**Learning Resources Inc**
Assessing, Developing & Documenting Soft Skills

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# Workforce Skills Certification System (WSCS)

## Summary

Employers need workers whose academic, technical and soft skills align with the requirements of available jobs. They value workers who can grow on the job. Employers want to invest in applicants and incumbent workers who learn independently, benefit from training, take on new responsibilities, and move up their career ladder.  Enabling people to acquire and document their effective basic skills is the goal of work-readiness and the Workforce Skills Certification System.

The **Workforce Skills Certification System (WSCS)** documents and develops employer-validated academic and soft skills and facilitates peoples' transition to the workforce.

WSCS:

o   Assesses and **documents** the work-related academic and soft skills a person currently has
o   Provides specific information to help **develop** these skills to assist those candidates not ready for certification
o   **Certifies** work-related skills demonstrated at a high level

## Certifying body

CASAS – the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems and its soft skill assessment partner, Learning Resources, Inc. (LRI) created this unique system, which rests on a foundation of demonstrated academic and soft skills competencies.

WSCS combines the experience and expertise of two proven leaders in assessment, CASAS and LRI. Both CASAS and LRI credential high performance levels using nationally normed programs that have assessed millions of future and incumbent workers. Training is available to help users implement and manage the administration of WSCS.

## Target Population

The Workforce Skills Certification System is designed for youth and adults, including those entering the workforce, those transitioning to work, incumbent workers, and dislocated workers. This also includes:

o   Individuals in correctional settings preparing for release and those in transitioning programs
o   Unemployed and underemployed individuals
o   Individuals reentering the labor market including TANF clients preparing for work
o   English language learners, Adult Basic Education learners, and GED learners

## Testing locations and sites

WSCS can be part of a statewide strategy, or may be used by individual service providers trained by CASAS. The **Workforce Skills Certification System** is administered and awarded at a local, regional, or state level by organizations including chambers of commerce, business associations, workforce investment boards, and educational institutions (e.g., high schools, community colleges) or programs such as VABE and VESL programs.

**Work readiness curricula and support**

CASAS provides a WSCS competency framework that service provides can use to build, modify, or enrich their work readiness curricula.

LRI's curriculum and development tools fit within the CASAS framework; these flexible resources facilitate the integration of soft skills development within any academic or technical program.

Service providers that administer WSCS are able to customize curricula tailored to job requirements, learner needs, and learner assessment results. They are able to use a free resource - **CASAS Quick Search** - an online easy-to-use database that provides invaluable curriculum support. This database contains titles of more than 2,500 commercially available print, audio, visual, and computer-related instructional materials appropriate for use with adults and youth. Users can locate and sort instructional resources by WSCS competencies, learner skill levels, and publisher and titles. This expedites the process to identify instructional materials that can be ordered from publishers. All QuickSearch reports generated can be stored, shared, and printed free of charge.

**Competencies assessed:**

WSCS documents and certifies the work readiness competencies identified by employers as necessary for entry-level employment and career advancement.

Academic Skills
A person's **reading** and **math** skills are determined by their responses to internationally validated, standardized assessments developed by CASAS. The basic academic reading and math skills are measured by written multiple choice test items using materials taken from common work settings. Results are reported using National Reporting System (NRS) Educational Functioning Levels (EFL) accepted by both the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education to track academic skill achievement. Go to www.casas.org to see sample test items.

Soft Skills
Soft skills are effective **workplace behaviors**. The soft skills measured and developed as part of WSCS are:

- **Personal Qualities** – Integrity, Responsibility, Self-esteem, Self-Management, Sociability
- **Customer Care** – Customer Relations, Decision-Making, Commitment to Quality
- **The specific behaviors** measured by Personal Qualities and Customer Care appear here.

The soft skills are measured using video-based assessments that present candidates with realistic work-based scenarios that measure their skills in comparison to performance criteria validated by employers nationwide. This process effectively measures the soft skills of job applicants and incumbent workers. Go to www.learning-resources.com to view sample videos.

