

Project Result 1: Competence Catalogue



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction to the Competence Catalogue.....	4
2	Competences required for Blended Learning.....	5
2.1	Basic digital Competences.....	5
2.1.1	Ability to use the main components of a computer or laptop	5
2.1.2	Ability to communicate via email	5
2.1.3	Competence to create digital documents	5
2.1.4	Competence to handle digital documents	6
2.1.5	Ability to use the internet as support for one’s learning	6
2.1.6	Ability to protect one’s personal data when working with digital devices	7
2.1.7	Competence to protect one’s digital device.....	7
2.1.8	Willingness and ability to use the e-learning platform of this course.....	7
2.1.9	Ability to use video conferencing tools for learning.....	8
2.1.10	Problem-solving skills.....	8
2.2	Strengthening Learning Motivation	9
2.2.1	Self-motivation skills	9
2.2.2	Self-discipline	9
2.3	Time Management.....	10
2.3.1	Ability to plan one’s learning timetable.....	10
2.3.2	Ability to prepare for an exam.....	10
2.3.3	Competence to prioritise learning contents.....	10
2.4	Learning Strategies.....	11
2.4.1	Ability to identify one’s own learning type.....	11
2.4.2	Skills to prepare a supportive learning environment	11
2.4.3	Ability to prepare learning materials.....	11



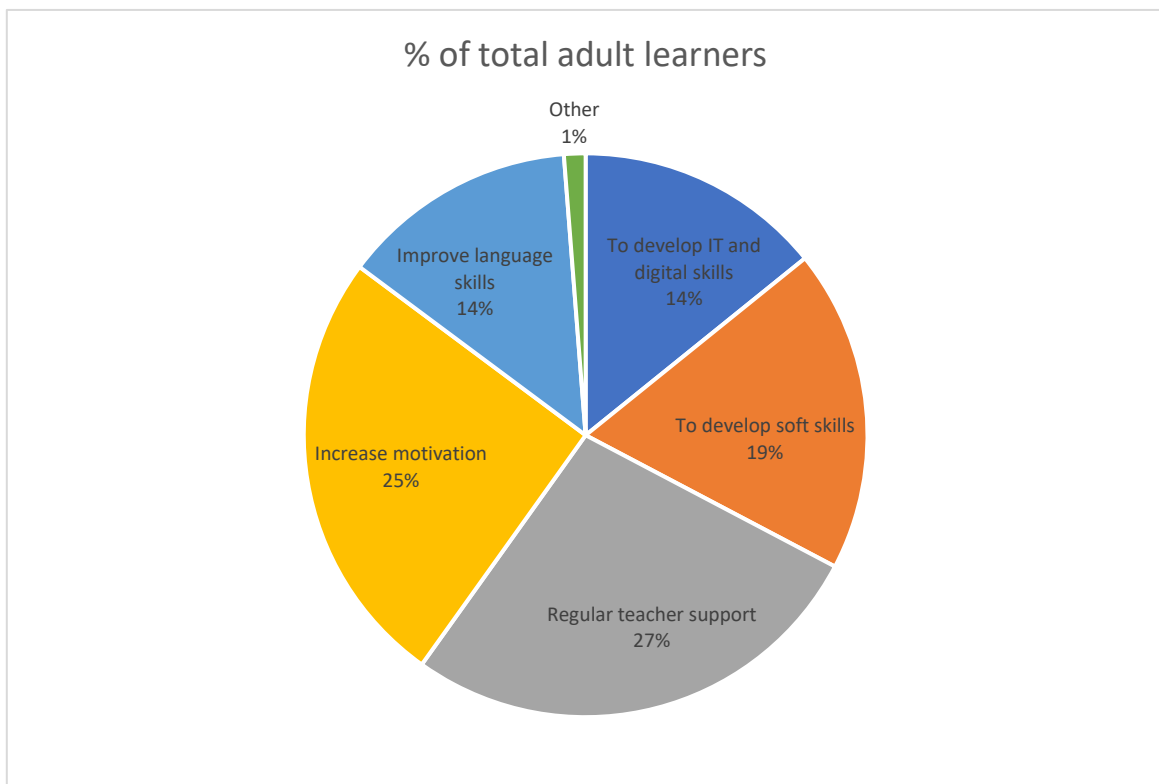
2.4.4	Ability to follow a face-to-face session efficiently.....	11
2.4.5	Competence to learn autonomously.....	12
2.4.6	Ability to keep learning contents in one’s long-term memory.....	12
2.5	Personal Well-Being.....	12
2.5.1	Growth mindset.....	12
2.5.2	Ability to learn in a team.....	13
2.5.3	Critical thinking skills.....	14
2.5.4	Problem-solving skills.....	14
2.5.5	Ability to handle exam anxiety.....	14
2.5.6	Stress management skills.....	15
3	Conclusion.....	15



