
ADAM SMITH COLLEGE
INSPIRING LEARNING

Course Handbook

NQ Computing Essentials
Level 4/5

Contents

Welcome to Adam Smith College	3
Information about your course	3
Your Curriculum Head	4
Your attendance at college and part-time employment	5
Your learning	5
Credit for previous learning.....	6
The aims of your course	6
The structure of your course	7
The content of your course	7
Succeeding in college	9
Assessment of your work.....	12
Re-assessment of your work	13
Cheating and plagiarism	13
Support for your learning	14
Your feedback.....	14
Your representation.....	15
Your comments, complaints or compliments	15
Code of conduct	16
Progression	18

Welcome to Adam Smith College

This is the Course Handbook for the NQ Computing Essentials Level 4/5. On behalf of the Course Team I would like to warmly welcome you to Adam Smith College. We feel sure that you will enjoy your time spent here.

To help you make the most of your time at College and to familiarise you with your course we have produced this course handbook. In here you will find information about the structure of your course, the teaching and learning styles used and the ways in which your work will be assessed and graded.

There is a considerable amount of information contained in this handbook, some of which will be of greater relevance to you as you work through the course than it is at the start of your studies in the College. However, we recommend that you read this Course Handbook through carefully **now**, then keep it safely - you will need to use it through your course.

We hope you will find the handbook a useful guide to your course and wish you every success in your studies.

Gillian Imrie

Curriculum Head: NQ Computing Essentials Level 4/5

Information about your course

Your course is:

NQ Computing Essentials Level 4/5

Your Curriculum Head is:

Gillian Imrie

His/Her office is:

S3.11, Stenton Campus

His/Her telephone number is:

01592 223076

His/Her email address is:

gillianimrie@adamsmith.ac.uk

Scheduled guidance time:

As per timetable

Your Curriculum Head

Each course in the Adam Smith College is assigned a Curriculum Head, whose role is to provide you with advice and support through your course of study. This falls roughly into two categories – guidance related to your studies and pastoral care to help you deal with any difficulties you might encounter of, for example, a personal, financial or health-related nature.

At the beginning of your course you will agree your learning targets with your Curriculum Head. These will be recorded on your Learner Agreement which both of you will sign. Throughout your course, your Curriculum Head will monitor your progress and meet with you regularly during the year to discuss how you are getting on.

Your Curriculum Head will also be available at a set time each week when you can meet if there's something you need to discuss. However, if something comes up which has to be dealt with urgently, you can ask to speak to your Curriculum Head at any time. He/she might not be able to meet you immediately – Curriculum Heads have classes to teach and other students to look after – but he/she will offer you an appointment as soon as possible or refer you to another appropriate member of staff.

Your Curriculum Head may not always be able to personally provide you with the sort of help or support you need, in which case he/she might recommend that you are referred to a member of the College's Guidance or Learning Support staff.

So, if at any time throughout your course, you experience difficulties which are affecting your progress as a student, your Curriculum Head should be your first contact. Please remember that unresolved problems rarely just go away. On the contrary, they tend to get worse the longer they're not dealt with. So, speak to your Curriculum Head sooner rather than later.

Your attendance at college and part-time employment

Your success as a student depends on full and regular attendance at **all** classes. You should inform your Curriculum Head as soon as possible if you have problems with attendance. Our records show that students who do not attend all their classes have a very high risk of failure.¹

We recognise that you may need to undertake part-time work, but we strongly advise you not to take employment of more than 15 hours a week if you are a full time student. Should you need to take employment of more than 15 hours per week we recommend you register as a part time student. A full time student is expected to follow their timetable and negotiate work times around it.

Your learning

Your College course will provide you with constant opportunities to learn new skills and acquire knowledge in your chosen subject areas. In order to make the most of all the opportunities available, you need to organise and plan your learning and also to manage your time effectively.

You must attend **all** your timetabled classes. You also need to study in your own time and you should plan to spend several hours a week to fulfil your commitment as a full-time student. You need to allocate time for this in your diary.

Prepare for lectures and tutorials by doing any reading or exercises in advance. Always make some notes – there is usually a handout provided. Review these after the class and ask your lecturer if there is anything you do not understand.

Note assignment deadlines and exam dates in your diary and remember to begin assignments early. You will enjoy researching and planning your work if you allow yourself plenty of time. Make sure you understand what you need to do and plan how you are going to tackle it. Seek advice from your lecturer or Curriculum Head if there is anything that needs clarification.

