



National External Diploma Program Workforce Skills Certificate System Overview

The CASAS Workforce Skills Certification System (WSCS) certifies workforce readiness in skill areas that are critical to entry-level employment and career success. CASAS intends to offer the Workforce Skills Certificate as an optional task for the NEDP. This additional task will provide students the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in workplace basic skills and soft skills and earn an **NEDP Workforce Skills Certificate**. The Certificate would be awarded to successful candidates in addition to their diploma earned through the National External Diploma Program – a “Diploma Plus”.

The workforce readiness task provides enhanced employment opportunity for NEDP candidates who are underemployed or who are transitioning to the workforce, whether for the first time or after an extended absence. This task is designed to augment the NEDP with a set of assessments that focus on the critical skills required for entry-level employment and career advancement in a wide range of industries. The resulting Certificate enhances an NEDP graduate’s job-seeking efforts by demonstrating to employers that he or she has the skills needed to become a valued employee and the motivation to earn the Workforce Skills Certificate in addition to an NEDP diploma.

The NEDP Workforce Skills Certificate will certify skills in these proposed areas:

- Reading and Math
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- LRI Workforce Readiness Skills/ Soft skills
 - Personal Qualities
 - Customer Service

The skills measured by the NEDP Workforce Skills Certificate reinforce those covered in NEDP Twenty-First Century Workplace competencies (numbers 59-70).

The **CASAS Workforce Skills Certification System** was developed in collaboration with Strumpf Associates: Center for Strategic Change of Washington, DC and LEED-Sacramento (Linking Education and Economic Development), a non-profit coalition of business, labor, education and government organizations.

Many companies contributed to the development of WSCS including: Bank of America, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Pacific Bell, and Sutter Health.

Employers identified the skills that are critical to entry-level positions *with potential for career growth* - and are closely linked to industry skill standards in banking, healthcare, and high-tech manufacturing and are applicable across industries. Validated by employers from a broad range of industries, WSCS is aligned with SCANS¹ and O*NET² skills.

¹ In 1990, the Secretary of Labor appointed a commission to determine the skills young people needed to succeed in the workplace. Its findings and recommendations continue to inform education and workforce development providers.

² Created for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, O*NET is the primary source of occupational information. It is free to the public and allows exploration of hundreds of occupations.

The **LRI Workforce Readiness Skills** assessments were developed with the support of the US Department of Labor to help those seeking to develop basic employability skills of future workers. Initially developed for Johns Hopkins University, the assessments were utilized by educational institutions and social service agencies participating in the Johns Hopkins Career Transcript System. They are also used as new hire screening instructions by companies and organizations that hire from entry-level populations.

The skills measures by the **NEDP Workforce Skills Certificate** (comprised of the CASAS WSCS and LRI Workforce Readiness Skills) are aligned with the Skills for the 21st Century³, particularly in the areas of:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration
- Information Literacy
- Life and Career Skills

For additional information, see:

- CASAS Workforce Skills Certification System:
<https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/assessments/WSCS>
- Learning Resources, Inc. (LRI):
http://www.learning-resources.com/entry_level_program_demo.cfm

³ The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is a national organization that advocates for 21st century readiness for every student. P21 and its members provide tools and resources to help the U.S. education system keep up by fusing the three Rs and four Cs (critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation).