and student. The ITABE assessment checklists and guidelines reference the FETAC standards in specific areas, as well as links to MLJ. Those guidelines are therefore an excellent support in relation to assigning levels to students for the annual reporting purposes.

### **Links between the NFO, the related FETAC standards, the MLJ assessment framework and ITABE programme assessment pack.**

The relationship between the statutory frameworks of the NFO and FETAC and the assessment frameworks of MLJ and ITABE are summarised in table format on page 16/17.

There are very clear similarities between the four MLJ cornerstones and the sub-strands of Knowledge, Skill and Competence as determined by the NOAI. Table 2. below outlines how the MLJ cornerstones fit with these sub-strands.

**Table 2. Links between MLJ and the National Framework of Qualifications**

<b>Mapping the Learning Journey - Cornerstones</b>	<b>National Framework of Qualifications - Sub-strands Knowledge, Skill &amp; Competence</b>
Knowledge and Skill	Knowledge - Kind - Selectivity
Depth of Understanding and Critical Awareness	Competence - Insight - Learning to Learn
Fluency and Independence	Skills/Know-how - Selectivity - Role
Range of Application	Skills/Know-how - Range - Context

MLJ development preceded the launch of the NFQ and the development of FETAC Level 1 and 2 awards. MLJ was the main national research-based model in operation in Ireland below Level 3 while the FETAC awards were being developed, and it has directly informed that process. FETAC Level 1 and 2 minor award specifications in Reading, Writing, and Listening and Speaking match very closely to the Beginning level and Mid-level of MLJ respectively. The Upper level of MLJ operates within the range of the new Level 3, but does not completely fulfil the standards of that level. This is because the Level 3 awards are more extensive than the range of MLJ, so it is not aligned to the same extent as with Levels 1 and 2.

The development of both the MLJ and the new FETAC Levels 1 and 2 systems were informed by the views of key stakeholders, including VECs and their adult literacy services, and take into account the existing practices and policies within the Irish context, together with international and national research. MLJ does not fully meet the broad assessment criteria or evidence required by FETAC for accreditation of learning, but it can contribute to the FETAC quality assurance processes. For example, at Levels 1 and 2 students should be assessed for accreditation purposes only when they have achieved the relevant standards, and an assessment process to determine this is required.

The ITABE assessment process and guide directly references and correlates to the standards at FETAC levels 1, 2, and 3 in Reading, Writing and Speaking and listening, and Numeracy. “The checklists are broken up into levels equivalent to NFQ Levels 1 to 3”.<sup>5</sup> Hence the same comparison of level links applies with MLJ, as outlined above, in relation to FETAC. Other similarities include the use of a nine-point scale model as evident in MLJ. The evaluation of the ITABE programme noted the linkages with the MLJ and the need to highlight these further.



## 5. Definition of levels for use in VEC adult literacy returns

The previous definitions outlined by the DES up to 2007 in the adult literacy return forms used for reporting by the VEC adult literacy services were:

Level 1 = know alphabet but have difficulties with reading.

Level 2 = can read, but difficulties with writing, spelling and grammar.

Level 3 = can read and write but need improved skills due to return to learning/promotion etc.

The DES has concluded that the previous descriptors are no longer suitable and a more appropriate reference is to the National Framework of Qualifications and the national standards of FETAC Levels 1-3.

The new definitions of the three levels to be used in the VEC adult literacy returns from 2008 are:

**Table 3. New level definitions**

Level	New definitions
1.	Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 1
2.	Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 2
3.	Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 3

## 6. Guidelines

The following guidelines are outlined to support the assignment of adult literacy levels by VECs for the purposes of reporting to the DES.

**VEC adult literacy services are requested to assign a level to each participant based on the level definitions provided.** The definitions are described as standard bands up to a certain point. These bands are benchmarked against the NFQ Levels 1 to 3. Level summaries (page 16/17) and a comparative table of levels in the NFQ, FETAC standards, ITABE assessment pack and MLJ (page 16/17) are provided. Table 4 below summarises benchmarks for each level.

