



## Core Qualifications

### Training Field Description

### Key Qualifications

### Modules:

- Social Skills
- Method Skills
- Media Skills

## 1. Targets

Key qualifications represent one area of human-resource skills and are thus at the same time components of → Quality management and → Staff development. Their importance in every field of economic activity, however, means that they must be considered as a training field in its own right.

Here the term competence is subsumed under the leitmotifs “learning to learn“ and “sustainability“.

“Learning to learn“ is a lifelong active process that goes to make up an essential, dynamic characteristic of the individual functioning in modern societies. This is the aspect that is oriented more towards the individual member of society. Another aspect is that individual action relates basically to, or influences, the social fabric in which, after all, the individual finds himself. This is the aspect of “sustainability“: “Sustainability >here< is to be regarded as a key concept for a socio-ecological reform of society that ultimately implies a radical change in thinking habits in virtually every walk of life as well as global learning and action.” (Kutt 2001)

Rapid developments in the tourist sector, such as methods of booking and advice on the one hand, or knowledge of geographical or political facts about destinations on the other, require an ability to undergo continuous advanced training and the willingness to adapt one’s knowledge to ever-changing circumstances. Here, employees have to rely especially on the use of various media with different levels of networking that range from simple catalogues to globally networked booking systems. Moreover, an equally high level of customer orientation, for example, when advising on destinations, is demanded from them as employees of a sales-oriented company, just as much as commercially oriented activity.

Given this background, and after the completion of this field of training the participants are meant to

- understand both intra-company and inter-company social systems and be able to actively contribute to their optimum functioning (→ **Social Skills**);
- to familiarize themselves with working techniques, procedures and learning strategies, to identify their strategic merits in the exercise of their own profession and to be able to make selective and permanently effective use of them (→ **Method Skills**);
- have an overview of the media landscape relevant to tourism and its range of possible applications, both for the acquisition of information and for the distribution of information (→ **Media Skills**).

## 2. Definition of the Training Field

Key qualifications were described for the first time in 1974 by D. Mertens. Using a cognitive and action-oriented approach they help people deal knowledgably with demands and information offers. But they also refer to necessary developments and the adaptation of professional action and thinking to changing social and technological framework conditions. In the meantime series of studies and theoretical research have yielded a comprehensive picture of key qualifications, which means skills at different levels that are composed of different capabilities and their reciprocal influences. “Reflection (...) is the basic factor involved during the acquisition of key qualifications. It designates the process of investigative thought.” (Richter 1995)

Based on relevant studies it is assumed that all job offers emphasise key qualifications. For the most part communicative skills and the ability to cooperate are called for, along with independence and efficiency. Relatively high importance is attached not only to problem-solving ability and to creativity but also to the

ability to assume responsibility as well as the ability to explain and to evaluate. Abilities of a more cognitive nature, like the ability to think and learn, only occupied sixth place. (cf. Belz/Siegrist 2000)

The literature discusses and defines a broad canon of key qualifications. The training field to be described here concentrates on the acquisition of skills that serve as the three fundamental mainstays subsumed under “learning to learn” and “sustainability” but cannot be looked upon as able to exist in isolation or as learnable. What is meant here are skills and abilities which, although necessary in the exercise of one’s profession, are neither unavoidably acquired in a cognitive way when learning one’s profession nor specific to certain professional images. They must be looked upon as content-neutral qualifications the mediation of which, however, is necessarily linked to specific contents. But working and living specifically in the intercultural, that is, globally-networked, sphere imposes special demands on individuals because it takes them away from the relatively all-encompassing protection of a limited cultural field as well as making demands on the sustainability of their thinking and acting.

No claim for completeness is made but, rather, examples are provided for training those key qualifications that are especially needed for working in tourism.

### 3. Scenarios

The Media Skills Module, for example, could also provide an introduction to “media use” by means of a simple exercise in the field of dynamic packaging, which is in actual fact a comprehensive application:

The participants are supposed to book a flight plus hotel and a rented car at the destination via the Internet. To start with, the participants are given the parameters of the exercise as well as information about available Internet providers (e.g. “expedia.de”). Working in small groups or with a partner the participants can then work out how to handle the relevant Internet pages and the input masks either on their own or supported by the trainer, depending on their previous knowledge. Another possibility could be to split-up the small groups into the roles of “customers” and “consultants”. They then change roles after a first exercise.

The results of the work are recorded, evaluated and discussed with the trainer.