**Scoring and Test format**

Using computer-delivered employer-validated tools, WSCS incorporates a variety of testing formats including multiple choice, generated (written) response, and video simulation. The tests are automatically scored and the test results are captured in a backend database. A **Workforce Skills Profile** is generated locally for each test taker. Reports are also available to show the test taker's skills as well as the skills they could develop.

Academic Skills
For the **Workforce Skills Profile**
CASAS Employability Competency System (ECS) - computer delivered
o   ECS Reading – 60 minutes
o   ECS Math – 60 minutes

For the **Workforce Skills Certificate**
CASAS Form 551 - computer delivered
o   Reading –  40 minutes
o   Math  – 40 minutes
o   CASAS Critical Thinking – 15 minutes
o   CASAS Problem Solving – 25 minutes

Soft Skills - for both the **Workforce Skills Profile** and **the Workforce Skills Certificate**
Module 1 - **Personal Qualities** - Internet- or DVD-delivered
o   40 minute video during which the viewer responds to 28 work-related questions
Module 2 - **Customer Care** - Internet- or DVD-delivered
o   37 minute video during which the viewer responds to 28 work-related questions

## Certification process

The WSCS is a 3 step process: document skills, develop skills (as needed), and certify skills.

A candidate begins by taking the work-related academic and soft skills assessments. The results are documented on the *Workforce Skills Profile*. The *Workforce Skills Profile* lists the skills demonstrated by the candidate. Potential employers highly value this information when they are looking for qualified job candidates. For those working under WIA, the academic scores can be used to meet federal reporting requirements.

Next, the candidate participates in classes/training designed around the work-related **academic and soft skills and competencies employers** are looking for - making the best use of training time. The specific skills to be **developed** are clearly spelled out in easy-to-read learner-level reports (generated locally) based on results from employer-validated assessment tools.

Once a person has demonstrated all the required skills, they are eligible to be awarded a *Workforce Skills Certificate*, which shows employers that they have all of the high-level skills needed to succeed and move up the career ladder. The skills demonstrated are listed on the back of the certificate.

Go to [www.learning-resources](www.learning-resources).com to see sample **Profiles** and **Certificates**.

## Cost

The following prices are estimates for initial planning purposes. Please call for alternative pricing options based on volume and current customer status

o   CASAS eTests and LRI soft skills = approximately $45 per candidate
    This price provides for sufficient reading, math, and soft skill assessments for one year as well as unlimited soft skill development; volume use lowers the unit cost
o   Startup implementation = $950
    Includes training to implement computer-delivered academic and soft skills assessment tools. Additional implementation and staff-development training is available from CASAS and LRI
o   TOPSpro = $1,995
    This software allows local generation of unlimited **Workforce Skills Profiles, Workforce Skills Certificates**; as well as learner-level, class-level and program-level competency reports to target instruction; and learning (gains) progress reports
o   Additional CASAS/LRI training is available as needed to support the implementation of WSCS.

Summary – What is needed to implement WSCS?

1. Install CASAS TOPSpro to generate WSCS Profiles and WSCS Certificates.
2. Install CASAS eTests to assess basic academic skills.
3. Install LRI's Workforce Readiness Skills (WRS) program – on-line or via DVD.
4. Establish classes where academic skills can be developed
5. Integrate LRI's soft skills into academic and/or technical programs.
6. Engage employers to ensure that learners leave your programs with the specific skills employers require.

## Employment-related outcomes

Employers looking for qualified candidates are key in this process. They determine work readiness skill levels based on the jobs they need to fill. To assist local businesses to more accurately define the academic and soft skills their jobs require, easy-to-use Employer Survey tools are available at no extra cost.

CASAS/LRI do not currently track employment-related outcomes. Agencies that administer WSCS evaluate outcomes locally.

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