



Development of a VET curricula for Personal Assistant professional profile  
based on the European Framework of Qualifications

## EU-Assistant: Development of a VET curricula for Personal Assistant professional profile based on the European Framework of Qualifications

# *MODULE 7 – OTHER PERSONAL SKILLS*



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. MODULE DESCRIPTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. FLEXIBILITY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1. Adaptation to the user.....	6
3.2. Adaptation to different contexts.....	6
<b>4. RESPECT.....</b>	<b>8</b>
4.1. Being in the background.....	8
4.2. Be a good conflict solver.....	8
4.3. Ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the user's life.....	9
<b>5. USE OF ICT.....</b>	<b>10</b>
5.1. Let's talk about Internet, web 2.0, social networking.....	10
5.2. Online synchronus communication tools for person with special needs.....	12
5.3. Multimedia sharing.....	14
5.4. Tips for online communication.....	15
<b>8. REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>17</b>

## 1. MODULE DESCRIPTION

<b>MODULE TITLE</b>	OTHER PERSONAL SKILLS
<b>KEYWORDS</b>	skill, personal, functional diversity, respect, flexibility, personal assistance, adaptation, ICT
<b>TARGET GROUP</b>	This module will be aimed at those who want to know how to develop other personal skills.
<b>LEVEL</b>	medium
<b>CAREER OPPORTUNITIES</b>	People who want to become Personal Assistant for people with functional diversity.
<b>AIMS OF MODULE</b>	<p>This module provides participants with practical knowledge, understanding, resources and opportunities to learn how to develop other personal skills also important to work as a PA.</p> <p>The student will know how to be flexible in her/his daily work, respectful with the user and his context and how to use the ICT.</p>
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	Upon completion of this module, the participant will have learned how to be flexible and respectful.

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<b>LEARNING</b>	
<b>PREREQUISITE (S) SKILLS:</b>	Basic use of ICT.
<b>PREREQUISITE (S) COURSE:</b>	none
<b>GUIDED LEARNING HOURS:</b>	2
<b>COMPENTENCY</b>	The student develops transversal competences for the performance of the profession like to be flexible, maintains an attitude of respect for the needs and realities of the users and improves their ICT knowledges.
<b>ASSESMENT</b>	The evaluation will consist of a multiple choice type test and develop response exercise, which will test the knowledge and understanding of students through learning outcomes test.
<b>CATEGORY</b>	cost (cost optimization) time (efficient time management) s-quality (service quality) m-quality (management quality)
<b>SUPLEMANTARY MATERIAL (S)</b>	none

## 2. INTRODUCTION

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Dear participant,

Welcome to this module! This module is created within the framework of training for people who are interested in becoming personal assistants for people with disabilities. In this module you will learn about other important personal skills when it comes to being a personal assistant, and it is how to be a flexible worker, adapting the work to the user and know how to be in different contexts.

Module 5 includes contents about flexibility, but also about how to be in the background, being a good conflict solver and to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the user's life. Finally, at this module the student will learn basic use of ICS, reading about Internet, web 2.0, social networking, online synchronous communication tools for person with special needs, multimedia sharing and tips for online communication..

Warm regards,

EU- Assistant Project Team

## 3. FLEXIBILITY

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Flexibility is defined as the ability to adapt one's behavior with agility to the circumstances of each person or situation, without abandoning the criteria of personal performance.

### 3.1. Adaptation to the user

A Personal Assistant is a professional figure that stands out, precisely, for its flexibility. Taking into account that the same assistant can attend several users and each of these users is a unique person, with their likes, preferences, weaknesses or strengths ... It's not difficult to understand that one of their main skills has to be flexibility.

Although the personal assistant may have regular and specialized training of social-health or similar type, or experience in care or assistance, it is imperative that when starting to assist a new user, he does this with the intention of listening and learning the way he want to be treated. While both meet basic safety guidelines, it will be the user who will determine the form and timing of the tasks.

All the knowledge that the personal assistant has is useful for the job, but do not forget that each person is particular and that the conditions in which his work will be developed will not always be similar to those learned in theory.

The worker must be able to adjust his way of doing things (mobilizations, transfers, homework, support in general) to the way the user needs it, since the latter has to exercise control over everything related to Its day to day.

Through questions, the personal assistant should make sure to perform the tasks of daily life at the time and in the way that the user would do if he did not have the condition of physical disability.

Although this skill may be difficult to perform, it is easier to develop if we practice empathy with the user and his lifestyle.

Finally, routine and work schedules are other aspects in which the personal assistant must show some flexibility, and to understand it is necessary to be aware that the life of the user, like that of any person, also has some spontaneity, So a flexible personal assistant will have to adjust to changes as much as possible.