1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPETENCE CATALOGUE

The competences of this Catalogue were selected after finalising the literature review and analysing the data collected from the focus groups, questionnaires, and interviews. The five competencies highlighted throughout by both the trainers and the low-skilled learners include basic digital competences, learning motivation, time management, learning strategies, and personal well-being which also includes a growth mindset and stress management.

‘What support do learners need to be able to study via Blended Learning?’ was one of the questions in the Learner Questionnaire. The below chart highlights the competencies the students believe are necessary to be able to successfully complete a blended learning course. The competences listed are explored in more detail in this Competence Catalogue.



2 COMPETENCES REQUIRED FOR BLENDED LEARNING

In this section, you can find a list of the competences that were mentioned in the research activities and are included in our learning materials as well as short explanations for all these competences.

2.1 Basic digital Competences

2.1.1 Ability to use the main components of a computer or laptop

To follow blended learning courses, learners need the competence to deal with their learning device (such as a computer or laptop). This includes, among others, the ability to start and shut down their computer/laptop, to turn on the screen of the computer or to charge a laptop. Also, the ability to deal with other hardware components is important. Examples are using a mouse or a keyboard.

2.1.2 Ability to communicate via email

In a blended learning course, learners need to be able to know how to communicate via email. This includes, first of all, being able to create an email address for a course and in general for their personal use. Then once they have an active email account they need to be able to log into that account again, keeping in mind passwords and using an email account on different devices and the security checks which could arise from doing so. Finally, they need to be able to use their email account, specifically focusing on reading emails, writing/sending new emails, as well as understanding other basics, such as Spam, forwarding, and attaching documents.

2.1.3 Competence to create digital documents

Learners in a blended learning course must have a basic understanding of how digital documents work and the competence to create digital documents, specifically Word Documents and PowerPoints.

First of all, learners should be familiar with the basic functions of any word editing software, such as how to open a word document, how to write/edit a document by adjusting font/size/colour, and how to save and export a document in different formats, distinguishing between .pdf, .docx, .rtf, etc.

Once they are familiar with word documents, the learners should be introduced to the basic functions of any presentation editing software (such as PowerPoint), paying special attention to the differences with word documents. That is, other than adjusting font/size/colour of text, understanding how to



create new slides, insert images and take advantage of templates that many presentation programmes offer when editing a .ppt file.

2.1.4 Competence to handle digital documents

The competence to handle digital documents is essential for learners in a blended learning course. Other than creating documents, they must be able to also find these documents saved on their computer. This means having a general understanding of how documents/files/folders are organised on any operating system. Once they have a grasp on this they must know how to use their chosen operating system's functions for searching for specific files, whether they are already saved on a device locally or whether they have recently been downloaded.

Aside from understanding a file storage system of an operating system, it is also important that learners are able to work with online drives. This means that they need to be familiar with the way online drives store information, similar to the way operating systems do. They must also know how to access/give access to specific drives, upload/download files from a drive, as well as share files and comment on documents within a drive.

