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recognising achievement in adult learning

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Terminology

Aim The overall intention and purpose of a learning programme expressed in general terms.

Learning goal The learning goal is used here to signify overall achievement. In qualification-bearing or accredited programmes this is the award. In non-accredited learning, achievement of the learning goal is achievement of the aim as expressed in agreed learning objectives.

Learning objectives Key elements of a learning programme which contribute to the aim and are to be achieved.

Learning outcomes The results of a learning experience including new knowledge, understanding and skills gained, increased confidence and readiness to progress to further learning or take on other new challenges. These are not necessarily the same as the objectives planned at the outset.

Learning outcomes methodology An approach to planning, facilitating and assessing learning which takes as its starting point the definition of desired learning outcomes. As practised in adult and community learning it typically includes negotiation and agreement of learning outcomes between tutor and learners, optional re-negotiation during the learning programme and the use of the planned outcomes (individual or shared) for reviewing progress and assessing learners' achievements during the programme and at the end.

Introduction

Why do adults take part in learning? There are many possible answers but a characteristic adult learners share is a high degree of self-motivation. Even when they feel pushed by circumstances or needs, it is generally the learners that have taken the decision and enrolled. Adult and community learning (ACL) offers them an adult environment within which to learn, an experience essentially different from their experience of school, however rich that may have been, and an environment in which they can work to their own goals whatever their level of study. The agenda belongs to the learners.

Or does it? ACL providers must respond not only to the voices of their learners but also to national priorities and standards. Among these is the requirement to provide evidence of learner achievement. How can ACL providers show achievement when so many learners are on learning programmes which are not accredited? Will such a process change the provision in ways the learners do not want? Many LEAs and providers have increased their offer of qualification-bearing and accredited programmes, providing new opportunities for learners, but the demand for non-accredited learning remains. So, too, does the sense of achievement of learners on non-accredited programmes.

ACL providers have developed experience and systems for recognising achievement which make flexible use of the learning outcomes methodology, or the achievement of learning objectives. Often they provide a mix of accredited and non-accredited work. Developing practice is explored here to help clarify issues and choices rather than to promote any particular approach. Different solutions will be needed to match the diversity of provision.

Systems introduced to demonstrate progress have an impact on learners. If they raise achievements they will increase learner satisfaction, but they need to be sensitive to the ethos of adult learning.

Where learners have chosen non-accredited programmes that choice must be respected. The focus is on quality, and achievement will continue to be a key indicator of this while details of funding methodology change. The task is, therefore, to develop systems which not only recognise achievements but help to raise them.

New context : new challenges

ACL providers need to be able to show that the learners are learning and making progress. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), which plans and funds post-16 learning, will look for evidence of achievements in reviewing provider performance. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) has begun inspecting provision in line with the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), which opens with the question 'How well do learners achieve?'

In preparation for this first round of inspections the ALI carried out 10 pilot inspections and published a report (ALI 2002a). Their findings provide useful pointers for managers who will want to consider whether they apply to their provision. Among the inspectors' findings were 'insufficient recording and checking of learners' progress' (p6) and 'insufficient collection and use of data' (p13).

Non-accredited provision spans the range of ACL. It includes return to learning, basic and key skills, pre-vocational, general education, family learning, community and issue-based and liberal adult education programmes. It is important not to use these categories to make assumptions about learners' reasons for participation or about how they will use their learning. Learners can sample and select from the broad curriculum of traditional adult education before making a major commitment. In non-accredited learning they can find routes into foundation, vocational or academic courses which they might not have thought of undertaking, or they can use it to enrich their lives. They can draw on their learning in their wider community or family roles. Two things are important here, the motivation and purpose of the learner – which can change – and whether the learning experience really facilitates development and progress.

Responding to the national agenda will sometimes involve changes in the learning culture. The challenge to providers is to increase the focus on learner progress without losing sight of learners' perspectives and preferred styles, and to look for ways of recognising and recording learner achievements that match these perspectives and styles.

Key questions

1 Is there a clear rationale underlying the offer of:

- non-accredited learning
- credit-bearing qualifications, including those in the National Qualifications Framework?

The answer will vary from place to place, but often historical reasons, funding pressures and the enthusiasms of individuals have played a part alongside needs analysis and planned curriculum development. Many adult and community providers offer a mix of credit-bearing and non-accredited provision. As they plan where to apply a new system within existing learning programmes providers will confront this question.

2 Why would a provider choose not to offer a qualification?

There are a number of possible reasons:

- to allow for negotiation and so offer increased autonomy and respect to learners
- to provide 'safe' first steps towards qualification courses or employment
- to keep programmes flexible and build in learner success
- so that learners with very different backgrounds, levels of general education and learning skills can learn together successfully because of shared interests
- to attract learners who have had negative experiences of assessment
- to reflect learners' priorities (for some, accreditation is not what is important – at best it is a diversion and, potentially, a distortion)
- to avoid over-burdening short courses with inappropriate requirements.

3 So, where non-accredited learning is the preferred option, how do we know that learners progress and achieve their aims? How do we develop good practice in recognising and recording achievement?

Recognising achievement

Achievement in learning means increased skills, knowledge and understanding. It is many faceted. The richness of a successful learning experience and the gains to individuals and groups cannot all be defined. We recognise the impact in use and enjoyment. While a sense of achievement, and the potential to do more, comes with successful learning, learners sometimes undervalue their achievements and do not gain the confidence they need to move on. Assessment is a means of analysing learning, enabling learners to see their progress, gain confidence and build on it – to recognise it more fully.

Formalising assessment will bring about changes in the culture of ACL and learners, tutors and managers will need to work together to ensure that its impact is positive and that the part assessment plays is kept in balance with other kinds of learning activity.

Learning achievement shows itself in increased participation and interaction within groups as well as in specific attainments linked to the curriculum. Some of it remains unseen because learning can lie dormant long after a course has finished and only translate into action when the right moment comes. Some learning leaps defy analysis. A work of sculpture may show achievement of the learning objectives and of something more. Learning can be interrogated but retains its mystery.

The value of assessment

We recognise achievement by assessing learning, by finding out how much individuals and groups have learned: what they know, understand and can do. Some learners value formal assessment, but it is not always welcome and not always helpful. Research done by NIACE on learners on non-accredited courses (Turner and Watters 2001) has shown that not only do they value the opportunity to study without qualifications but that:

Assessment was not a term used by learners. It appeared to connote judgmental, unsympathetic attitudes and provoked strong antipathy among some. Instead, they spoke of feedback from tutors, which was valued highly.

Useful feedback is an outcome of assessment, and giving and receiving feedback is often part of the process of assessing. Learners want their learning to be assessed and feel the benefit of it, but the term is loaded with negative associations. Some have definite ideas about the kind of assessment which furthers their learning and which is acceptable to them.

An important point here is that most of the feedback which is valued so highly is part of the learning process and not something that happens at the end. Tutors use their skills in:

- listening, observing, checking and questioning
- giving vital one-to-one feedback just at the right moment
- asking – are learners making the progress I expect? what is the most helpful next step?

This is formative assessment.

Purposes of assessment

Formative and summative assessment both have a part to play.

Formative assessment contributes to the learning process by:

- helping learners progress – giving them confidence by recognising what has been achieved and identifying gaps and areas for improvement
- helping tutors adjust the learning programme to meet group and individual needs.

Summative assessment defines what has been learned at the end of a learning programme by:

- showing the extent to which learning objectives have been met
- providing a record of achievement which the learner may use when seeking employment or progression to further learning
- confirming achievement of intrinsic value to the learner
- contributing to curriculum evaluation and review
- contributing to the celebration of learning
- providing evidence and data on learner achievement.

Success can lead to changes in learners' purposes. Positive experience of assessment encourages some learners to progress to qualification-bearing courses. For others it is a source of energy in their continuing commitment to learning.

Assessment always plays a part

Where there is no established policy or practice on assessment it is still present and influences learning. Learners and tutors alike engage in a continuous process of assessment though it may be neither overt nor planned.

Learners assess their own progress and they compare their work with that of their peers; they have in their minds ideas about the standards they want to achieve or things they want to be able to do and they judge whether or not they are moving towards them. Their expectations of success or failure are there from the outset and change as they go along.

Tutors also engage in continuous assessment, checking and noting learners' responses, observing their progress and adjusting the learning programme in the light of assessment. They make judgements and expect a higher standard of achievement from some learners than others. They have in their minds standards and criteria and expectations for groups and individuals.