### 3.2. Adaptation to the different contexts

Another important aspect to keep in mind is that personal assistant work does not take place in a single position (like in an office), but rather takes place in the life of the user: at home, at work, at work, at his school, in the street, in his leisure activities, with his family, with his partner...

Therefore, it is necessary for the assistant to know how to adapt to these different contexts.

It is necessary to differentiate situations in which the assistant can have a more relaxed relationship with the user, such as at home when they are alone, and when should have a more professional and distant attitude, such as at work or at school. This is important so that the user can develop in their environment normally without the assistant influencing him and his interactions a lot.

As for their interpersonal relationships, the personal assistant should be friendly and kind to the loved ones of the user, however should always remember that they are not friends and maintain respect for the user's privacy in their conversations.

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## 4. RESPECT

### 4.1. Being in the background

The ability of the personal assistant to be in the background is very important because the user and his environment should not feel limited their privacy by the presence too close to the assistant.

That is not to say that the assistant can not be present in social situations, but that he must find a balance between proactivity and respect for privacy.

For example, it can be placed at a safe distance from the user while he is having a conversation with another person, or he can let him know where he is going to be if the user needs it (this place can not be far from the user and must be accessible to him).

### 4.2. Be a good conflict solver

To avoid as many problems as possible in the Assistant-User relationship it is very important to be able to communicate well.

It is necessary to be aware that the conflicts are normal and that they will appear, however if both parties want to maintain that working relationship, they will have to face them and learn to solve them, never to avoid them because they will appear again in the future and with greater resentment.

Good communication and mutual respect are the keys so that a conflict does not become something irresolvable. At times, however, it would be desirable to be able to go to the entity that manages the service to help mediation.

#### **Aspects to consider:**

- It is impossible not to communicate. All behavior is a form of communication.
- Human communication involves two modalities: verbal and non-verbal. Many communication problems are due to a discrepancy between the two modalities.
- The most important thing about communication is the desire to communicate.
- Language must be understandable to both parties.

It is important to be aware of how we elaborate the discourse, how we expose our ideas and how we are influenced by the previous ideas we have (prejudices). Be

aware also that sometimes we interpret the words of the other giving a different meaning to the one that pretended the other.

### **4.3. Ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the user's life**

Privacy and confidentiality are indispensable requirements for this kind of job. The personal assistant will be present in very intimate moments of the user, both positive and negative, but everything he witnesses must be within the professional secret. Neither the family, nor the friends, nor the couple, nor the professionals that attend to the user must receive personal information from him by his personal assistant. It is not their function to inform the environment about aspects of the user's life, whether they are important or not, and therefore, in most cases will sign a contract of confidentiality.

## 5. USE OF ICT

Developing communication technology can reduce dependence on the others and facilitate independent living for people with disabilities. For example, the last development of mobile/ Android telephone services allow users to make a very quickly call when they need it. The increasing the using of social networking makes the people with special needs to socialize and make friends around the world.



### 5.1. Let's talk about Internet, web 2.0, social networking

*Internet* is a worldwide network of computers. Computers of majority organizations, educational institutions, companies are connected into network. Every computer that is connected to the Internet is identified according to his unique digital address (IP address), e.g. IP address - 64.233.183.83, while its symbolic name is <http://www.google.com/>

Internet could be used to communicate with partners, friends, mentors and mentees, search for new information, new job, publish publications.

Internet network users could use:

- e-mail service;
- online communication services;
- information search services;
- videoconferencing services;
- World Wide Web services;
- E-commerce services etc.

The most part of information is placed in web pages. Web page or web portal is a hypertext document coded in HTML language (HTML - *HyperText Markup Language*). Internet browsers are used to view Internet documents, e.g. *Internet Explorer, Mozilla, Netscape*.

Besides text information, video, audio and graphic information is stored in the Internet too. Nowadays almost everything that user is interested in could be find in the Internet, and you can use search tools to do that.

In 2004 O'Reily Media hosted the first *Web 2.0* conference. From that time Internet changed dramatically, turning from "web of reading" to "web of writing". Blogs, wikis, social networks and bookmarking systems, video and audio podcasting, new ways of synchronous and asynchronous communication provide new possibilities for teaching, learning, collaborative work, etc.



The main features of Web 2.0 tools are dynamism, openness and free availability. These tools also help to create frequently asked questions list for example and allows users to comment them or to share their experience. They also help to create much more useful information and increases knowledge.

The most popular Web 2.0 tools are: blogging, wiki's, video sharing sites, social networking, social bookmarking, etc.

All the examples mentioned above can be used to create an effective communication between the person with special needs and his/her personal assistant, friends, family members, etc.



**Social networking** is defined as the grouping of individuals together into to specific groups, often like a small community or a neighborhood. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in schools or in the workplace, it is most popular online in websites with message boards or forums and community groups. This is because unlike most high schools, colleges, or workplaces, the internet is filled with millions, if not more, of individuals who are looking to meet other internet users and develop friendships. Most used are: **Facebook, Twitter,**

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**Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn.** The friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits to social networking online. Another benefit is diversity. The internet gives individuals, from all around the world, access to community networking sites. This means that although you are from Europe, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Japan. Not only will you make a new friend, you but may also learn a thing or two about a new culture.

Today you will find many health and disability community networking websites online.

If you are a bit unsure of how you might find fun activities near you, you could try a local social club. These are very good to join because you can do something you enjoy and get to know other people at the same time. Many clubs and disability groups cater to people with various levels of disability and age groups in which volunteers teach skills useful for independent living and integration into society while providing them with an opportunity to interact socially with other people.

## **5.2. Online synchronus communication tools for person with special needs**

Internet offers the possibility to communicate with other people that could be in any place of the world. Electronic message reaches its target in a few seconds/minutes. Communication over the Internet could be established in a several ways, the only thing is to select the appropriate one: write e-mail to one or several people, chat online using synchronous communication tools, participate in discussion groups or share your impressions and useful information in forums.

If a group of people is not connected to the Internet at the same time it is better to select e-mails for communication. Received e-mail could read and replied any time.

Today there are many websites offering live voice chat rooms and instant messengers (IMs), enabling users to both hear and speak to one another online. If several people could connect to the Internet at the same time, they could use real time synchronous internet communication tools (chat rooms and IMs). The main voice chat rooms are free and supplied by websites such as *ICQ, Yahoo!, MSN, AOL, Windows Live Messenger, Skype*, and the new Google Talk Instant Messenger and chat client. Google Talk enables you to call or send instant messages to your friends for free anytime, anywhere in the world.

**VOIP** - Voice over IP (VoIP) is defined as a methodology and group of technologies for the delivery of voice communications and multimedia sessions over Internet Protocol (IP) networks, such as the Internet. Other terms commonly associated with VoIP are IP telephony, Internet telephony, broadband telephony, and broadband phone service.

**VoIP phones** - A VoIP phone or IP Phone uses Voice over IP (Voice over Internet Protocol - VoIP) technologies for placing and transmitting telephone calls over an IP network, such as the Internet, instead of the traditional public switched telephone network (PSTN).

**Mobile VoIP** - Or simply mVoIP is an extension of mobility to a Voice over IP network. Two types of communication are generally supported: cordless/DECT/PCS protocols for short range or campus communications where all base stations are linked into the same LAN, and wider area communications using 3G/4G protocols.

All that you need to engage in voice chat are:

- ❖ 166MHz processor with 16MB of RAM (minimum)
- ❖ Internet connection (56 kbps minimum)
- ❖ Full-duplex sound card required (for Audio)
- ❖ Microphone, Speakers or Headset (for Audio)

**Windows Live Messenger** as well as **Skype** are synchronous communication tools for Internet which let you send instant messages, call to other *Windows Live Messenger* users to mobile phones. Also users could establish video conference, share files. Furthermore additional features are available: several *Windows Live Messenger* users could play games, send pictures that are drawn using this program, or two users could draw the same picture online at the same time. This program can be downloaded for free from the original site of the program.

**Yahoo Messenger** allows users send instant messages, create video or audio conference. Program notifies users when they new mail appears in e-mail inbox or upcoming new event that is scheduled in *Yahoo* calendar. Users can also listen Internet radio. Similarly to other communication tools users could share their files and photos with each other, play games or use special plug-ins.

*Yahoo Messenger* could be downloaded from <http://messenger.yahoo.com/>.



**Skype** was founded in 2003. It's based in Luxembourg, with offices in Europe, the US and Asia. It's owned by an investor group led by Silver Lake and which includes eBay Inc, Joltid Limited and Skype founders Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and Andreessen Horowitz.

At peak times,  
there are

**23 million**  
users online

What's most important, however, is what Skype can do. Voice and video calling, IM and SMS are available on a wide range of operating systems and mobile devices. They connect business colleagues, saving them time and money and allowing them to stay ahead of the competition. And they help keep friends and families together, wherever they are in the world.

Skype was mainly developed for the communication and it can be adapted to persons with special needs as well. Skype has developed many features in order to ensure reliable communication.

The main features of Skype are:

- **Video calling.** This feature gives the possibility to call people and see them all over the world.
- **Call to phones and mobiles:** You can buy Skype credits and make calls to your friends or relatives all over the world.
- **Free Skype calls:** You can call anyone to their Skype's and have long conversations.
- **Group video call:** A perfect tool for online conversation.