Another necessary skill useful for both handling digital documents as well as participating in any online activity is the ability to navigate between different opened windows. This means, understanding how to open/close/maximise/minimise windows, as well as how to use functions such as split screen, screenshot, or sharing windows in a video conference system.

2.1.5 Ability to use the internet as support for one's learning

The ability to use the internet as support for one's learning is key in a blended learning course. It is key that learners in this course understand that it is possible to learn anywhere and anytime thanks to the internet.

Once they are conscious of this, the learners need to be able to know how to connect their devices to the internet and how to use the internet on different devices. That is to say, a learner should be familiar with the basics of how to access the internet connection settings on their chosen operating system and device, understand if they are connected to the internet or not (wirelessly or via an ethernet cable), recognise when there is a connection issue, and have general notions of how to troubleshoot a connection issue when it arises.



The learners must also be familiar with the basic functions of a search engine, knowing how to find information that is relevant to them quickly. This includes knowing how to use a search engine's settings and filters and how to use quotation marks or commas to make a search more precise.

Other than this, learners should also be able to distinguish between the search results they come across, understanding the criteria of reputable online sources of information as well as how to find open learning materials and knowledge portals online.

2.1.6 Ability to protect one's personal data when working with digital devices

Participating in a blended learning course requires learners to be able to protect one's personal data when working with digital devices. Learners must be able to explain how their personal data can be protected. This means first of all, understanding some of the basic risks involved with emails, downloaded files and use of the internet in general, e.g. viruses and their repercussions. Furthermore, the learners must be conscious of what information should/should not be shared online and how sharing certain data can put them/their computer/email accounts at risk.

2.1.7 Competence to protect one's digital device

Other than being aware of protecting one's personal data, it is important that participants in blended learning courses can indicate specifically how their digital devices can be protected. This means knowing how to implement strategies to avoid potential risks, whether using an antivirus or identifying dangerous links and webpages. Being able to recognise safe/dangerous links/webpages/emails is key to avoiding potential risks regarding personal data.

2.1.8 Willingness and ability to use the e-learning platform of this course

To encourage the willingness to use the e-learning platform of this course (MILES) learners must be able to be aware of and explain the advantages of learning platforms when learning online. This will allow them to understand the benefits of using such platforms in a blended learning course. They should be able to name some of the major platforms and explain some of the possibilities of using them for learning, such as the ability to access a course and its content at any time or share/communicate/cooperate with both an instructor as well as other learners in a course.

The learners must also specifically know how to deal with MILES, as this is the platform that will be used for this course.



2.1.9 Ability to use video conferencing tools for learning

Video conferencing tools, such as Zoom, are a key tool in a blended learning course, which means learners in such a course must be able to use this tool.

First of all, a learner must be able to log into a common video conference tool. This means knowing how to either download the chosen application or access it via an online version, usually following a link in an email. Then they must be aware that their login credentials, namely the access code/password may change throughout the duration of a course due to security issues.

Learners must also know how to communicate via a video conference tool. This means, first of all, knowing how to connect/permit to use a microphone/camera. Once they are familiar with this, learners should also be aware of the dynamic of a live stream conference, i.e. basic online etiquette with microphones/cameras and understanding how to move video windows.

Once learners know the basics of communicating via a video conference tool, they must be able to actively participate in an online lesson. This means being able to use different functions to proactively collaborate on diverse tasks with the instructor/classmates. For example, a learner should know how to access a chat box, send direct messages, share their screen, upload/download shared files, collaborate on a digital whiteboard, etc.

2.1.10 Problem-solving skills

In a blended learning course, problem-solving skills are needed as IT problems will inevitably occur. Basic problem-solving skills, or troubleshooting, provide learners with the ability to deal with and resolve common IT problems and focus on the course itself.

Learners must be able to try different possible solutions when it is not possible to start their computer. For example, checking whether their device is plugged in or not, or if it has enough battery. Or, if it is an issue with the device's screen, the learner needs to recognise if it is shut off or perhaps if the brightness is turned down too low, etc.

