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# Qualification Specification

SP4A2 – VTCT Skills (ITEC) Level 4 Award in Dry  
Needling

610/1552/0

Version 2

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# About VTCT Skills

VTCT Skills is a market-leading specialist vocational and technical Awarding Organisation.

We offer a comprehensive range of qualifications, assessments and services in 17 sectors, including Hairdressing, Beauty, Logistics and Early Years. Working closely with employers and training providers, our ranges are backed by industry and trusted around the world.

With over 3,000 training locations, we help over 120,000 learners achieve professional skills that transform their lives, every year.

For more information, please visit our website or contact our dedicated Customer Support Team via email; [customersupport@vtctskills.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@vtctskills.org.uk) or call +44 (0)23 8068 4500.

[www.vtctskills.org.uk](http://www.vtctskills.org.uk)

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# 1 Qualification at a glance

<b>Qualification title</b>	VTCT Skills (ITEC) Level 4 Award in Dry Needling
<b>Qualification number</b>	610/1552/0
<b>Product code</b>	SP4A2
<b>First registration date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2022
<b>Age range</b>	18+
<b>Total Qualification Time (TQT)</b>	35
<b>Guided Learning (GL) hours</b>	21
<b>Assessment</b>	<p>To be awarded this qualification, learners must successfully achieve the following assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practical Examination</li><li>• Portfolio of Evidence</li><li>• Case Studies</li></ul>
<b>Grading</b>	Fail/Pass
<b>Entry requirements</b>	A minimum of a level 4 certificate in Sports Massage Therapy or equivalent.

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## 2 About this qualification

### 2.1 Who is this qualification for?

The VTCT Skills (ITEC) Level 4 Award in Dry Needling is a VRQ qualification aimed at learners aged 18+ who wish to develop the knowledge and skills to deliver dry needling as a therapeutic modality. The qualification is also aimed at existing practitioners, for example in, Sports Therapy, Sports Massage Therapy, Osteopathy, Physiotherapy etc., wishing to undertake continued professional development.

### 2.2 What does this qualification cover?

The qualification includes two mandatory units, which include:

- Theory of dry needling practice
- Planning and delivering safe and effective dry needling techniques

Throughout this qualification, learners will develop their understanding of myofascial pain syndrome and how the mechanisms of dry needling can be used in the treatment of this condition. Learners will also explore the practical skills required to deliver safe and effective dry needling techniques, understand how to plan and provide dry needling techniques and be able to apply these to a range of muscle groups.

### 2.4 What could this qualification lead to?

Learners undertaking this qualification may wish to progress to other training courses, including:

- Advanced dry needling
- Acupuncture courses

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## 3 Qualification structure

To be awarded the VTCT Skills (ITEC) Level 4 Award in Dry Needling learners must achieve all mandatory units.

The minimum TQT required to achieve this qualification is **35**.

Product code	Unit title	Level	GL	Unit reference number
Mandatory unit				
USP196	Theory of dry needling practice	4	5	L/650/4322
USP197	Planning and delivering safe and effective dry needling techniques	4	16	M/650/4323

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## 4 Centre requirements

### 4.1 Approval and recognition

Existing centres that wish to deliver this qualification must obtain recognition using the standard qualification recognition procedures.

New centres that want to deliver this qualification must gain both centre approval and qualification recognition. Please refer to the VTCT Skills website for further information.

Centre staff should be familiar with current practices and standards in the sector and with the qualification structure, content, assessment and quality assurance arrangements before designing a course programme.

### 4.2 Tutors and assessors

In order to deliver and assess this qualification, staff must:

- be occupational experts and have knowledge and understanding in the area for which they are delivering training. This knowledge must be at the same level as or higher than the training being delivered
- understand the qualification's structure and content, and the learning outcomes they are delivering
- have recent and relevant industry experience in the specific area they are delivering
- have credible experience of teaching and/or providing training
- hold or be actively pursuing an appropriate teaching/training qualification
- undertake activities which contribute to their continuing professional development (CPD)

### 4.4 Total Qualification Time (TQT)

TQT is defined as the number of notional hours which represents an estimate of the total amount of time that could reasonably be expected to be required in order for a learner to achieve and demonstrate achievement of the level of attainment necessary for the award of a qualification.

TQT is comprised of the following two elements:

- the number of hours which VTCT Skills has assigned to a qualification for Guided Learning; and
- an estimate of the number of hours a learner will reasonably be likely to spend in preparation, study or any other form of participation in education or training, including assessment, which takes place as directed – but, unlike Guided Learning, not under the immediate guidance or supervision of – a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.

The TQT for this qualification is detailed in Section 3 of this specification.

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## 5 Assessment

### 5.1 Summary of assessment methods

The assessment method for this qualification is internal assessment. Learners must achieve the assessment detailed in the table below.

Mandatory units		
Unit product code	Practical Examination	Portfolio
USP196		✓
USP197	✓	✓

### 5.2. Practical Examination

The content of LO3 and are LO4 covered by a practical examination.

Practical Examination	
Availability	To be scheduled through the VTCT Skills booking system, whether being remotely moderated by an External Moderator or conducted by an in-person External Examiner.
Grading model	Fail, Pass
Units covered	USP197
Type of assessment	Observation of practical client treatment

The practical examination will be conducted by an external examiner; either through direct observation at the centre or through the use of remote moderation using live streaming, facilitated by a centre-based internal assessor.