For full details of regulations about attendance, see the College Attendance Policy and Procedure.

¹ For full details of regulations about attendance, see the College Attendance Policy and Procedure.

In summary:

- ❖ plan your learning strategy
- ❖ allocate enough time
- ❖ attend **all** of your classes
- ❖ start assignments well in advance
- ❖ seek advice and help
- ❖ use the learning resources offered
- ❖ enjoy the learning experience!

Credit for previous learning

Some students have previous experience or qualifications for which they may receive credit on their present course of study. If you have any qualification that may exempt you from part of your course, for example from school or another college, you may apply for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). Similarly, if you have undertaken work, paid or voluntary, that has resulted in learning skills or knowledge that is equivalent to units you will be studying here, you may apply for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). Together these are known as AP(E)L and it means you do not have to duplicate study you have done previously. It does not necessarily have to be in your chosen subject, but it must be at the same level as your course of studies here.²

If you wish to claim for APL/AP(E)L please speak to your Curriculum Head.

The aims of your course

The aims of your course are:

- ❖ to enhance your practical skills in all general areas of computing;
- ❖ to provide a 'taste' of the various computing areas available;
- ❖ to provide a sound basis for those of you who decide to go on to a more advanced course of study;
- ❖ to give you experience of the equipment, materials, processes and practices currently used in the computing industry;
- ❖ to encourage your development of effective learning strategies.

² For full details of the scheme for crediting previous learning, see the College Credit Transfer and APL/APEL Procedure.

The structure of your course

The course consists of 13 units/credits and will have 3 or 4 days of formal classes each week along with individual study and coursework. As this is a full time course you should plan to spend a minimum of 35 hours each week on your course, approximately 18 of these will be in class.

Course Content	
Unit Title	Credit
Office and Personal Productivity Applications	1
PC Passport: Internet & Online Communications	1
Computer Hardware & Systems	1
Digital Media Elements for Applications	1
Software Development (Programming)	1
Problem Solving	1
Communication	1
Numeracy	1
Personal Development Planning	1
Introduction to Adobe Flash	0.5
Introduction to Computer Networking	0.5
Introduction to Adobe Fireworks	0.5
Introduction to Gamemaker	0.5

Note: You will be given the opportunity to study for either Level 4 or Level 5 and progression onto the relevant level will be dependent on which of these you achieve on completion of the course.

The content of your course

Here are brief descriptions of the units which make up your course:

Office and Personal Productivity Applications

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to make efficient and effective use of software application packages for personal and business use. The Unit will also offer practical experience in using complex features of the three main types of software application

packages associated with office and personal use — word processing, databases and spreadsheets. Basic system software functions will also be covered to enable the candidate to properly load and terminate application software and to save files in a file management structure.

Computer Hardware and Systems

This Unit is designed to provide candidates with information about the main functional elements in a computer system. The candidate will learn about the main functional and physical characteristics of motherboards, memory devices and processors with an emphasis on understanding individual hardware components and assembly. This Unit will provide candidates with information relating to hardware installation, configuration and upgrade techniques, utility software, application and systems software, common system faults/error prompts.

PC Passport: Internet & Online Communications

This Unit is designed to introduce candidates to a range of Internet tools used to access, retrieve and exchange information from the Internet or an intranet. Candidates will use a range of e-mail features to send and receive messages. Candidates will also acquire routine skills in the use of hardware and software relating on-line communication.

Digital Media Elements for Applications

This Unit is designed to enable candidates to develop the skills of digital media applications and the various media elements used within these applications. Candidates will develop the skills to generate images, 2D animations, audio and video files for inclusion in a multimedia application. This Unit will provide candidates with knowledge of these media elements and the copyright issues related to them. In addition, candidates will be introduced to the capturing of these media elements.

Non-assessed Units

In addition to the above SQA assessed units, you will also study a number of topics which are not assessed formally, and include opportunities for development of social and personal development which are essential for employment or progression within the College.

Succeeding in college

Just as at school, your success in college requires high motivation and effort, strong study skills, effective time management, and good test-taking strategies. But college success requires much more. Once you move to college, you will generally find that students are more motivated and competent; lecturers are more demanding; the work is more difficult; and students are expected to be **independent**. Here are some ideas that will help you succeed in college:

It's Up to You

Firstly it's up to you to organise your study – both how you're going to do things and when. You may find that all of your assignments are due at the same time, so a bit of forward planning for staggered deadlines will save a lot of panic at the last minute. There's plenty of help and advice available if you're unsure about how to do anything – your Curriculum Head, Class Lecturer, Learning Support Staff.