They should also be able to restart a computer when needed, either through the normal process of clicking on "restart" in the taskbar or holding down the power button when a computer is not responding. Considering that restarting a computer fixes a myriad of IT issues, they must be familiar with this process.



It is also helpful for these learners to understand the functions of the task manager of an operating system, as here you can often identify if a specific programme is using too much memory and causing the whole operating system to respond slowly, or if one needs to manually shut down a programme which is not responding for the same reason.

2.2 Strengthening Learning Motivation

2.2.1 Self-motivation skills

To participate in a blended learning course, students are required to have the skills to motivate themselves even when studying feels challenging.

It is good for students to understand that there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Studying may seem easy, and orientation to it is effortless if the students feel that studying is meaningful and interesting to them. In this case, it is a question of intrinsic motivation. If the student has not chosen the topic to be studied and does not consider it meaningful to them, it is good for the student to know ways to increase external motivation. External motivation can be developed, for example, through rewards. Intrinsic motivation can also be strengthened through the experiences of success and pleasure brought by rewards.

Students benefit from understanding the impact of motivation and its lack of learning success, as well as the fact that motivational variation is normal. It is useful for students to be able to view motivation as a force that guides them to achieve a goal and know ways to increase their motivation. Students need to be aware of ways in which they can make studying more pleasant. It is also essential that they learn to set concrete goals for themselves.

2.2.2 Self-discipline

Studying requires self-discipline, perseverance, and the ability to temporarily tolerate feeling uncomfortable. The reasons for an adult student to start studying in blended learning settings can be manifold. If the benefits of studying do not create intrinsic motivation, the student needs skills to increase self-discipline. If the student does not have the skills to self-discipline, he/she can postpone the assignments too much or do other things during the study assignments. It will be useful for students to learn how to identify situations and reasons for postponing assignments.



As part of this competency, the adult student needs skills on how to maintain good habits in studying: how to avoid procrastination or resist temptations and how to act in situations where they face challenges or resistances. One challenge for adult learners can be situations where they must move out of their comfort zone, such as participating in distance learning. It is useful for students to learn to identify situations in which it is good for them, for example, to reward themselves to maintain their motivation to study.

2.3 Time Management

2.3.1 Ability to plan one's learning timetable

To be able to follow blended learning courses, it is necessary that adults are able to plan their timetable for independent learning. This means that learners have to know about their own learning performance curve so that they know when and over what period of time they can learn best. This also includes considering breaks as well as planning their breaks efficiently, so that they can benefit as much as possible from them and so that they support their further learning process.

2.3.2 Ability to prepare for an exam

Concerning time management, it is also important that a learner is aware that he or she has to plan the timetable for exam preparation on his or her own, and that he or she is also able to do that. Therefore, this competence includes issues like creating a personal learning plan and a timetable for exam preparation. In addition, the learner has to be able to implement some suitable methods for efficient time management. This includes, among others, the ability to get an overview of all contents and all learning resources that are important for the exam. Additionally, a learner should know how he or she could organise the time shortly before an exam to be well prepared and avoid nervousness.

2.3.3 Competence to prioritise learning contents

In order to complete an exam successfully, a learner has to be able to prioritise the learning contents as usually, it is not possible to learn all contents in the same depth. Therefore, he or she has to be able to identify all contents that are relevant for completing an exam and to understand why it is important to prioritise all the learning materials and contents. This competence also includes the knowledge about different methods to prioritise learning content as well as the ability to implement some of these methods.

2.4 Learning Strategies

2.4.1 Ability to identify one's own learning type

In the context of participation in blended learning, it is essential that each participant is able to organise and manage his/her own learning process, both individually and in a group. Within this competence, the adult learner will have an awareness of the own effective acquisition, processing, evaluation and integration of new knowledge and the ability to apply these competences in different situations and contexts. The adult learner will know the types of learning strategies and will be able to recognise which strategy fits best to him/her.