Some tutors are very skilled at providing low-key but very structured and useful assessment and feedback to learners and they may keep records of these activities. For others it is less structured but is provided as a need becomes obvious. However, a lack of planned assessment means opportunities to challenge or support learners can easily be missed.

Lack of overt processes can mean the development of learning skills is overlooked and meaningful records of learner progress and achievement are not produced. Where learners are not actively engaged in making and doing the tutor may have little evidence of progress and may rely on satisfaction questionnaires. These are important but not a substitute for good practice in assessment.

Staff development exercise: group or individual

Beyond the questionnaire – things 'happy' learners might be thinking:

I'm really pleased with what I've achieved and my confidence has gone way up.

They all knew a lot. I didn't do very well but I didn't make a fool of myself. It was fine.

It has changed my whole view of what history is.

I'm very pleased with what I've made. Someone helped me with the calculations – but I did everything else myself.

She was very pleased with my work. I was wondering about doing the Access to Higher Education course but I never brought it up. Silly really.

It was amazing. The tutor was a real expert. Yes, I know a bit about it.

Reflect on the 'happy' learners' statements and create a little scenario based on each one. Would any of them have benefited from improvements in:

- **initial assessment**
- **progress review / formative assessment**
- **end of course review / summative assessment?**

What are the implications for practice?

Assessment, then, plays its part wherever learning is taking place. It is not something which is added on nor is it an unnecessary intruder. Constructive assessment should take its place among planned learning activities and this comes about most easily where there are clear learning objectives.

Integrating assessment

It is standard practice among many education providers to include learning objectives as well as the subject content in syllabuses and schemes of work. These set out the skills, knowledge and understanding learners will work towards. Where these objectives are discussed and agreed it becomes relatively easy to engage learners in the review process and to develop a mix of self-assessment and tutor assessment which is right for the learners. This brings an element of transparency, which is particularly important in non-accredited learning. Review and assessment processes must have intrinsic value.

It can be helpful to think of six steps within the learning process which can foster achievement and make it easier to demonstrate and record progress:

- initial assessment
- agreement of learning objectives
- review of progress / adaptation of objectives or learning activity
- end of programme assessment
- exploration of next steps
- celebration of achievement.

They do not necessarily take place in this order.

The ALI inspectors' summary report on the ACL pilots (ALI 2002a) reinforces the view that assessment should be thought of as part of the learning process. Their findings on recording and checking progress (p6) clearly related to other aspects of teaching and learning. These findings were:

- insufficient recording and checking of learners' progress
- concentration on end of course review / learning outcomes
- inadequate initial assessment especially for open access provision
- insufficient attention to individual learners' needs.

There is an emphasis here on formative assessment which matches the value learners gave to feedback. Assessment is there to support learning. While it does that it can also provide the records and the data which managers, inspectors and funding bodies want to see.

Levels, criteria and 'distance travelled'

When we think about assessment we think about both progress and standards to be achieved. How do tutors and learners evaluate learning? Assessment on qualification-bearing and externally validated courses is made against pre-set criteria. Awards have levels which are nationally recognised. In ACL, many courses have Open College Network (OCN) accreditation and learners achieve validated units, each of which has a credit value, based on notional study hours, and a level – Entry Level or Level 1, 2 or 3. To achieve OCN credits learners must achieve all the learning outcomes of the unit towards which they are working by meeting specific criteria attached to them. There is flexibility within the system although not as much as in non-accredited learning. Criteria are often expressed in ways that permit variety in content and different ways of showing that they have been achieved. 'Parallel' units often exist at different levels – here the same learning outcomes appear with different assessment criteria to facilitate their use by mixed-ability groups.

In some respects the OCN methodology resembles that applied in recognising achievement on non-accredited programmes, but there are key differences.

On non-accredited courses:

- learning objectives or planned outcomes can be negotiated – learners may select from them and they may be changed by agreement during the learning programme
- learning achievement is assessed against the learner's starting point (the 'distance travelled' approach)
- records of achievement can be of use to learners but are not externally validated and moderated to increase their currency
- where there is mixed ability this is not made obvious by the award of credits at different levels.

The concept of showing 'distance travelled' depends on making an initial assessment which can be returned to as a point of comparison as the learner progresses. There is no fixed set of criteria which the learner must reach. However, there are assessment criteria, and a key element of working with learning objectives is being clear about what is to be achieved. On a non-accredited course there are times when a craft tutor will say: 'You will have to take that out and do it again before you can go on to the next step.'

Criteria are being applied, but within a non-accredited framework a tutor has as much flexibility as the discipline allows and prior learning and the pace of progress can be taken into consideration when reviewing achievement. As new learning objectives are approached and defined, so too are criteria, and this can be part of the review process.

A comparison of OCN methodology and an approach based on 'distance travelled' (as used at Mary Ward Centre) is given. This can help clarify the choices providers will make in deciding how to demonstrate learners' achievements.

Achievement level or 'distance travelled' ?

OCN methodology

This example shows how the same learning outcomes are offered at two levels in 'parallel' units to allow for achievement at different levels.

NOCN National Programme : Social and Life Skills
Unit title : Citizenship
Unit code : HB1/1/QQ/002
Level 1

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
4 **Understand the range of public services available in the local community**	**4.1** **List the main public services available in own local community under the heading of 'Protection Services', 'Leisure Services' and 'Health Services'**

NOCN National Programme : Social and Life Skills
Unit title : Citizenship
Unit code : HB1/2/CE/072
Level 2

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
4 **Understand the range of services available in the local community services**	**4.1** **Describe the main public services available in own community**
	4.2 **Explain how individuals can access these. State how individuals can influence the operation of local services**

The ‘distance travelled’ approach at Mary Ward Centre

At Mary Ward Centre tutors report on the amount of progress their students have made and as part of this process they place their achievements in categories 1–4. Category 1 describes the greatest distance travelled.

Students’ learning will be assessed and recorded according to how far they have progressed against the learning objectives from the point at which they started the course. For example, a graduate of Fine Art may attend a life drawing class to refresh and revive her interest, and although her work is consistently excellent there may be no significant progression in her drawing skills. On the other hand we can imagine a novice in the same class, who improves enormously during the course, although his work does not match the level of execution of the graduate’s. In both instances it is the distance travelled during the course by the individual students that will be assessed, and not the final pieces of work … additional benefits of learning (‘added values’) will also be considered…

Student 1 The graduate who maintains her excellence in life drawing may not have progressed in terms of drawing skills. She may, however, have achieved other learning outcomes (experimenting with materials, demonstrating an ability to take risks, critical evaluation of her work) and may also have overcome her creative block. Her tutor would be justified in placing her in category 2 because she has progressed against some learning outcomes, and has gained additional benefits from the course.

Student 2 The novice has made substantial progress against all the learning outcomes of the course, and so merits being placed in achievement category 1, even though his work is not as technically accomplished as the first student’s.

Mary Ward Centre 2001

Whatever the approach, it should have at its heart the individual learner. It will then lend itself to the creation of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).

Individual Learning Plans

The CIF refers to ILPs under question 2 'How effective are teaching and learning?'.

With learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment that are reviewed and up-dated regularly

ALI/OFSTED 2001 p8

An ILP is produced through a combination of negotiation and review. The focus on the individual means that specific needs and objectives are considered. Learners are challenged and supported in ways that work for them. ILPs are not just for planning but are referred to during the programme and used to round off the experience at the end. An important aspect of the ILP is that it looks forward and considers 'next steps'. It is an evolving, working document that can be used flexibly.

Initial assessment has to take place early enough in the programme to provide a useful marker to look back to. It has to be reasonably comprehensive too. A project at The Adult College, Lancaster, has been looking into this and is described in the case study below.

Where possible, an ILP should draw together all the elements of a learners' programme. However, where people are taking unrelated short courses, this is not always manageable.

The focus on the individual does not mean that group achievement, and learning objectives which have been collectively negotiated and experienced, are not individually owned. Learners may work to the same objectives and they may complete them together or individually. Sometimes sharing out roles and working as a team encourages learners to share knowledge and skills. They can then carry this practice over into other roles, in the family or the community.

ILPs provide a record of individual progress and progression and as such provide useful evidence for managers and funding bodies. This should not, however, shape ILPs. They are not checklists. ILPs are for learners, and should be user-friendly and with language and design varied to match the needs of different individuals and groups.