Get Informed

Get yourself informed about things like timetables, room locations, deadlines and guidelines for assignments. It's your responsibility to do this – no-one will remind you! This Course Handbook is your best source for what you need to know about your course of study. Make sure you know where you've put it, or how to access it online – you'll probably need it later in the term. Explore the College Learning Gateway so you know where to find other useful information.

Have Clear Goals

College success requires commitment and a lot of hard work. You must be very certain about the importance of a college education.

- Be clear about why you are going to college.
- Establish specific goals you wish to accomplish.
- Know what it will take to reach these goals.
- Be certain your goals are consistent with your interests and abilities.
- Be flexible – change your goals if needed, based on your experience as you progress through college.

Get Financial Aid if Needed

There are many sources of financial aid that can help you meet the costs of studying at college. Become aware of and pursue these sources.

- Consider all possible sources of financial aid.
- Meet all deadlines for submitting applications and documentation.
- Respond quickly and completely to all requests for additional information.

- Be persistent in following up your application. If you do receive financial aid, meet all requirements to keep and continue your aid.

Manage Your Money

There are many ways to spend money in the college setting for other than education purposes. Take steps to ensure that you do not waste the money set aside for your college education.

- Set a budget and keep to it.
- Be careful about your use of credit cards. Don't overspend. Pay balances promptly to avoid high interest costs.
- Open a current account and carefully monitor your balance.
- Keep your mobile phone under control. Those minutes and fees can really add up.

Stay Physically and Emotionally Healthy

You will need to be at your best to succeed in college. This means taking care of your body and maintaining a good frame of mind.

- Get enough sleep.
- Don't rely on coffee and drinks that contain high doses of caffeine to provide you with energy. Foods such as pasta, peanut butter, non-sugar cereals, and fresh fruit are healthy alternatives to provide the energy you need.
- Avoid junk foods. Fast food is convenient but usually not good for you.

Work With Your Curriculum Head

As a student you will be assigned a Curriculum Head to help you with both academic and career issues. It is up to you to get the most out of this guidance.

- Know your Curriculum Head's office location, schedule of office hours, and contact information.
- Schedule an appointment with your Curriculum Head at any time you have problems that affect your academic performance.
- Have specific questions in mind whenever meeting with your Curriculum Head.
- Check your college email regularly, your curriculum head will send important information about your course via the College email system.

Make Good Use of the Library

You are going to spend a lot of your time in college at the library. Take full advantage of this major resource.

- Get to know the resources of the library as soon as you get to college.
- Learn to use its computer resources and catalogues.

- Make good use of its equipment such as copy machines, microfiche readers, production facilities, etc.
- Check out the quiet study areas. Sign up for their use if required.

Avoid distractions

- Be confident about taking your work seriously and encourage others to respect your right to work without interruption. Minimise distractions while you work.
- Alert people around you to the times when you are working and should not be disturbed.
- When working:
 - Ask telephone callers to ring again later or switch on your answering machine.
 - Don't turn on the TV
 - Don't play computer games
 - Don't read your e-mail.
 - Avoid "time sponges" (e.g. cleaning the kitchen floor, tidying your sock drawer, etc. - i.e. any boring activity that suddenly seems more important than getting on with your work.)

Maximise the time available

Consider how you can use all your 'free time' to its best advantage:

- If you spend a long time commuting by train or bus, identify those tasks that you could tackle during the journey e.g. brainstorming ideas for a project or planning a structure for a report.
- Make sure you utilise the periods between lectures effectively e.g. conducting research in the library or background reading.
- At home, think about the 3D rule:
 - What can you defer until a holiday?
 - What can you delegate to other people?
 - What can you delete completely?
- If you are responsible for a household, free up more time by lowering your housework standards and by making sure others help out.
- Make the most of the time when the children are in bed or at school.
- If you have children with homework to do, taking study time together can sometimes work well.
- Save time by cooking meals that can be frozen for later in the week rather than reserving time for this each day.

Assessment of your work

Throughout your course, your work will be assessed in a number of different ways, depending on the different criteria in individual units.³

The majority of courses delivered in the College are assessed partly or wholly on a continuous basis – in other words, you will be assessed on parts of your work as you go along rather than all of it at the end of the unit. This assessment is carried out by the lecturer teaching the unit.