2.4.2 Skills to prepare a supportive learning environment

The adaptation of the learning environment significantly helps students to acquire the required knowledge and skills in the educational process. Preparing a supportive learning environment involves ensuring good contact with the teacher and classmates in the course/class, good information intake, use of appropriate teaching aids, and use of special working methods and specialised spaces. The student's learning space and its space for teaching aids should be organised according to the spatial possibilities of the school or teaching organisation and, in the context of blended learning, appropriate arrangements for adapting the space for home learning and self-study should be recommended.

2.4.3 Ability to prepare learning materials

As part of this competency, the student will identify the forms in which they most appreciate having their study materials. He/she will think about what he/she needs and what will help him/her to be most effective in his/her studies. Will you need revision cards? Will different notebooks for different subjects and, for example, different colours help? Do you need somewhere to keep your papers, e.g. in a ring binder? Do you prefer paper and pen, or do you prefer to work on a PC or laptop?

2.4.4 Ability to follow a face-to-face session efficiently

In the hybrid form of education, face-to-face and distance learning models complement each other. This complementarity is perhaps the most telling characteristic of the approach. How we can link the two approaches (face-to-face and distance) to each other to get the best possible combination for a given learning intention and goal is crucial for the integration of the two models. Students will not only learn how to effectively link two models, but the emphasis will be on the face-to-face part of

teaching: how to listen actively, how to take teaching notes, and how to put what is learned into practice and apply the skills learned in the best possible way.

2.4.5 Competence to learn autonomously

The adult learner will learn to set long-term and short-term learning goals related to his/her studies or profession. The student will be able to identify appropriate courses and methods for his/her teaching strategy and have a basic overview of the educational market. The adult learner will be able to identify when he/she needs support, help or supervision from a teacher, colleague or peer group. Learners will also learn to use a learning diary to effectively meet their learning objectives.

2.4.6 Ability to keep learning contents in one's long-term memory

Adult learners will learn a great deal of practical information about how our memory works and how to promote the effective storage of information in long-term memory. They will learn how to use memory correctly, become familiar with a range of memory and learning techniques, strategies, or mnemonic aids (e.g. for numerical information, foreign language, preparing for a presentation or speech), find out how to motivate themselves to learn, how to make the learning process more efficient and how to reduce the stress of forgetting. Repetition is an important aspect of our brain's retention of information; students will learn how to repeat and how often.

2.5 Personal Well-Being

2.5.1 Growth mindset

Having a fixed mindset is a situation where a learner believes that intelligence and ability are inherently stable and can never change. On the contrary, it is important that learners in a blended learning course believe that these traits are capable of improvement. The mindset should be one of growth, where the learner understands that he can learn and practise the required skills until he feels capable of succeeding.

When a learner does not already have the skills or intelligence to complete a task, this can easily lead him to believe that there is no chance for improvement. This fixed mindset can lead to damage in challenging situations. That is why learners must adopt a growth mindset so that they become convinced that they have the ability to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. In this way, every challenge is transformed into a learning opportunity. In fact, by adopting a growth

mindset, learners will develop a powerful tool that will lead them towards success. This mindset will encourage learners to become curious about learning, which will in turn make them more enthusiastic about learning information. Curiosity prepares the brain for learning and makes subsequent learning more enjoyable and rewarding (Stenger, 2014).

A growth mindset will allow learners to plan ahead and take initiative. Learners will make a conscious effort to take the right set of actions and to reach their desired goal. In this way, learners become proactive and will demonstrate an attitude that will positively influence their learning ability. Patience and resilience are important factors too, and learners must understand that when they are faced with challenges, the goal is still possible and worth continuing toward. Resilience is essential and will help the learners to remain effective and focused on their goals despite the challenges faced.

2.5.2 Ability to learn in a team

Ideally, learners work within a team to support each other when learning. As learners enjoy working with each other, this will positively influence student learning. Learners need to respect and appreciate each other showing that they are willing to cooperate. Circle Time will encourage equality and acceptance allowing all learners to have a voice and to raise issues.