The use of ILPs may be introduced as part of the development of recognising and recording achievement. It brings with it a dialogue about how much individual attention is possible on short, part-time courses. Regular opportunities for in-depth review are not possible on many courses. However, the very nature of the ILP determines that it must capture the individual learner's intentions and achievements.

Additional support needs have to be identified, whether this takes place before or on the programme. On short courses, negotiating objectives with individuals may be limited to establishing priorities and selecting targets, and review may be carried out in small groups or plenary sessions. This is still worthwhile because it engages learners in establishing their expectations and it can provide opportunities for informal peer assessment with the tutor at hand to support individuals as need arises. On more substantial programmes review may take the form of one-to-one feedback at regular intervals. A variety of strategies is needed to match the range of provision.

Formative or summative: it's about progress

Assessment of learning objectives is cumulative. The purposes of assessment are both formative and summative, but we have seen how in non-accredited learning the formative aspect is often the more valued by learners. Learners work with their tutors to review progress, problem-solve and identify new challenges as they go along. The summative process at the end need not be experienced as a sudden burst of assessment but it can be important to learners. It brings together all that has been achieved so far and perhaps some extra unexpected achievement too. Learners can look back at their starting points and see progress.

Progress in ACL does not always mean moving to higher standards. Many learners have objectives to broaden or maintain skills or keep up their levels of mental and physical activity. For example, achievement in maintaining mobility in the face of health challenges can be celebrated and recorded.

For ideas on how to assess (including non-paper-based methods) see Donley and Napper (1999), *Assessment matters in adult learning*. Appendix 1 reproduces: 'When to use assessment activities' from page 7 of this publication.

Case study Initial assessment

An ACL Quality Support Programme project
at The Adult College, Lancaster

Initial assessment in ACL is generally based on a tutor's informal observation of a student over the first few weeks. It is rarely in-depth or rigorous and there is little checking of prior learning. Sometimes criteria for judging success are not defined at all and sometimes they are informally held by the tutor and shared.

For many tutors, developing assessment practice is a cultural shift. There is a well-established view that adults choose non-accredited learning because they don't want to be 'measured'. They are autonomous and measure their own learning, moving at their own pace in a responsive learning environment.

The project set out to develop a more structured approach. The aim was to develop initial assessment in the wider context of recognising achievement. There was one project worker, and students and tutors contributed to the development. The students felt valued and welcomed the extra interest in the process. Among the outcomes were the following guidelines on initial assessment.

- A variety of approaches should be available to match student profile and course content.
- Assessment outcomes should be shared with students to ensure awareness of starting points.
- The assessment and negotiation processes may well be interlinked.
- Assessment must be non-threatening, unobtrusive, supportive and sensitive to students' previous experience.
- Imaginative and innovatory methods should be used to keep the experience informal and enjoyable.
- Assessment methods need to be effective in providing meaningful, accurate information.
- Assessment can be spread over more than one session.
- A mix of methods may be employed, for example observation, set work, self-assessment exercise, group or small group discussion, one-to-one interview with tutor, previous records or work, questionnaires, photographic or video observation (portfolio approach).

Simple techniques in silver jewellery making

Initial assessment doesn't always happen at the beginning. On this course the teacher checks that students are on the right course and whether they have relevant experience. This is because the course is aimed at people with no experience and beginners are unaware of the skills involved in silver jewellery making. They are unable to decide upon learning outcomes other than to gain experience and practice in the subject. It would be intimidating to assess someone's skills with unfamiliar tools and materials.

A more informative assessment can be done after two classes when the students have completed the initial project of making a simple ring. When they have tried out some tools, equipment and processes, their levels of success can be observed in their work (the rings) and recorded on a form. They then go on to incorporate techniques they have learned into their own designs.

Celebrating achievement and telling the story

Celebration of achievement has always been part of ACL and the variety of ways in which this takes place is increasing. Often it serves the dual purposes of validating the learners' achievements and promoting the opportunities available to potential learners. Among the most visible celebrations of achievement are newspaper articles and exhibitions, which enliven centres and take work out to public spaces. Adult learners' week provides an annual celebration which serves both these functions. It offers opportunities to 'have a go' and celebrates achievements in independent life skills, basic skills and an amazingly diverse curriculum spanning all levels from the introductory to the most accomplished. However, the celebration of achievement takes place throughout the year and includes:

- displays and exhibitions
- performances
- newspaper articles and features
- featured classes and learners
- 'sales and services'
- award ceremonies.

Awards ceremonies increasingly reflect the diversity of ACL, and learners on non-accredited programmes receive awards alongside those gaining certificates from external awarding bodies. Recognising achievement in a more structured way is likely to increase the number of events which celebrate achievement formally.

Describing and defining achievement increases inner celebration. Learners are able to put their achievements into words more precisely; to tell themselves and others what they have achieved. Space and time both limit opportunities to show learners'

achievements publicly. The celebration of achievement needs to be thought of more broadly and brought into everyone's learning experience – planned into the learning programme. Sometimes the most precious and memorable celebration takes place in groups and classrooms. Tutors provide space and stimulus for this and learners make it happen.

Telling the stories of learner achievement enables staff, teams, LEAs, local LSCs, partners and stakeholders to celebrate too. The stories provide valued evidence which complements data and gives ACL a human face. They tell of progression and change – and of learning in progress to the enrichment of life.

Developing practice

In recent years a considerable body of experience of applying learning outcomes methodology to non-accredited provision has been developed. Learning outcomes describe what a person knows, understands and is able to do after a process of learning. The method is based on projecting what these outcomes will be, agreeing them with learners, possibly adapting them by agreement during the learning programme, and assessing achievement against them.

The benefits

Identifying and assessing learning outcomes can offer the benefits below (Foster, Howard and Reisenberger 1997).

For the learner

- **Clearer information about the course**
- **A more reflective approach to learning**
- **Recognition of the importance of confidence**
- **The ability to make and value own judgements on progress**
- **Group cohesion through discussing course aims and outcomes**

For the tutor

- **Improvements to planning and reviewing courses**
- **A framework for negotiating with the group**
- **A way of reviewing progress on group and individual objectives**
- **An improved quality of teaching**

For the providers

- **A way of identifying staff development needs**
- **Qualitative and quantitative indicators of student satisfaction**
- **Improvements in the quality of curriculum planning**
- **A clearer framework for establishing progression routes**

For national organisations

- **A way of identifying learning gains for funding purposes**
- **A way of giving credibility to non-accredited learning**
- **A means of recognising the broader outcomes of adult learning**
- **A basis for self-assessment reports and evidence for inspectors**

Planning for progress

The learning outcomes methodology provides an excellent planning tool because it invites tutors to focus on the learning which they hope will take place rather than how they will cover the subject. The programme can then include activities at key points to provide opportunities for both active learning and integrated assessment.

Once the desired outcomes have been agreed and the programme starts the planned outcomes become learning objectives. Some tutors prefer to stay with the language of the learning outcomes methodology, which will typically express each desired outcome in a sentence beginning:

At the end of the course learners will be able to…,

and find it motivating because it sets high expectations. For others the focus on the outcome rather than process reflects a limiting view of learning. It is important to get the language right for both tutor and learners. It is also important that, if the focus remains on outcomes, it does not lead to a 'top and tail' approach where the outcomes are set at the outset and not returned to until the end.

A planning tool

Tutors can use the form below to list their learning objectives and match each with a summary of their teaching methods and what the learners will do. Often the learners' activities will both help them learn and allow the tutor to assess and record learning unobtrusively. Once tutor inputs and learner activities have been linked to each learning objective it becomes easy to integrate assessment into the scheme of work.

Learning objective	**Tutor input** Facilitating achievement	**Learner activities** Learning and showing progress and achievement

Planning for diversity

At the planning stage tutors will want to consider the range of potential objectives for the programme. This has to be done with the planned target group in mind and the possibility that learners may have very diverse backgrounds or needs. Will the learning objectives cover learning skills, communication skills and personal development as well as subject-based objectives?

- Are the objectives expressed as flexibly as possible to allow learners to meet them in ways which draw on their varied backgrounds, experience and interests?
- What are the basic skills learners will need to use to achieve the objectives?
- Will the range of learning activities allow people with different preferred learning styles to give of their best?

Staff development exercise

How do your learners show what they have learned?