**Table 4. Benchmarks for the assignment of levels**

Level	Benchmarks
1. Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who are participating in programmes validated by FETAC leading to Level 1 awards.</li> <li>• Students who are participating in non-accredited programmes within the standard band of FETAC Level 1.</li> <li>• ITABE level 1.</li> <li>• MLJ beginner level.</li> <li>• Consolidation of competencies within FETAC level 1 and support for progression into other levels.</li> </ul>
2. Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who are participating in programmes validated by FETAC leading to Level 2 awards.</li> <li>• Students who are participating in non-accredited programmes within the standard band of FETAC Level 2.</li> <li>• ITABE level 2.</li> <li>• MLJ mid-level.</li> <li>• Consolidation of competencies within FETAC Level 2 and support for progression into other levels.</li> </ul>
3. Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications at Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students who are participating in programmes validated by FETAC leading to Level 3 awards.</li> <li>• Students who are participating in non-accredited programmes within the standard band of FETAC Level 3.</li> <li>• ITABE level 3.</li> <li>• MLJ upper level.</li> <li>• Consolidation of competencies within FETAC Level 3 and support for progression into other levels.</li> </ul>

**This assignment of level should be carried out by the Adult Literacy Organiser or their delegate.**

**There is no direct correlation between the new level definitions and the previous level definitions used up to 2007 or the IALS levels.** The new level definitions relate directly to NFQ levels, while the previous level



definitions used in the VEC adult literacy returns were more related to the skills of reading, writing and spelling. Neither do the new levels relate to the IALS levels used in that survey in 1995, and IALS levels are not identified as a particularly useful benchmark (see table 3 above).

**A students' right to attend for personal, family or other reasons without working towards a formal qualification at whatever level should be respected.** These new definitions of levels reference the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications. While accreditation is not a requirement of participation in adult literacy programmes, services should provide the option of appropriate accreditation to all students.

**People are not at levels, skills are.** A specific set of knowledge, skills and competence can be assessed as being at a particular level, for this purpose the levels described in the NFO. A person's sets of knowledge, skills and competence in relation to reading, writing, speaking and listening, and numeracy may all be at different levels. Adult literacy students have a range of strengths and weaknesses, and this 'spiky profile' means that a student may have identified a need in relation to writing, but may be an accomplished reader.

**The primary need of the student will be the key determinant of level.** Adult literacy students are participating in learning programmes based on their specific needs and interests. It is the set of skills and competence that the student is addressing that should be the subject of the report.

**VECs should assign one level to a student for the particular period for the purpose of the report.** Where a student is engaging in more than one learning programme, for example numeracy and reading, which are at different levels, the VEC shall assign one level for the purpose of the report. This should be based on the primary need of the student, as highlighted above. It is acknowledged that most students address a range of skills and competencies in practice, for example, reading, writing, numeracy and learning to learn. The spiky profile also suggests that these various skills can be at different levels. As in previous years, the VEC adult literacy services are asked to make an informed judgement as to the assignment of level and the appropriate provision for participants. The main focus of the learning programme and student interests are important indicators in this regard.

**For the purposes of reporting literacy activity, reference to certification received more than 5 years previously at a particular level may not be a benchmark in assigning a level.** Just as people develop skills and can learn throughout their life, skills and competences can also diminish over time, particularly where they have not been exercised.