Teamwork will maintain and encourage a positive outlook and will help learners focus on the good. By working together, learners will create opportunities for small successes and then celebrate them together. Being a team will help students share and acknowledge each other's feelings and their lived experiences. By giving constructive feedback to others, a learner will enhance his peer's confidence and boost his motivation. It is important that as team members, learners show that they are reliable by putting in the effort to help the team to succeed.

Teamwork will also enhance communication both verbal and non-verbal. The social skills of the learners will improve, such as active listening and effective speaking, which will help with learning how to listen to teachers and understand instructions. The advantage of Peer Learning is that it allows learners to focus on understanding rather than solving. This develops a spirit of collaboration and cooperation among learners and makes them more effective.

Learners can also use social media to improve teamwork efforts. This will help them communicate better with each other, help them find material relevant to their learning, make it possible to share ideas and make it easier to keep in touch.

2.5.3 Critical thinking skills

Critical thinking is when learners evaluate an issue in order to form a judgement. Critical thinking will help learners to decide how to use their time fruitfully. By evaluating how to spend their time, learners will discover tasks and activities that may change how to prioritise their duties.

It is essential that learners apply critical thinking when searching for sources in that they must recognize that not all information is reliable. They must be selective and apply good judgement before accepting online or offline material. This means that when faced with information, learners should avoid jumping to conclusions and learn how to draw appropriate conclusions. Before accepting information, learners must evaluate sources and be aware of biases or assumptions, including their own. It is important that they compare the relative value of available options and determine the best solution.

2.5.4 Problem-solving skills

The skill of being able to solve problems requires that learners build the ability to identify problems, brainstorm and analyse answers, start thinking "outside the box" and then apply the best solutions. This will help learners both on a personal level as well as when it comes to teamwork. It is essential that learners are proactive in understanding the root of a problem and should work with colleagues to consider a wide range of solutions before deciding how to move forward. By applying problem-solving skills, learners become able to successfully deal with unforeseen risks and threats.

By building problem-solving skills, learners will find the potential to handle difficult or unexpected situations in the learning situation as well as overcome related challenges. In this way, they will be able to assess situations and calmly identify solutions, develop plans for evaluating a course and for choosing adequate follow-up courses.

2.5.5 Ability to handle exam anxiety

Exam anxiety can be expressed as the situation where although the learner would have paid attention in class, taken detailed notes and read every chapter, they still find themselves so nervous that they blank out the answers to even the easiest questions.

Exam anxiety may be related to negative past experiences with exams. It can also come from a lack of proper preparation, or perhaps knowledge of exam-taking techniques or study methods. Bad

thoughts that come to mind before the exam, such as thoughts that you will not know the answers or that you are going to fail, will increase the pressure and add to the exam anxiety.

To help stay calm and confident right before and during the test, learners should perform relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, relaxing muscles one at a time, or closing their eyes and imagining a positive outcome.

Another good tip is to eat and drink – learners have to remember that the brain needs fuel to function.

2.5.6 Stress management skills

Stress can affect learners both physically and emotionally and can cause changes in how they behave and learn. Therefore, it is important that learners know how to deal with these intense emotions and become capable of reducing and managing stressful situations.

Stress management will reduce stress on mental or physical well-being. Some techniques to manage stress include mental, emotional, and behavioural strategies.

Since it is not always possible to avoid situations that may cause stress, it is essential that students recognize the symptoms and try altering them. Ways that can help reduce stress include expressing feelings instead of bottling them up and applying better time management. It can also help to adapt to the stressor where this cannot be changed. Mindfulness meditation can help and can be practised anywhere at any time. Moreover, it is important that during stressful episodes, students get enough rest and learn how to keep things in perspective.

3 CONCLUSION

Throughout this Competence Catalogue, the five major competencies required were explored further. These include using e-learning platforms, protecting data online, self-motivation and self-discipline, planning the learning timetable, identifying one's preferred learning method and ideal learning materials, growth mindset, and problem-solving, amongst other topics.



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