Group activity

1 **Write down the different ways learners show what they have learned.**

2 **Arrange them in categories to show different kinds of activity (eg group or individual, tutor-led, learner-led, practical or study-based).**

3 **Discuss the range of learning shown and how different learners respond to different kinds of activity.**

Individual or curriculum team activity

4 **Relate the range of learning and kinds of activity listed in the group to your own practice. Can you add variety to the learning activities in your schemes of work to enable learners with different backgrounds and preferred styles to fulfil their potential?**

Basic Skills and ESOL

Awareness of the basic skills needed to be able to succeed on each programme is important if we are to enable learners to achieve their potential. Equally important is recognition of English language needs. This means developing understanding and methodology in partnership with Basic Skills and ESOL colleagues, deciding what can or cannot be integrated into programmes, what may be possible with additional support and when and how Basic Skills or ESOL learning objectives can be included in the overall learning programme.

Questions relating to recording achievement in non-accredited Basic Skills and ESOL provision are addressed by Grief and Windsor in *Recognising and validating learning outcomes and achievements in non-accredited Basic Skills and ESOL* (2002). The national standards and core curricula are central to this process (see Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2000; Basic Skills Agency 2001a, 2001b; DES 2001).

Negotiating with learners

Once a programme begins, tutors and learners negotiate and agree group or individual learning objectives. There is a range of strategies for this and the approach will vary depending on the nature of the subject and the group. Usually the key learning objectives are in the syllabus or course information sheet and this provides a starting point. The tutor may:

- chair discussion and create learning objectives with the group
- present a set list of learning objectives and let learners prioritise them and shape how they will be achieved
- present a set list with a choice of options and room to add one or two more
- offer a menu to choose from
- offer a menu which combines:
  - subject-based learning objectives
  - basic / key skills which will be used on the programme
  - learning skills that will be developed
  - personal development learning objectives (eg confidence building).

The process doesn't have to be paper-based. Tutors have developed a wide variety of techniques for use with different groups. For example, they may have learning objectives or targets on the wall and let learners walk around and chat about them and use Post-its to choose them or comment on them. This leaves the tutor free to talk with individuals who don't take part. Whatever the process, tutor and learners will create an agreed list of learning objectives to work towards. This can then be shared by the group or customised with individual learners.

Appendix 2 provides an example of a draft learner record form to use for recording learning objectives and outcomes.

Achieving objectives

Learning objectives cannot always be assessed as competencies – easy to demonstrate and either achieved or not. To attempt to encapsulate learning in a list of competencies is to take a narrow view of it. People on the same programme will engage with the content at different levels. ACL learning objectives are often broad. There may be only four or five which will be used to assess overall achievement at the end. Tutors develop skills in wording them in ways which will allow them to observe whether learning has taken place. For example, where a learning objective is to understand the philosophy of Kant it will be expressed using verbs such as 'explain, relate, compare, make a case for or against…' rather than 'understand'. This encourages active learning and helps learners recognise what they have achieved. Even so, learners often feel they have made progress against objectives rather than achieving them. And there are some to which they could devote years of study. This has led to the development of systems which record both full and partial achievement. Appendix 3 provides an example of such a system as used in a Workers' Educational Association learning outcomes record.

'Soft' and 'hard' outcomes

Learning outcomes are sometimes described as 'soft' or 'hard', with 'hard' ones being measurable and 'soft' ones not. Sometimes academic outcomes are seen as 'hard' and those relating to personal development as 'soft'. These distinctions are imprecise and can devalue outcomes designated as 'soft'. The following definition of 'soft outcomes' from NIACE Dysgu Cymru (2002) is more helpful, although it does not overcome the negative connotations of the term:

Learning gain, and consequences of such learning gain, that may not necessarily map across to learning outcomes in formal awards. Eg some social and life skills, benefits to health and well being, to family and friends, local voluntary organisations, and the wider community.

In ACL the focus is traditionally on the learner as a whole person. Working to learning objectives should not narrow the approach and can potentially extend it. It is important to value the kinds of learning gains listed above. They may represent greater learning achievement than the 'hard' outcomes of a course. They may also appear centre-stage as the core outcomes of a non-accredited learning programme – the learning that is mapped.

The Progress File for adults, *Broadening horizons* (DfES 2002), takes starting points from many aspects of experience, and ideas from it can be adapted to look at a wide range of needs and potential with diverse groups. It is organised around a series of 'triggers' such as having an appraisal at work or becoming self-employed, and links specific activities to each.

The Gloucestershire Personal Power Pack, described in the case study which follows, is an example of how a framework can be created within which personal development learning gain can be expressed in precise and systematic ways. It challenges the concept of 'soft' outcomes.

Case study # Personal Power Pack

Recognising 'soft outcomes'. An ACL Quality Support Programme development project, Gloucestershire County Council

Gloucestershire County Council Adult and Continuing Education and Training Service (ACET) has developed a flexible framework to show learner achievements in so-called soft skills.

Local representatives from the voluntary and community sector, health and education professionals and others contributed to consultation, design and piloting. The Personal Power Pack is a set of self-assessment sheets tutors and other support workers can use with learners. Behind the process lies the belief that being able to recognise and measure day-to-day achievements helps learners value what they do and how they behave. In the process, skills often thought of as unmeasurable are defined and exemplified and progress is shown.

There are four assessment areas (attitudinal, personal, inter-personal and organisational skills) and initial assessment and review documentation for each (learners negotiate which skills to work on), an action plan and a score sheet learners can use to score their achievements.

The Learner Support Worker Course

The flexibility of the Personal Power Pack was shown on this course where workers and learners studied together in the context of a Neighbourhood Project Network. The course prepares students to support other learners working to improve their IT skills. Some of the learners at the project are people who have low self-esteem and feel excluded from society.

Four workers and six learners aged from their early 20s to 65 took part. The learners wished, as a first step, to become volunteer supporters but, in the medium term, were looking to find employment outside the project. As volunteers they would assist other learners working to improve their IT skills, but to enable this their own growth needed to be addressed. The project workers regarded the course as providing them with additional skills, and as a preliminary to a teacher training qualification.

The Personal Power Pack was used throughout the course. Each student identified two or three areas for improvement. Final review took place at the end of the course with time set aside for each student – a time of celebration (no matter how small the progression).

Although hesitant at first, the group began to look out for improvements and were keen to measure their progress using the scoring system. They were generally happy to discuss their individual progress with other members of the group and this allowed the group to grow in strength, building a network of support for each other. They remained in touch long after the course had finished.

Achievement of learning goals

Learning goals

Main learning goals

Intended gains in skills, knowledge or understanding. Gains may be reflected in the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Or they may be reflected in the ability of learners to apply learning in contexts outside the learning situation, eg in the family, community or workplace. Learners' main goal/s should be recorded on an individual or, in some cases, group learning plan. Plans should be revised as progress is made and new goals emerge.

Secondary learning goals

These may include planned-for gains in self-confidence, and inter-personal skills. These should also be included in learning plans where appropriate.

'Language of adult and community learning', *Guidance for providers on the inspection of adult and community learning: interpreting the Common Inspection Framework* ALI 2002b p4

This definition of learning goals is broad and non-accredited learning sits comfortably within it. Tutors have developed effective ways of showing 'greater knowledge, understanding and skills' by recording achievement of learning objectives.

A difficulty arises if a mechanism is sought to determine who has and who has not achieved the learning goal on a non-accredited course, to mirror the sorts of results obtained on qualification courses. Where a strength of the programme is that learning is not constrained by an external syllabus but centred on learners' individual goals and needs it is questionable whether such 'results' provide a basis for comparisons. A strong quality assurance framework with documented processes will provide a more reliable picture of standards across provision. Part of that process can be the recording of learners' achievements against learning objectives.

Systems currently in use work in a number of ways.

- Learning outcomes are either fully achieved or not achieved and numbers achieved may be expressed as a percentage.
- Progress is achieved against learning objectives which may be fully or partially achieved – there may be three, four or five points on a scale. This may be used to show distance travelled.
- Assessment of achievement may be carried out by learners (self-assessment) or by the tutor, or by a joint process where the tutor countersigns the learners' self-assessments to confirm agreement.
- Students receive feedback on their achievements. This feedback may be oral or written.