**Table 5. A comparative table of links between NFO, FETAC, ITABE, and MLJ levels**

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>NFO level and certification available</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FETAC Level 1 Certificate in General Learning</li> <li>FETAC Level 1 Certificate in Communications</li> <li>Also component awards of the above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FETAC Level 2 Certificate in General Learning</li> <li>Also component awards of the above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FETAC Level 3 Certificate</li> <li>Junior Certificate</li> <li>Also component awards, including various Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose awards</li> </ul>
<b>Levels set by DES for VEC adult literacy returns</b>	Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications Level 1	Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications Level 2	Working towards a standard equivalent to the National Framework of Qualifications Level 3
<b>FETAC standards for each level<sup>6</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small range of elementary knowledge</li> <li>The performance under direction, of activities and processes which are repetitive and predictable</li> <li>The ability to sequence learning tasks and to use some learning resources</li> <li>Initial awareness of an independent role for self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a narrow range of basic knowledge</li> <li>the performance of a sequence of routine tasks with clear direction</li> <li>the use of basic language, concepts and equipment associated with the preferred learning area</li> <li>the ability to make straightforward choices and decisions in predictable and structured contexts and roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to perform relatively simple work related tasks.</li> <li>Confirming a minimum level of employability, while incorporating practical capabilities and understanding of theory.</li> </ul>
<b>ITABE</b>	ITABE assessment procedures and guidelines Reference NFO and FETAC Level 1, as well as MLJ beginner level.	ITABE assessment procedures and guidelines Reference NFO and FETAC Level 2, as well as MLJ mid-level.	ITABE assessment procedures and guidelines reference NFO and FETAC Level 3.
<b>MLJ levels</b>	Beginning level in the Knowledge and Skill Cornerstone comprising Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Numeracy, as well as the other Cornerstones, Critical Awareness, Range of Applications and Fluency and Independence.	Mid – level in the Knowledge and Skill Cornerstone comprising Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Numeracy, as well as the other Cornerstones, Critical Awareness, Range of Applications and Fluency and Independence.	The upper level of MLJ operates within the range of Level 3, but does not completely fulfill the standards of that level, either in terms of range or level.

6 FETAC standards for each level





**Table 6. Indicative Level Summaries<sup>7</sup>**

	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Listening and Speaking</b>	<b>Numeracy</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	At the top range of this standard band, the reader will recognise commonly used symbols, signs and words from within a personally relevant vocabulary. He/she will be aware of simple reading conventions and identification strategies.	At the top range of this standard band, the writer will be able to transcribe simple information. He/she will be capable of writing personal details and create short lists of familiar words.	At the top range of this standard band, the learner will be able to listen to obtain simple information and instructions in familiar contexts. He/she will be able to hold short conversations to express opinions, discuss personally relevant issues and exchange information.	At the top range of this standard band, the learner, with support and within a narrow range of familiar contexts, will have an elementary knowledge of quantity, number, shape, pattern and their relationship. He/she will be capable of, with appropriate use of language, identifying and constructing elementary patterns and solve problems with one or two solutions.
<b>Level 2</b>	At the top range of this standard band, the reader will be able to locate and recount simple information from short pieces of text. He/she can understand and explain common social sight words and use strategies to decipher unfamiliar words.	At the top range of this standard band, the writer will understand the difference between formal and informal writing. He/she will be able to write brief notes or messages and will understand the concept of sequence.	At the top range of this standard band, the learner will be able to ask questions to obtain information and will be able to follow verbal instructions or directions. He/she will be able to engage in conversation to express opinions and recount facts appropriate to a variety of audiences.	At the top range of this standard band, the learner will have a basic understanding of 2 & 3 dimensional shapes, numerical value, patterns and sequence. He/she will be capable of solving, with appropriate use of language, basic numerical problems and handle simple data.
<b>Level 3</b>	At the top range of this standard band, the reader will use a range of reading techniques. He/she will be able to extract information from a variety of sources, demonstrate an appropriate level of comprehension and act upon written instructions.	At the top range of this standard band, the writer will have an understanding of the use of punctuation and will be able to spell familiar and commonly used words. He/she will be capable of writing short pieces of correspondence, for both a formal and informal audience, and write short passages for the purpose of self-expression.	At the top range of this standard band, the learner will be able to engage in conversation with one or more people to obtain information or instructions. He/she will be capable of recounting information obtained in a structured way and describe an occurrence or event in a fluent manner.	At the top range of this standard band, the learner will know which mathematical operations to apply to common problems and be capable of carrying them out accurately and with confidence. He/she will understand the language of mathematics and be able to use a pocket calculator and basic measuring instruments.