So that assessments can be fair to all students, and whoever teaches them, internal assessments are checked by other lecturers teaching the same, or similar, units. This is a process called ‘internal moderation’.

Over and above the internal moderation of assessments of student work, awarding bodies check that colleges are assessing work appropriately by a process called ‘external verification’. This process involves the awarding body carrying out checks on College staff’s assessments of student work. This is done by sending ‘external moderators’ to the College, where they check assessments against national standards.

Only after these three stages have been completed can you be sure of your results, the certificates for which will be sent to you directly by the awarding body, not the College.

Internal assessment is not just about judging whether you have passed or failed. It also provides both you and your lecturers with important information about what you’re doing well and where you have shortcomings in your knowledge, understanding or skills. Assessment is closely linked to the learning process in the sense that the feedback you will receive from your lecturers will help you improve your work in the future.

Finally, a range of courses delivered in the College are assessed by means of an externally-set and externally-assessed examination. The examining body will inform you directly whether or not you have completed your course successfully. College lecturers are not in a position to tell you whether you have passed or failed, until they have been informed by the examining body (usually at the same time as you will know directly from the examining body). If in doubt, please ask your lecturer about the procedures used.

³ For full details of the College’s regulations about assessment, see the College’s Assessment Procedure.

Re-assessment of your work

If you are unsuccessful in an internal assessment, you will be offered the opportunity to be re-assessed. Depending on the arrangements for re-assessment laid down for a particular unit, this may involve retaking either the whole assessment or just part of it.

You will normally only be allowed one (or, in exceptional circumstances, two) re-assessment opportunities.

Cheating and plagiarism

There are various forms of academic dishonesty but in the student's context it means cheating in examinations or presenting work for assessment which is not your own.

Plagiarism as a form of cheating takes place when the student 'borrows' or copies information, data or results from an unacknowledged source, without quotation marks or any indication that the presenter is not the original author or researcher.

If carried out knowingly, cheating and plagiarism have the objective of deceiving examiners and this threatens the integrity of the assessment procedures and the value of your award.

Work produced by someone else may be summarised or repeated providing it is referenced to the original author. As well as text, work such as diagrams, maps and charts must also be acknowledged. In addition to the use of quotation marks when quoting from original sources and secondary material, full reference for both quotes and paraphrases or summaries of published material must be given. All references should then be included in a bibliography at the end of the piece of work. Appropriate references for web-based material must also be given, including the relevant URL.

Any student found to have used unfair means in any examination or assessment procedure will be penalised.⁴

⁴ For full details of the College's regulations on cheating and plagiarism, see the College Academic Deceit Procedure.

Support for your learning

The College has a positive policy of supporting students with learning difficulties or disabilities and their interests are represented by the Diversity Committee which reports directly to the Principals Group. The College has a Learning Support team, which can provide help and advice on all aspects of learning support and coping with learning difficulties.

The College offers support in making alternative arrangements for exams and assessment, support with study skills and advice with applications for the Disabled Students Allowance. Support and advice can also be provided in the specification and purchase of specialist equipment and the use of Information Technology.

In order to ensure that you are provided with the appropriate advice and support from the start of your studies it is important that you discuss any difficulties and special requirements with the Learning Support Manager, or with your Curriculum Head, as early as possible.

Your feedback

The College requires all courses to have a formal system through which students are invited to comment routinely, in confidence, upon the teaching they have received. This helps us to check that students have a clear idea of our aims in teaching particular units, and of what we expect them to do; that our classroom teaching is effective and stimulating; that our advice and feedback to students on individual work is helpful; and that our resources are adequate.

Questionnaires are the primary mechanism for this formal 'feedback'. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire for each unit you are taught. We appreciate that they can be tiresome to complete in large numbers, but hope that you will take the time to give a full and detailed response. Both negative and positive feedback is important. In order to be able to assess the feedback and to attempt to take appropriate action it is important that when making comments you indicate **why** you feel that something is good or bad, not just that you think it is.

Each lecturer responsible for a unit will prepare a short report analysing the questionnaire returns, highlighting any criticisms or suggestions. The report and the questionnaires for each unit will then be passed on to the Curriculum Head, who will present the reports at meetings of the Course Committee. The reports will also be discussed at appropriate

meetings of staff within the department so that appropriate action can be taken. A summary of the student feedback and the action taken will be included in the Institute's Annual Report which is presented to the College Academic Board.