The advantages of providing overall achievement data are that:

- where moderation takes place it enables comparisons to be made within an institution to show how effectively the chosen methodology is being applied across the curriculum and from year to year
- it provides quantitative data for self-assessment
- it acts as a spur to raise achievements and improve record-keeping.

Issues to consider are listed below.

- The concept of pass / fail does not apply to non-accredited learning and is not a part of the programme the student has signed up for. In evaluating achievements providers are looking at the quality of their provision rather than grading learners.
- Achievements should be high on non-accredited programmes as tutors plan programmes to build in success and adapt them as they progress to get the right balance between challenge and encouragement for each learner.
- Learning objectives vary in depth and time taken to achieve them.
- Achievements cannot be compared across providers because it is not possible to compare like with like. Internally, systems for recording achievement can provide useful data as long as it is seen as providing a rough indication of outcomes and trends.
- Processes required to make such quantitative data meaningful externally would be comparable to those required in accredited provision. In that case a qualification would probably be the better option.

Individual Learning Plans and overall achievement

As the use of ILPs develops in ACL it may increasingly replace systems based on counting objectives achieved. ILPs match the flexibility and responsiveness of non-accredited provision. Recognition of achievement by the completion of an ILP is usefully distinct from achieving a qualification.

Individual Learning Plans:

- belong to learners
- record learners' main goal(s)
- chart both process and progress
- go with the learner from initial assessment to final review
- include planning next steps.

Case study

Achieving the learning goal

Essex County Council

When a project was set up in Colchester Adult Community College to improve and measure achievements on non-accredited learning the main issue was the measurement itself – what constitutes a pass?

The team settled on full achievement of 70% of learning outcomes as the 'pass' and designed a system which would be as streamlined as possible. The key instrument was a single form (including guidelines) on one side of A4, to be completed by the tutor, recording an outcome for each student on the course. Individual forms did have to be used when students had customised learning outcomes. Initially the system was to apply to all courses, but this soon changed to courses of 12 hours or more.

A spreadsheet was used to collect the data because the management information system in use at the time did not have the facility to record that type of achievement.

Tutors' ability to identify measurable learning outcomes was fundamental to the working of the scheme and staff development activities and materials were key. One lesson was that staff development is necessary over a long period to launch an initiative on this scale. In its second year the scheme was implemented in all nine adult community colleges in Essex.

Update 2002 – a move to Individual Learning Plans

Confidence and skills in measuring and recording achievement using a learning outcomes methodology have grown and, although there is still work to do to achieve consistent quality, the system is well established. This means the Essex team are ready to break new ground – the plan now is for completion of ILPs to replace the 70% pass mark as achievement of the learning goal.

For a full report on this project see the ACLQSP website www.qualityACL.org.uk

Quality assurance

Recent experience of self-assessment and development planning means that ACL providers have already reviewed their quality systems in the light of the evaluation requirements of the CIF. In so doing they will have responded to the key questions on achievements and assessment. In some cases processes are already in place for recognising and recording achievement and all that is needed is to check and adapt these in the light of evolving national requirements. Where quality systems are still being created, the requirements to monitor achievement and assessment should be integrated.

Funding and inspection bodies like data that makes it possible to compare performance year on year, and to check the consistency of standards across provision. However, for data to be meaningful the organisation has first to develop consistency in practice. Even when this has been done the diversity of learners, particularly in open access provision, and the variety of aims and learning objectives means that the data will show trends and provide a general picture of achievements rather than precise information for detailed comparisons. It will, however, reflect, thorough quality procedures.

To generate data organisations require notional ways of quantifying learning backed up by an effective quality assurance framework. This will be based on:

- a common understanding of what it means to achieve the learning goal – often a personal goal
- compatible instruments for recording achievements
- training and support
- a staff handbook with guidance on negotiating learning objectives and assessing progress
- an internal moderation system.

Quality monitoring needs first to address the impact of new ways of working on the learner and then to provide judgements and evidence for others with legitimate interests and claims.

- What kind of quality processes will ensure that assessment is constructive and motivating for learners rather than focused on pieces of paper they quite possibly do not want?
- What kinds of records is it useful for tutors or learners to produce?
- How best can current quality processes be adapted to monitor the recognising and recording of achievement without passing a heavy burden of bureaucracy down to tutors and learners?

Planning for quality and gathering evidence

Figure 1 Ways of thinking about how quality is monitored and evidence is provided

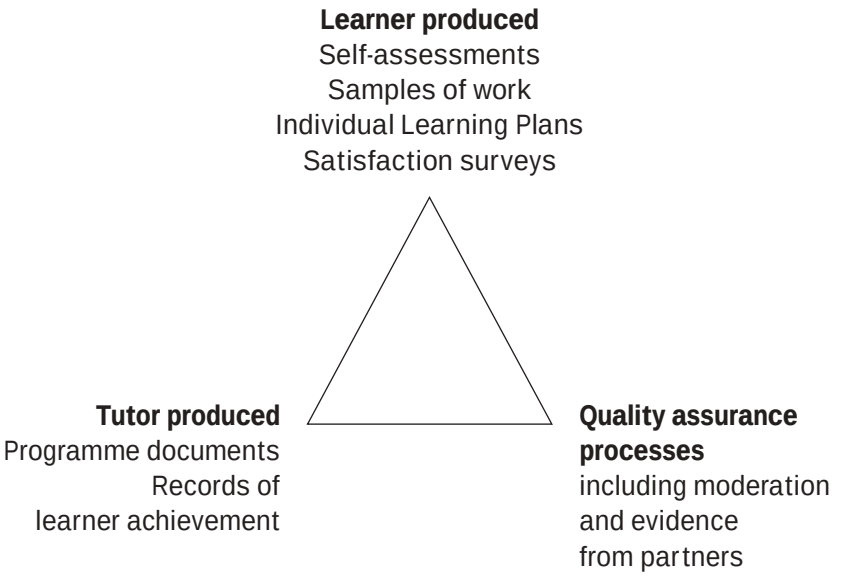


Figure 1 suggests ways of thinking about how quality is monitored and evidence provided which will bring the systems you already use into play. By putting together a picture from three sources, 'triangulation', a reliable judgement of learner progress can be made which is not narrowly focused on tracking individual learner achievements. Existing quality and self-assessment procedures will need to be adjusted to take account of the new emphasis on learner achievement.

Where provision is delivered in partnerships the views of partners on impact and achievement should always be sought. For example, the headteacher of a school involved in family learning may provide important evidence of achievement.

The key areas where new quality processes can improve standards are defining learning objectives and assessing or reviewing achievement. Curriculum teams need to ensure that all programmes, however short, have learning objectives which are used to structure the learning experience and final review, even if the latter is a brief discussion of what has been done at the end of a 3 or 6 hour course. Organisations which have piloted systems have found a need to establish baseline requirements and then a threshold in terms of learning hours at which written records of achievement become necessary or other quality mechanisms become applicable. Planning to assure quality includes differentiating requirements so that they are manageable and appropriate.

Moderation is a very effective way of raising standards and engages tutors at the point of their interest – their own courses. Moderation processes are designed to ensure common standards across provision. Internal moderation draws on peer strengths and brings with it the added benefit of sharing and spreading good practice. It provides excellent staff development as well as monitoring standards. Moderation records and reports provide evaluative evidence.

Tutor records and learners' work

Tutors' course files or record books provide key evidence of delivery and of achievements. It is important that they include lists of learners and record their participation in selected learning activities and assignments. Appendix 4 provides an example of a sample tutor record, and Ravenhall, Ogilvie and Ewens (2002, pp36–37) give an example of a framework for a course record book. Tutors' records can be backed up by examples of learners' work. There will be a need for consultation and careful planning of what samples and records of learners' work are to be collected, because people like to keep their work and because large quantities of work cannot be stored.

Learner feedback and evaluation

Learner feedback collected in surveys can provide information on achievement which is complementary to that produced by learners' self-assessments and tutors' assessments. For a practical guide to making the most of learner feedback and using a variety of techniques see Ravenhall (2001). One important message is that, while a variety of methods should be used, they should be targeted to particular purposes to prevent survey fatigue. Providers that have already piloted systems for recognising achievement have found focus groups very useful at the development stage.

Learner feedback can be both formative and summative. It contributes to programmes in progress, when tutors are able to respond quickly, and to improvements for future learners. Getting feedback comes about naturally when progress against learning objectives is reviewed.