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from the text developed by Terry McCann (ITABE Coordinator, IVEA) in consultation with the MLJ sub-group on assessment for accountability

## 7. Glossary and Abbreviations

**Adult Basic Education** – refers to the development of competence in adult skills that are needed to fully take part in society such as literacy and numeracy

**AEO** – Adult Education Officer

**ALO** – Adult Literacy Organiser

**ALS** – Adult Literacy Service

**AP(E)L** – Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning

**BTEI** - Back to education Initiative

**CE** – Community Employment  
– FAS employment training programmes in operation throughout Ireland

**CTC** – Community Training Centres– FAS funded training units, in different centres around Ireland, providing vocational and ABE skills to early school leavers over 18 years of age

**DES** – Department of Education & Science

**Distance education** – learning at home

**ESOL** – English for Speakers of Other Languages /English as a Second or Other Language

**Ethos** – the ideas and beliefs or a particular person or group

**Family Literacy** – improves literacy skills within the context of the family setting

**FÁS** – The Irish national employment training agency

**FEMIS** – proposed Further Education Management Information System to be developed

**FETAC** – Further Education Training Awards Council

**Framework** – The basic structure that supports something such as a building and gives it its shape

**Guiding Principles** – values

**Holistic** – dealing with or treating the whole of something or someone not just parts

**IALS**- The International Adult Literacy Survey carried out by the OECD and published in 1997

**ITABE**- Intensive Tuition in Adult Basic Education

**IVEA** – Irish Vocational Education Association representing Vocational Education Committees

**NALA** – National Adult Literacy Agency

**NALP** – National Adult Literacy Programme



**NAPS** – National Anti-Poverty Strategy – government medium term plan to tackle poverty

**NCCA** – National Council for Curriculum & Assessment

**NCGE** – National Centre for Guidance in Education

**NDP** – National Development Plan – government medium term plan for economic and social development

**NQAI** – National Qualifications Authority of Ireland – Statutory body which manages qualifications at national level

**OECD**- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

**Process** – a series of actions that you take in order to achieve a result

**Qualitative** – relating to how good something is and not how much of it there is

**Quality** – how good or bad something is good/high quality, poor/low quality

**Quantitative** – relating to quantity

**Stakeholders** – All those who have an interest in an organisation or an issue/s These may include clients, staff, government etc

**Statutory** – decided or controlled by law

**Strategy** – a plan to achieve something

**STTC- Senior Traveller Training Centres** – local organisations providing vocational education and training for adult Travellers

**Towards 2016-** a ten-year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 -2015, proposed by government and agreed by social partners, such as unions, employers and the community and voluntary sector groups

**VEC** – Vocational Education Committees – managing adult and further education at County level

**VTOS** – Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

**White paper** – Government policy document outlining the plan for the future of adult education

**WIT** – Waterford Institute of Technology – a third level educational institute which offers professional training and qualifications for adult literacy practitioners

**Youthreach** – refers to local training units, in different centres around Ireland, providing vocational and basic skills to early school leavers under 18 years of age

[www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)

## What is NALA?

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is an independent membership organisation, concerned with developing policy, advocacy, research and offering advisory services in adult literacy work in Ireland. NALA was established in 1980 and has campaigned since then for the recognition of, and response to, the adult literacy issue in Ireland.



**National Adult Literacy Agency**  
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## Useful websites

NALA [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)  
Literacy learning and tuition [www.literacytools.ie](http://www.literacytools.ie)  
The Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers [www.rug.ie](http://www.rug.ie)

Freephone **NALA 1800 20 20 65**



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