

Terms of Reference

Digital Toolkit for Core Skills

Skills and Employability Branch, Employment Policy Department

1. Background

As the world of work is undergoing an unprecedented transformation, most countries are confronted by the challenge of growing skills mismatch. As articulated by the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, the key global drivers of transformative change in the world of work, such as technology, globalisation, the transition to the green economy and demographic shifts are changing job and skills profiles, creating new jobs as well as rendering many existing jobs obsolete.¹ More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has fast-tracked and accentuated the challenges posed by these global drivers, whilst causing worldwide health, education and economic crises. Apart from the changes in the technical skills required, there is a growing recognition that core skills² will be an increasingly important catalyst for workers to adapt to and thrive amidst the uncertainties and disruption caused by global megatrends and the pandemic. It can be argued that many existing core skills frameworks do not adequately and comprehensively cover the characteristics of the emerging world of work. As such, the ILO has developed a new framework of core skills, or 'Core Skills for Work and Life', which proposes 30 core skills grouped in six major categories.

To support the implementation of this framework, it is proposed to develop a digital toolkit.

2. Objectives and Outputs for the ILO Digital Toolkit for Core Skills

The main objective of the ILO toolkit for core skills is to provide guidance and good practices for the successful integration of core skills development in national education and training system to improve the quality and relevance of training, retraining, recognition of skills and qualifications. The toolkit is expected to entail three main elements:

- (1) Policy guidance and examples of how core skills can be comprehensively adopted systemically in national education and training systems;
- (2) Detailed operational analysis and guidance on different elements of core skills implementation at the country level through a series of policy notes and operational strategies on how to integrate selected core skills in:
 - a. curricula and qualifications;
 - b. training delivery, assessment and certification;
 - c. career management and skills recognition systems.

¹ The ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work aims to examine all aspects of the future of work, identifying key challenges, opportunities and recommendations for action by all stakeholders, including governments, employers' and workers' organizations.

² There is no standard terminology used universally for core skills. Other terms used include: soft skills, life skills, transferable skills, employability skills, core competences, portable competences, etc. This paper will use the term 'core skills'.

- (3) Good practices of core skills implementation in different curriculum areas and different institutional settings supplemented by links to a wide range of resource materials on delivering and assessing core skills available in the public domain.

Output1: Policy guidelines for adaptation and implementation of the core skills framework

The Contractors should develop the policy guidelines for policymakers and relevant stakeholders on how to adapt and implement the core skills framework at the country level. The guidelines should follow a question and answer structure, raising critical issues to bear in mind regarding key issues to address during implementation, including stakeholder engagement; implementation planning; cooperation/communication strategies; professional development; monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback; and resourcing. It should highlight the importance of national and regional dialogues, support the identification of systemic weaknesses and opportunities, as well as guide the definition of operational priorities. An easy to use **checklist** synthesising all critical elements for policy decisions and stakeholder engagement should also be produced, reflecting the Q&A content.

The guidelines' content should be informed by a literature review on existing national and regional strategies and practices for the integration of core skills development in education, training and career development systems. Emphasis should be given to the identification of challenges and strategies to overcome them, accounting for system variability (e.g. existence of core skills curricula, qualification systems, pre-vocational training, RPL, e-portfolios) displaying alternative routes to address critical issues. Each issue should, where possible, be cross-referenced to the examples covering the integration of core skills in key areas included in Outputs 2 & 3.

The guidelines should be an easy-to-use instrument, appropriate for high-level reflection, rather than an in-depth and comprehensive description of available options. More detailed discussion analysis should be produced selectively, in the form of a set of guidance notes (see Output 2). The structure of the tool will be finalised by the contractors through direct consultation with the ILO.

Output2: Detailed guidance notes for integrating core skills in curricula, training delivery, assessment, career management and recognition

The contractors should elaborate a set of three guidance notes providing detailed analysis and discussion of alternative routes for the adaptation of ILO core skills framework for work and life at the country level. The guidance notes should expand on the more complex issues highlighted in the policy guidelines (Output 1) which require a more comprehensive analysis. The notes should be thought as both as stand-alone documents and as a deeper layer of information relating directly to questions posed in the policy guidelines.

The guidance notes should provide analysis, guidance and examples of operational strategies regarding how to integrate selected core skills in three areas:

- a. Curricula and qualifications – addressing curricular approaches in structured educational and training settings and their links to qualification systems, credit systems and occupational certifications;
- b. Training delivery, assessment and certification – addressing needs of trainers and training providers, formal, non-formal and informal learning, assessment strategies, digital and hybrid contexts, digital credentials and official certifications;

- c. Career management and skills recognition systems – including initial screening of skills, referrals, personal portfolios, assessment and certification and relevant linkages to formal, informal, non-formal learning processes and career guidance.

Guidance notes should elaborate on challenges, potential solutions, roles of stakeholders and necessary resources to achieve successful implementation of core skills frameworks in these three key areas, making use of practical examples where relevant. Each guidance note should be around 5,000 words (10 pages).

Output3: Good practices in the delivery and assessment of core skills in distinct relevant contexts

The contractors will provide at least 15 examples of good practice of how core skills have been integrated in specific industry and occupational areas through:

- Curricula and qualification integration (at least 3 examples);
- Training delivery and assessment (at least 9 examples); and
- Career management and skills recognition system (at least 3 examples).

Where possible, examples should highlight the use of digital technology (e.g. online learning, e-portfolios) used for core skills delivery, assessment and certification. These examples should support key points covered in Outputs 1 and 2 but be separate to other examples used in developing those Outputs.

Output 3 will also include links to additional external resources from good practices on delivery and assessment of core skills available in the public domain for the guidance of teachers, trainers, assessors and guidance professionals on how to deliver and assess selected core skills, particularly targeting youth entering the labour market and older workers seeking to improve their core skills. The resource materials may include guidelines, toolkits and tools from:

- 1) International and regional development organizations
- 2) National authorities for education and training systems
- 3) The private sector
- 4) Other organizations

Under Output 3, the contractors should also provide an overall structure for online presentation of the three Outputs integrating all 3 levels of information: policy guideline, checklist and detailed guidance notes, depicting mobilisation of case studies in each level.

4. Deliverables, Timeframe and Payment Schedule

Whilst final timelines will be negotiated with the contractors, the following deliverables will be required:

- (1) Inception report including project work plan
- (2) The first draft of policy guidelines
- (3) The first draft of detailed guidance notes
- (4) The first draft of good practice in the delivery and assessment of core skills
- (5) Draft list of resources and tools
- (6) A revised draft of all Outputs
- (7) The final draft of all Outputs.

It is envisaged that the contractors will deliver the agreed Outputs over the period xx to xx 2020.

Payments will be made on the following basis:

- First payment (20%) - deliverable 1 and 2
- Second payment (30%) – deliverable 3 and 4
- Final payment (50%) - deliverables 5, 6 and 7

5. Required Qualifications and Experience

The contractor/s should hold academic qualifications in education, training and/or skills development with demonstrated professional experience in the field. They should also be able to demonstrate previous experience working on core skills at the level of both at policy and practice, including experience of developing strategies, guidelines and tools for integrating core skills to qualifications and curricula, delivering and assessing core skills.

Interested applicants should submit a motivation note along with the CVs of those who will be involved.