Surveys often provide data on the extent to which expectations have been met and learners feel they have gained new knowledge and skills. As shown in the discussion of assessment above, this feedback is broad brush and although it does not replace learning review it can be extremely useful. However, the number of forms learners have to fill in has to be kept to a minimum. In Leicestershire a form recording summative assessment has been created, which has a section asking the learners to evaluate the course and how effective the different methods used by the tutor were in facilitating learning. This form is reproduced as Appendix 5.

Case study Internal moderation

Mary Ward Centre, London

At Mary Ward Centre assessment on non-accredited programmes is moderated to ensure consistency in the quality of assessment and share good practice. All tutors who teach for more than 20 hours in a year present their methods at a moderation meeting chaired by a head of department or experienced assessor. If they teach a course of more than 20 hours they are required to write a course report, part of which is a list of learners with an achievement category awarded to each to reflect distance travelled on a four- point scale. At the moderation meeting tutors:

- talk through their methods for initial, formative and summative assessment
- present three case studies which show the range of achievement on their course
- evaluate and discuss the assessment practice of others.

After the moderation each tutor receives a report from the moderator with comments on how they assess, give feedback and progression advice to students, and on their students' achievements. The tutor is awarded a grade for assessment from a seven-point scale like that used for the observation of teaching and learning. The moderation forms part of a comprehensive quality assurance process. Tutors who are awarded grades 1, 2 or 3 (excellent, very good or good) become approved assessors and need not be moderated for 24 months. Those who fall short are supported by a mentor and moderated again the next year. Appendix 6 is a sample of the moderator's report form on individual tutors from Mary Ward Centre.

Mary Ward Centre also has an internal verification system carried out within departments which builds on moderators' advice.

Establishing the needs of the service: a checklist

Managers and curriculum teams may use this checklist to identify development areas. To assure quality in recognising and recording achievement in non-accredited learning, systems need to be based on the CIF. The following checklist draws on the CIF and the ALI guidance (2002b). Departures from these are in italic script.

Key

A = Very confident on this and work is well in hand

B = Haven't done much on this but we know what we need to do and how to go about it

C = We still need to do a lot of work on this

	A	B	C
Does the assessment support the learning?			
Challenging learning goals and targets are set			
Initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan			
Assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further			
Assessment contributes to the development, with learners, of Individual Learning Plans, informed by initial assessments that are reviewed and updated regularly			
Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners receive effective additional support throughout their studies			
Tutors set, use and mark assignments and other tasks in a way that helps learners to progress			
The quality of learners' achievements			
Challenging learning goals and targets are achieved			
Learners make significant progress towards fulfilling their goals and their potential			
Standards are consistently high across the provider's work			
Analysis of added value indicates that learners make at least the progress expected of them			

	A	B	C
The quality of learners' achievements *continued*			
Learners develop the skills of critical evaluation, research and analysis			
Learners reach appropriate levels in basic or key skills consistent with their learning programme			
Learners develop the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently and collaboratively			
The quality of assessment			
Assessment is fair, accurate and carried out regularly			
Forms of assessment are suitable, *varied and take account of diversity*			
How learning enables progression			
Learners are enabled to play an active role in the community, at work or at home			
Learners progress to other training or education, paid or voluntary employment which enables them to use the knowledge and skills they have learned			
How achievements towards learning goals are recorded			
Achievements of planned outcomes are recorded			
Retention rates compare well with local and national averages			
Trends in performance over time show continuous improvement or the maintenance of very high standards			
How evaluation contributes to development			
Assessment information, including the analysis of performance of different groups of learners, is used to guide course and programme development			
Learners and the local community have a voice in evaluating the quality of *assessment and the feedback given to them*			

Setting up a system to recognise and record achievement

Setting up a process for recording achievement and making it work requires a common understanding and commitment at all levels of the organisation because:

- it directly affects what learners and tutors do (the core work)
- it requires processes which have to be carried out by tutors, team leaders, administrators, curriculum and quality managers
- it has resource and funding implications
- it affects and reflects the ethos and values of the organisation.

And it carries risks because:

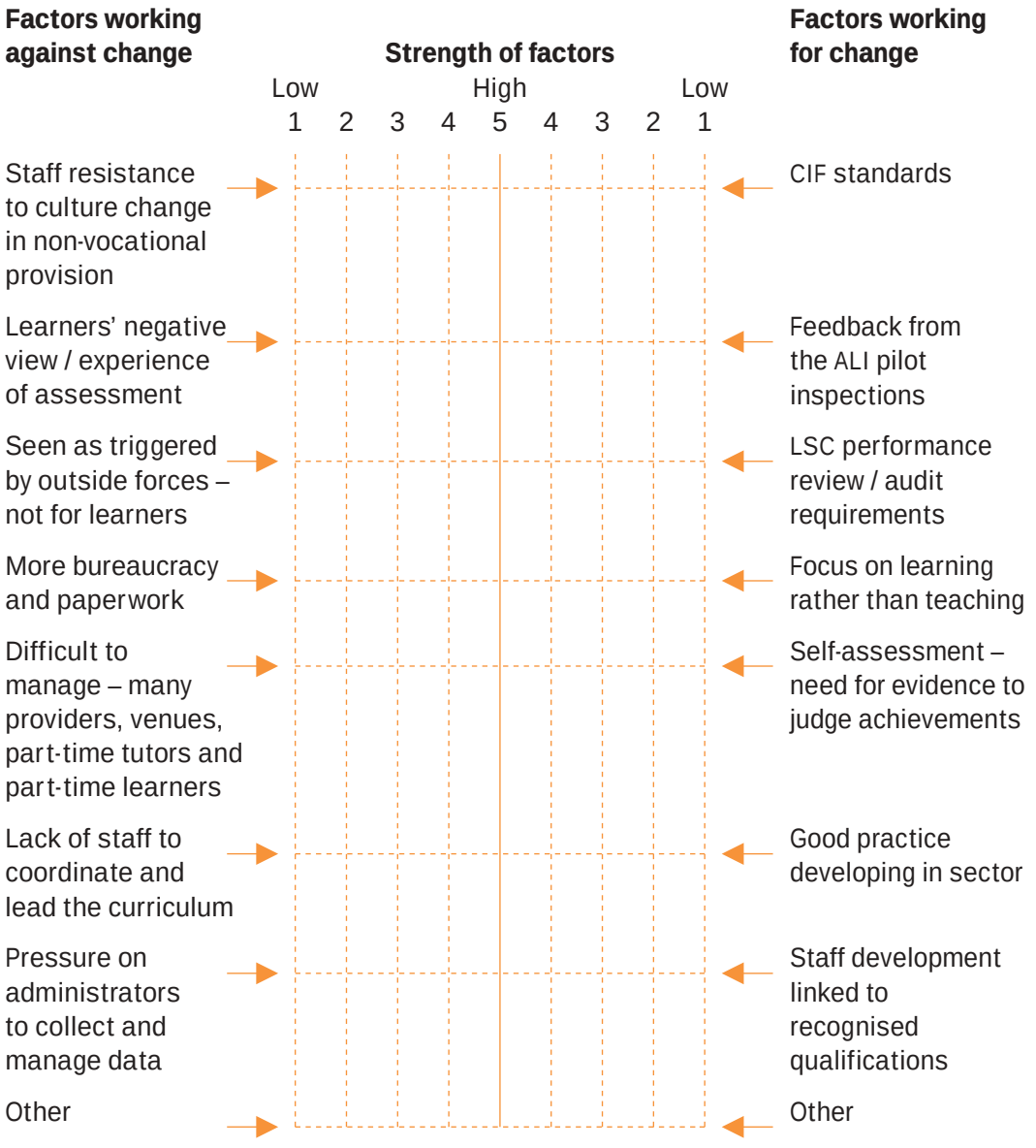
- it may require a change in the learning culture in parts of the provision
- inappropriate assessment alienates learners
- operating systems they do not believe in alienates tutors
- it can easily become a paper exercise.

Clear support and leadership from senior managers backed by initial consultation with all parties is essential to make sure people understand that change is necessary and will bring genuine improvements (as well as increased record-keeping). They also need to understand that developments respond to:

- the national quality agenda and LSC requirements
- the organisation's strategic plan
- the need for evidence for self-assessment
- improvement needs identified in the self-assessment report (where relevant).