Your representation

Each course in the College is required to have a Course Team. This meets at least twice a year to review the course and consists of the Curriculum Head, all member of staff who teach units on the course and two representatives from the students on the course.

Prior to each meeting, your course representatives will be given a copy of the agenda and will be asked to consult their fellow students about the items listed and be prepared to report to the meeting on any issues raised.

Following the meeting, the class representatives will receive a copy of the Course Review report to share with their fellow students on the course.

The existence of the formal system of student representation doesn't mean that you should feel this is the only channel open to you. You may of course raise issues directly with a lecturer or your Curriculum Head. Individual problems are often likely to be more easily and quickly resolved in this way.

Your comments, complaints or compliments

Naturally, we hope that your experience at the Adam Smith College will be an enjoyable and rewarding one. However, we do recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and encourage you to make your comments or complaints known to us so that we have the opportunity to resolve the problem and improve our services to you.

Problems are often most quickly and easily sorted by being dealt with informally. So we would ask that, in the first instance, you raise the matter with the appropriate member of staff. If you're not satisfied with the outcome, you can discuss the matter with your Curriculum Head.

Comments or complaints can also be put forward through your course representatives.

Where informal methods have failed to resolve the problem, you can make a formal complaint through the College's Complaint Form, which is available at Reception on all College campuses and in outreach centres or through the Students' Association.

It's always good to hear about what you think we do well and we encourage you to use the Compliments Form available at Reception. Every compliment received will be passed on to the person or department it's about.

Code of conduct

- **Be polite at all times.**
 - Why? It is good manners and will be expected in any future workplace.
- **Use of offensive language (swearing, racist or sexist terms) is not permitted.**
 - Why? Because it is unacceptable to use offensive language in any public place.
- **Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.**
 - Why? Again it is good manners and will be expected in any future workplace.
- **You will be informed at the start of the semester of the starting times for classes. You should ensure that you are on time for the start of classes and on return from breaks.**
 - Why? Good timekeeping is an important skill and avoids disruption to your and other students learning. If you do arrive late enter quietly and cause minimum disruption to the class.
- **Mobile Phones should be switched off or onto silent during classes and should not be answered during class.**
 - Why? Use of mobile phones cause disruption to your and other students learning.
- **Headphones should not be worn in class unless they are being used as part of a multimedia unit.**
 - Why? If you are using headphones you are not giving your full attention to the lesson and may miss important information.
- **You may use computers in classrooms responsibly during your break/lunch times but you must log off and leave if requested to do so by any member of staff.**
 - Why? Classes must have first priority for use of computers

- **Students must not access games, instant messaging or chat rooms during classes.**
 - Why? You are disrupting your learning by not giving full attention to the class work.
- **Food and open drinks containers (cups or cans) are not allowed in the classroom. You may have bottles of soft drinks or preferably water in the class.**
 - Why? Many people use these computers and it is unhygienic to eat whilst using them. Open containers may be knocked over and damage equipment. It has been shown that drinking water improves concentration and general health so you may have bottles in class as they can be sealed.
- **You must bring textbooks, notes, paper, pens and any other equipment needed to every class.**
 - Why? You must have access to the correct equipment in class to allow for successful study. Forgetting equipment disrupts classes and your learning.
- **During the year you will be given dates when you must hand in work or prepare for an assessment. You must meet all deadlines.**
 - Why? All students are given adequate time to prepare their work. Meeting deadlines is an important skill for the work place.
- **Do not use class rooms as a passageway. If you must pass through another classroom to reach your class then do so quickly and quietly.**
 - Why? This disrupts classes and is detrimental to the learning of students in the class you are interrupting.
- **Do not talk in class whilst the lecturer is talking to the group.**
 - Why? Because 1. It is very rude to talk over others and 2. You will seriously disadvantage your and others learning by not paying attention and causing a distraction.

What will happen if I don't follow the code?

- On the first occasion you will be given a warning by the class lecturer.
- If it occurs again you will be asked to leave the class and you will be marked absent.
- If you are asked to leave the same class more than once you must attend a guidance appointment with your Curriculum Head to discuss your future on the course.

Progression

Once you have completed your NQ at Level 5 you may wish to continue your studies at Adam Smith College, or go into employment. Normal progression from this course would be to Level 6.

If you intend to continue to study at Adam Smith College you should discuss this with your Curriculum Head.

The diagram below shows the options for progression from Level 4 upwards.