A remote examination guidance document can be found on the VTCT Skills website. The centre is responsible for ensuring the examination can operate seamlessly by organising the process as defined in the 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations' which can be found on the VTCT Skills websites.

VTCT Skills carries out a range of quality assurance activities to monitor the standards of assessment taking place in centres.

Low or very low risk centres can also avail of an external practical examiner visit at their discretion and from time to time all centres may be subject to a physical external quality assurance visit by VTCT Skills.

### 5.3 Case studies

In addition to the practical examination outlined above, learners must complete a minimum of **5 supervised dry needling case studies**. These will be internally set and internally assessed. Details of the case study information can be found in USP197 unit specification.



## 5.4 Portfolio

As part of this qualification learners are required to produce a portfolio of evidence which contains assessed evidence covering all the assessment criteria and range (where appropriate) in each unit specification, these can be found on the VTCT Skills website. A portfolio of evidence will confirm the knowledge, understanding and skills the learner must achieve.

The portfolio of evidence will be marked pass or fail by the centre lecturer/assessor and may be sampled by the external examiner.

Evidence in the portfolio may take the following forms (this list is not exhaustive):

- Observed work
- Witness statements
- Written questions
- Professional discussion
- Assignments
- Case studies
- Client consultations

All evidence should be documented in the portfolio and cross-referenced to unit outcomes. Oral questions and professional discussions should be recorded and only used for assessments outlined in specific unit specifications.

### 5.4.1 Authentication of learner work

The units in this qualification require evidence to be produced for assessment under direct supervision and controlled conditions, some units require learners to produce evidence without supervision.

Where this is the case, centres must be confident that learners' work is authentic. In such cases, learners must complete a Declaration of Authenticity to confirm that the work produced is their own. This must be countersigned by an assessor. A Declaration of Authenticity form is available to download from the VTCT Skills website.

The authentication of learner evidence is the responsibility of the centre.

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## 6 External Examination and Moderation

### 6.1 External Examiner Visits

Centres delivering this qualification will have a quality assurance visit each time an examiner visits the centre.

On a centre visit an examiner:

- examines all learners entered for the external practical examination
- samples learners' internally assessed case studies
- verifies that appropriate staff and sufficient resources are in place, and that the centre is continuing to meet the criteria specified in the centre contract
- checks that the centre's policies and procedures continue to meet VTCT Skills requirements
- allocates a quality assurance risk-rating to the centre
- provides advice and guidance on quality assurance matters

### 6.2 External Moderator

VTCT Skills carries out a range of quality assurance activities to monitor the standards of assessment taking place in centres.

Centres rated by their VTCT Skills external quality assurer or practical examiner, as being **very low risk or low risk** can avail of the remote moderation option for the practical exam.

The process of remote moderation of the practical exam, requires a suitably qualified centre-based assessor to observe and mark the practical exam for every learner. Simultaneously, a live-streamed External Moderator will observe and mark the practical exam for every learner, using the multiple device set up, within Microsoft Teams, to facilitate the viewing of multiple practical observations at the same time.

VTCT Skills has published a guidance document which sets out all the scheduling, set-up and delivery requirements for facilitating live-stream remote moderation at your centre using MS Teams. VTCT Skills can also facilitate other platforms for remote moderation.

Centres rated as **high or very high risk** by their VTCT Skills external quality assurer or practical examiner, shall not be eligible for remote moderation. These centres will be visited physically by an external examiner who will conduct the practical exam for every learner.

### 6.3 Spot Checking

In addition to the scheduled EQA visits, targeted and unannounced spot checks of centres delivering this qualification will be undertaken as part of the awarding organisation's formal quality assurance process.

For more information, visit the VTCT Skills website.

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## 7 Unit structure

The unit is available as a separate specification and can be downloaded from the VTCT Skills website. The unit that makes up this qualification is structured as follows:

<b>Product code</b>	The code allocated by the awarding organisation. This should be used when communicating directly with the awarding organisation.
<b>Title</b>	Reflects the content of the unit.
<b>Unit reference number</b>	This is the unit reference number as detailed the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications.
<b>Level</b>	This represents the level of achievement. The National Qualifications Framework level descriptors and similar qualifications at this level inform the allocation of the unit level.
<b>Guided Learning (GL) hours</b>	All units have GL assigned to them. This is the time a learner spends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• being taught or given instruction by a lecturer, tutor, supervisor or other appropriate provider of education or training</li></ul>
<b>Overview</b>	Provides a summary of what learners will cover in a unit, and outlines the knowledge and understanding to be developed.
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	Specify what a learner will know and understand as a result of completing a unit.
<b>Assessment criteria</b>	Assessment criteria specify the minimum standard required by the learner to achieve the relevant grade. Learners must provide sufficient and valid evidence to achieve the grade.
<b>Taught content</b>	Provides the basis for the teaching, learning and assessment of each learning outcome. Teachers and tutors should ensure that the full breadth of unit content is delivered.
<b>Assessment requirements</b>	Details the assessments that must be completed and achieved to be awarded a unit. For more information on assessment methods see Section 5 of this specification.

## Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1.0	01/10/2022	First published	Product and Regulation Coordinator
v2.0	01/01/2025	New branding	Qualifications Administrator