Time and planning is needed to get everyone on board. The process will touch on teaching and learning, curriculum development, assessment practice and, if successful, engaging learners in new ways of working. It will involve quality processes and administrative systems. Successful development will be both top down and bottom up. A force field analysis (Figure 2) can help providers anticipate the factors which can help or hold up the process of change.

Figure 2 Force field analysis

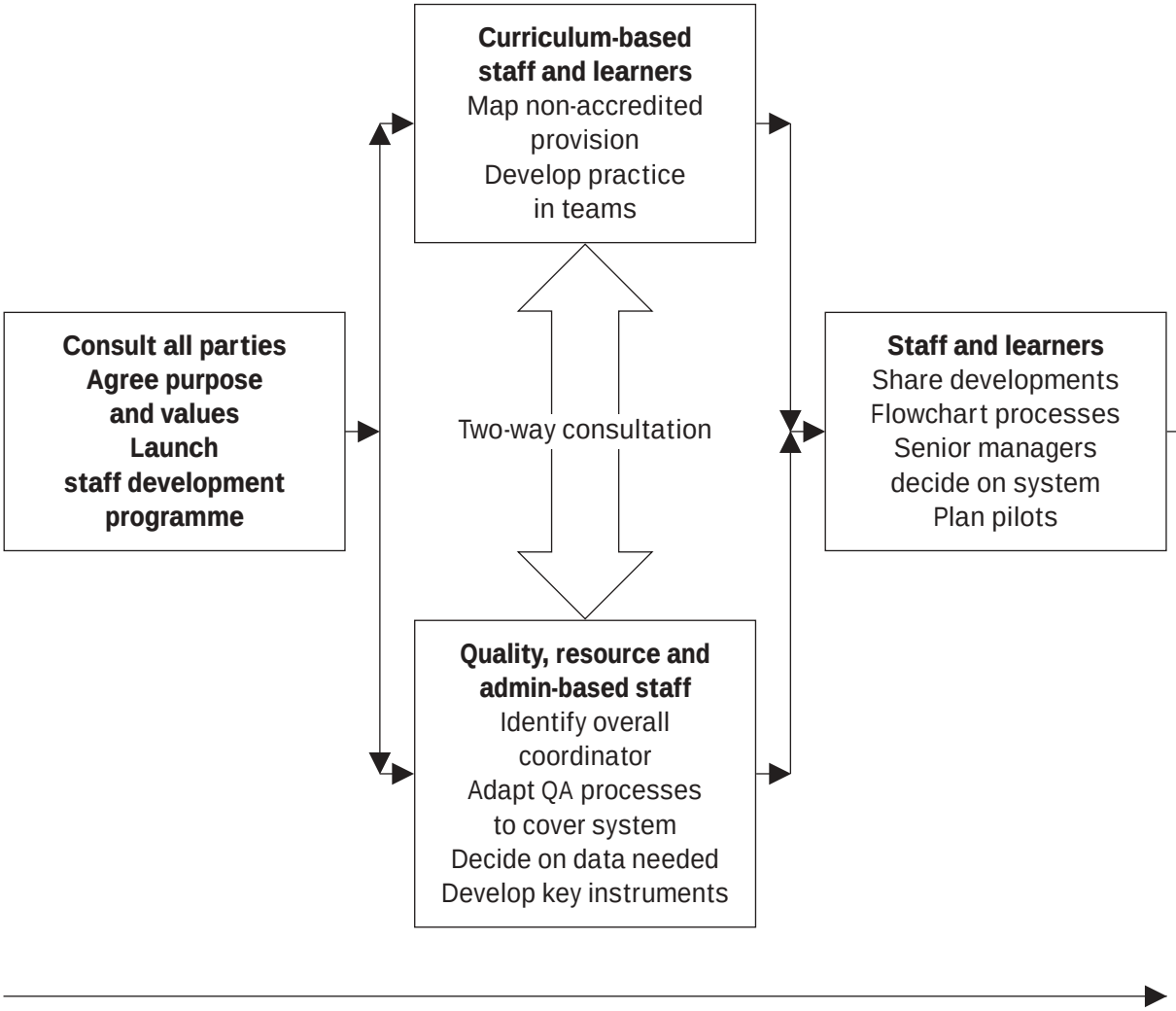


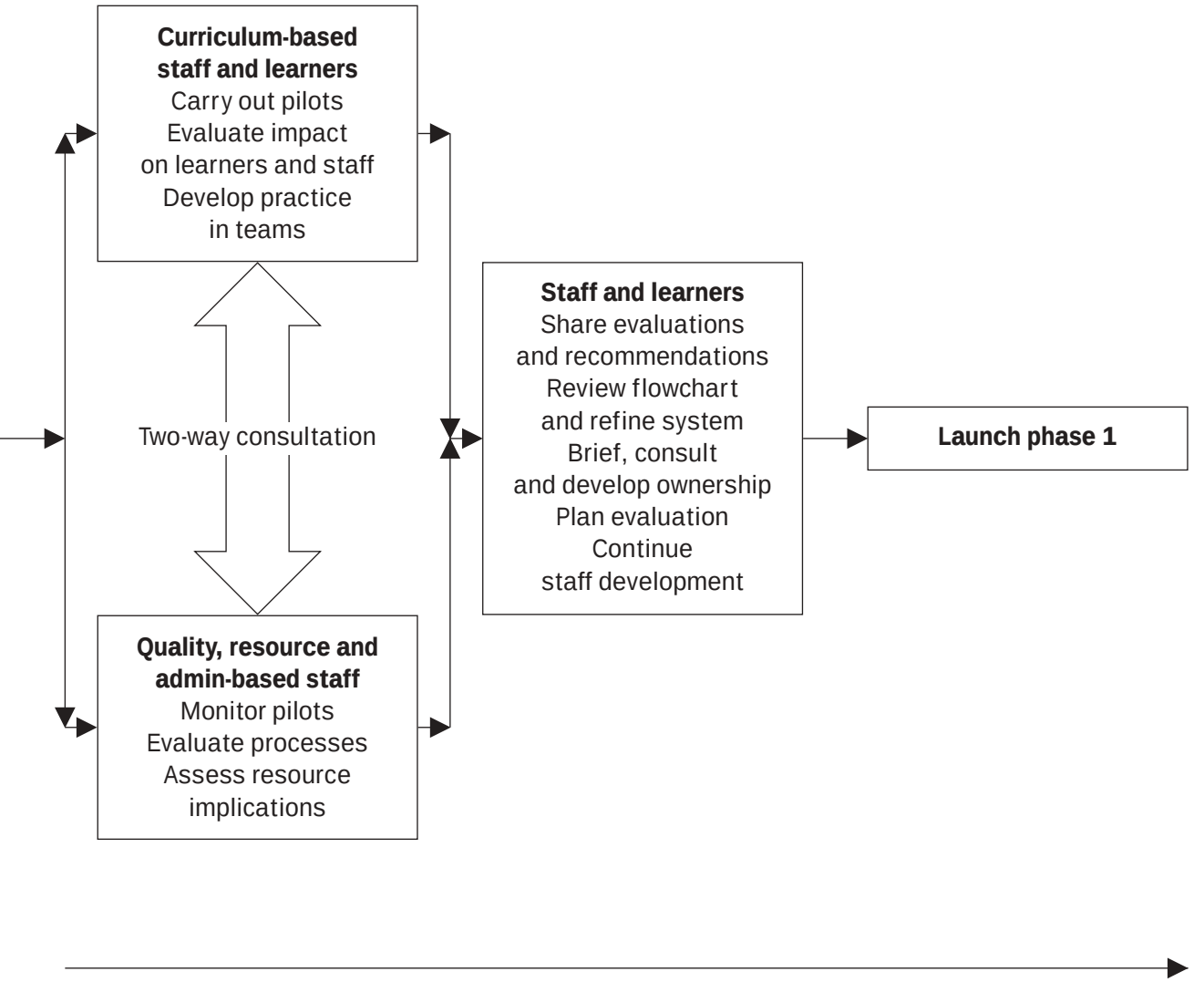
Exercise

1. Are there any factors affecting your service omitted on either side? If so add them.
2. Extend the arrows to show how influential each factor is in your service.
3. Analyse the reasons for the most powerful drivers and obstacles and use them to help you plan for change.