### 5.3. Multimedia sharing

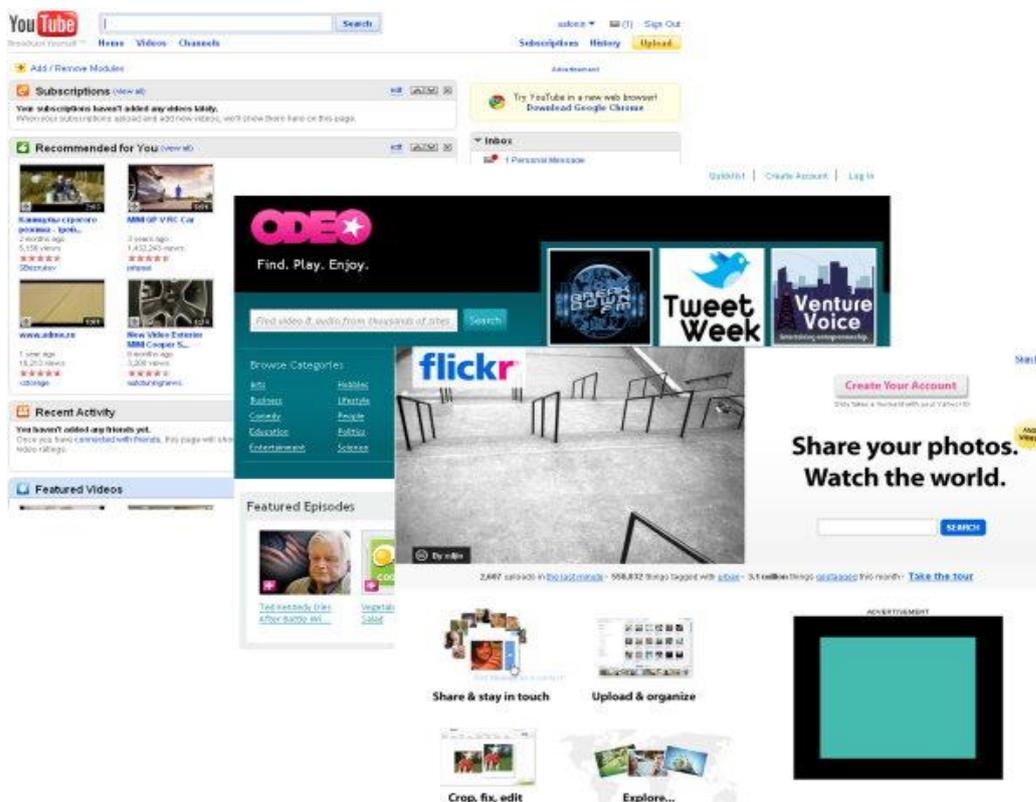
Multimedia sharing services showed tremendous growth over the last couple years. Such services as **YouTube** (video sharing), **Flickr** (photo

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Video about photo  
sharing:

<http://www.commoncraft.com/photosharing>

sharing) or **Odeo** (podcasting) are good examples of Web 2.0 idea working in practice. From being “web of reading” it became a “web of writing”. The content of these services is generated by millions of users that are creating, uploading and sharing gigabytes of their video, photo and audio resources with others. This development has been made possible because the widespread adoption of high quality, but relatively low cost digital media technology such as home video cameras, photo cameras, microphones and etc. (Anderson, 2007)



### 5.4. Tips for online communication



- Establish regular meeting times. Make a special effort to adjust preferably once a week virtual meetings if it is possible. The golden standard is weekly for 1 to 1.5 hours; however, you may agree on what will work for both of you and do

it regularly.

- Do your best to keep the lines going. In the online world,



of communication "dead time" in

communication can cause breakdowns in relationships. It is very frustrating for a person who sends out a message and doesn't get a reply. You can learn the person with special needs to answer at the messages received in a maximum of 48 hours.

- You can learn the person with special needs to maintain regular contact with his/her online friends. Sometimes a short sentence acknowledging receipt of a message and saying to be in contact later will be sufficient during a busy time. A quick line, such as "I haven't heard from you lately, are you very busy?" may help bridge a lag in communication.
- Logging in often is helpful. Keep the connections rolling.
- Part of your role as a personal assistant involves establishment of a trusting relationship. During this relationship there might be periods of busy schedule, off days, sick leaves, travels, any times you will be out of reach, you will have limited access to internet or you will be offline, etc. Take some time before these periods to establish a plan for communication with the person with special needs. Planning your communication pattern early will help avoid a disappointing gap in communication which will require much effort to fill in again.
- What if an unplanned situation occurs? Just send a message saying that you're under such and such condition. Give an approximate time you expect to be out of touch. For example: *"There is an urgent problem with my family, will be out of touch until Monday!"* This helps the other person know why you're not replying.
- Sometimes technical difficulties occur. If this happens, contact your related service providers directly so that technical difficulties can be handled promptly.

## 5. REFERENCES

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