In this way the participants learn to find travel offers that are available on the Internet, they learn to handle different input masks and identify features that their handling has in common. Apart from this, the trainer can also explain the function and sense of “CRM” (→ Customer Relationship Management): to enhance customer orientation a system of this type is capable of storing separate customers’ individual preferences and to take them into account during the preparation of an offer.

### 4. Details of training methods

Key qualifications include media skills and method skills, so all the methods and techniques of teaching and learning should be used in this context. What seems to be very important here is that their respective relevance is evaluated jointly by teachers and learners. Also, the methods used have to be plausible for the learner in order to generate a lasting effect.

The methods therefore cover a spectrum that starts with trainer-input and goes right down to individual and group work. The project work in particular helps learners to acquire experience and training in social and method skills using all available media.

- **Trainer input**

The use of trainer input as a teacher-centred method needs to be limited to those sequences where there is a need for the trainer to communicate information, e.g., in the form of lectures, scripts, on-screen presentations and so on. In doing this, care must be taken to address more than one of the learner’s input channels. For example, a lecture should always be augmented by an appropriate visual presentation. Scripts or work sheets should be structured, illustrated and easy to follow. This is the only way to translate information uptake into sustainable “learning to learn”.

- **Individual and group work**

Individual and group work serves to consolidate, practice and acquire new contents but should always be prepared and demonstrated beforehand by the trainer. Suitably prepared worksheets and exercise sheets can serve as written paradigms. What is practiced here is the ability to work in a team and important project-work techniques are learned and consolidated. What is vital in this context is feedback via the trainer as well as the presentation of results to the other participants on the course.

- **Project work**

Project work is probably the most complex of all methods. It comprises the planning, execution, completion and feedback of a complex constellation of different actions during which all other learning and working methods may be applied at a micro-level.

- **E-learning**

In the compact application of suitably prepared software (e.g. for E-packaging), E-learning not only means acquiring information in front of a computer screen but also the execution of a guided form of training with suitable feedback from the system about the learner's success.

The following remarks apply to all methods:

- The use of various technological means such as computers and their peripherals (beamers) that can be used especially for purposes of illustration, or of video equipment, which can be used, for example, not only to record discussions for feedback purposes, but also to bring destinations closer, is not only a matter of course for the field of "Media Skills".
- Students' dialogues, debates, discussions with different roles not only practice linguistic expression and rhetorical skills for purposes of sale and consultancy, but also empathy.
- Working techniques that have to be trained (mind-mapping, brainstorming and so on) should be used deliberately as methodical steps.

## 5. Content of the field of training (120 hrs.)

The three skills covered by this field of training are as follows:

- **Social Skills (42 hrs.)**

As a rule, Social Skills cannot be learned but need to be developed on the basis of existing individual personal resources. This includes the capacity for teamwork, to adapt flexibly to external changes, to be creative without losing sight of one's goal, as well as making appropriate decisions when necessary. Here, communicative skills and willingness to co-operate combined with social sensitivity (empathy) help the learner to recognise his own feelings and those of the other person (in the team or when conducting business with customers) and to permit them to an appropriate extent.

- **Method Skills (36 hrs.)**

The field of Method Skills trains the ability to work in projects as well as their independent planning and execution. Time management and the ability not only to deal with conflicts but also to be willing to enter into them and to solve them lead to the training of managerial behaviour, motivating oneself and others. This module finds its communicative expression in the aim of conducting discussions in an appropriate way and of chairing groups.

- **Media Skills (42 hrs.)**

In the field of Media Skills we summarise additional qualifications and knowledge that are closely connected with the profession, e.g. EDP and EU-relevant knowledge of languages as well as intercultural competences. These include not only knowledge that relates to legal, organisational, sector-specific conditions in the exercise of one's profession but also of rules and systems of values. It goes without saying that the modules will also have to provide space for characteristics specific to different

countries.

## 6. Interfaces

The training field Key Qualifications is not only closely related to the training field → (Human Resources); major aspects, especially of social skills, can also be found in the training field → Customer Relationship Management. There are also direct connections between the Media Skills module from this training field to modules of the → Marketing training field. Social skills go closely together with competences in the linguistic and cultural field (training field → Language and Culture). But key qualifications are also a fruitful ground for all training fields that are concerned not only with the acquisition of factual knowledge. So, inevitably, subjects dealt with in this training field will also be mentioned in other training fields. As regards the Key Qualifications training field itself the Method Skills and Social Skills modules come together and supplement one another just like the Media Skills and Method Skills modules.

## Bibliographic references

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