An implementation model for recognising achievements is given in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Recognising achievement : an implementation model




Curriculum-based staff and learners
Carry out pilots
Evaluate impact on learners and staff
Develop practice in teams
Two-way consultation
Quality, resource and admin-based staff
Monitor pilots
Evaluate processes
Assess resource implications
Staff and learners
Share evaluations and recommendations
Review flowchart and refine system
Brief, consult and develop ownership
Plan evaluation
Continue staff development
Launch phase 1

Issues to consider

- The balance between management's need for evidence and the interests of tutors and learners.
- The difficulty of recording achievement on short courses – there is a need to differentiate requirements.
- The implications of bringing in new systems across provision.

Implementation will probably need to be phased in. Providers may decide to begin where it is likely to be most straightforward and identify areas where patterns of staffing, variation in standards of syllabuses and schemes of work or scattered or isolated provision will make it more difficult. This will give time to develop infrastructure and teams in such areas and provide staff development.

Funding and resources

Specific requirements for and patterns of funding from LSCs and other bodies will vary from time to time but ACL providers will be expected to:

- have frameworks in place to recognise achievement in non-accredited learning
- demonstrate learner achievement as a key aspect of the quality of provision.

Local LSCs will support providers in developing quality, and funding may be available to assist in setting up the framework. Providers will need to cost development plans. There are additional staff development and administrative costs which will vary according to the system adopted and a number of providers have paid tutors for extra hours to cover new reporting and moderation requirements (see the case study below). Other providers have brought in new quality requirements without extra pay, sometimes implementing them gradually over a few years.

Case study

Financial implications

Buckinghamshire Continuing Education Service

A pilot scheme was set up using a learning outcomes approach and, among other implications of extending the pilot across the service, the cost was considered.

Issues included:

- the costs involved in the additional tutor training, support and delivery time
- the cost and logistics of administering individual learning records for 19,000 students across over 100 delivery sites
- the purpose for which the resulting records will be used, in order to clarify how long they need to be retained.

As all of the tutors involved are sessional paid staff on small contracts, they were paid to attend training. Including this payment, the cost of training each tutor was approximately £100.

Buckinghamshire Continuing Education Service has a pay scale which operates on a 'base rate'. Class contact time is paid at 1.5 base rate for non-accredited courses, and 1.7 for accredited courses. To encourage staff to take part in the pilot, it was agreed to pay them the 'accredited' rate.

Responses to a questionnaire after the pilot showed that the average additional time taken by tutors was 20% of the contact time. The payment of the 'accredited' rate therefore represented a fair recognition of the additional time worked.

If costs were incurred and staff recompensed in this way on all the Service's current non-accredited provision, this would add approximately £94,000 to the salary bill (based on 2000/01 tutor hours) on an ongoing basis. In addition there would be an initial training programme cost of around £60,000.

The costs do not take into account:

- administrative support
- cost of storage of assessment records
- additional photocopying, etc, to generate records and copies for students
- 'opportunity cost' to students (students could perceive a reduction in 'learning' time spent in the classroom. On average, the learning outcome approach took up an average of 4.5% of class learning time).

Staff development

Depending on current practice, developing ways of recognising achievement may involve changes in teaching and learning. There may be a need for more active learning and new forms of assessment as well as recording.

It is at the point where tutors and learners meet and interact that the organisation's strategies for fostering and recognising achievement will founder or succeed. Staff development provides the opportunity for tutors to come together as professionals and think about the learning that takes place on their programmes. How does it happen and how do they know that it has happened? Feedback from the pilot inspections indicates that more staff development is needed and that where tutors are brought together to engage in staff development this leads to improvement.

Developing good practice in recognising achievement needs to be integrated into all the strands of staff development – cross-service and team programmes, training courses providing Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) recognised qualifications and in the mentoring and support processes that arise out of the observation of teaching and learning or induction. However, part of the process of launching a new system for recognising and recording achievement will be a varied staff development plan on the topic. This could incorporate:

- a high-profile initial central staff development programme – for managers, team leaders and tutors
- a rolling programme with a variety of modes to reach into all corners of provision
- a procedure to track participation by tutors and follow-up non-participants

- cascading key messages to teams
- subject / client specific development at team level
- mentoring or other support mechanisms to respond to needs identified through quality assurance processes such as the observation of teaching and learning and course evaluation
- sharing experience and good practice.

Staff development provides an opportunity for initial consultation and the development of a consensus to support change. It can offer high quality professional learning to staff. Topics can include:

- involving learners in the learning process
- recognising basic skills needs, responding and referring learners for additional support
- planning for diversity – taking account of different learning styles and backgrounds so that all learners show what they know, understand and can do
- planning and carrying out assessment in varied and unobtrusive ways
- giving constructive feedback.

Developing teams and working groups that share subject and target group interests maximises tutor motivation to work on:

- writing learning objectives
- winning learners over to new methods (eg more active learning, discussing learning skills and styles)
- assessment and review – what worked well?

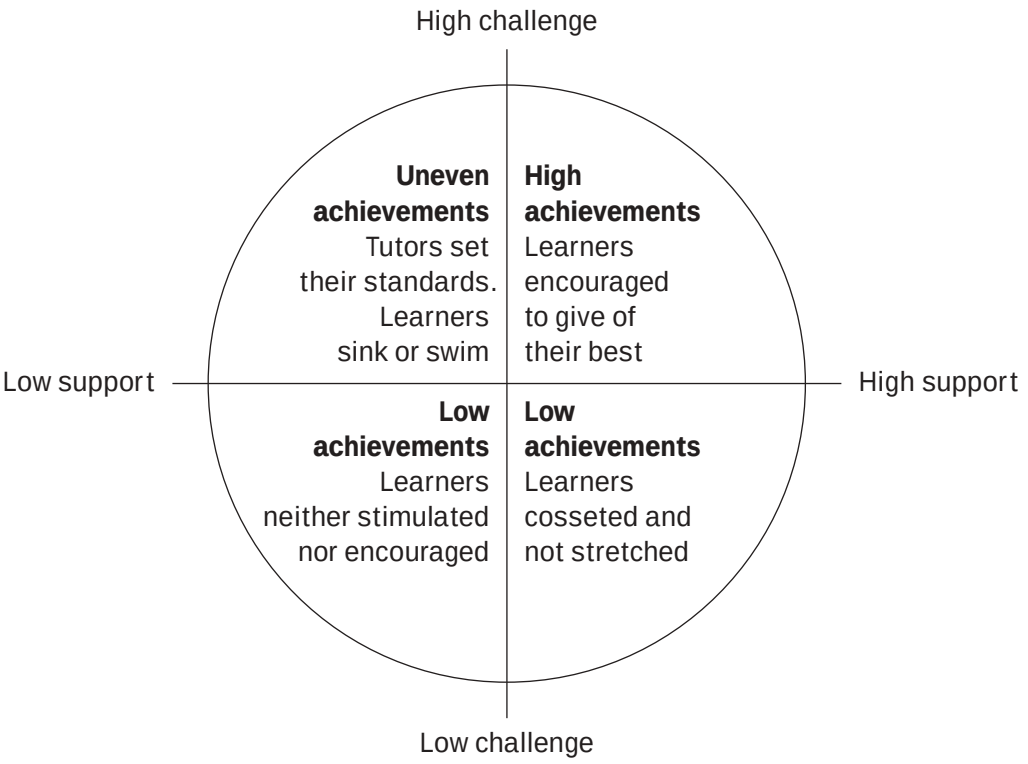
Staff development exercise

Aim **To help teams and tutors find 'safe' ways to raise expectations and performance by their learners.**

Are you concerned that raising expectations and assessing in a more structured way will make your learners more likely to drop out? Bearing in mind the barriers affecting learners, consider the model illustrated in Figure 4 (based on Moorse and Reisenberger 2001, p32). Is it relevant to your groups? What strategies might you use to create an environment in which learners welcome challenge?

Make two lists, one of ways of challenging learners in your curriculum area, and one of ways of encouraging them to meet those challenges.

Figure 4 Balancing challenge and support



- High challenge / low support
  A few learners do very well but others hold back. Drop-out may be high.
- High challenge / high support
  Confident and unconfident learners make progress alike.
- Low challenge / low support
  Learner participation is low and enthusiasm declines.
- Low challenge / high support
  Learners remain dependent on the tutor and tend not to move on.

Case study Staff development on recording 'distance travelled'

City of Liverpool Education and Lifelong Learning Service

Staff development to start a process of recording achievement within this large service – around 22,200 enrolments in over 280 venues – was planned to embrace the big picture. It started with the national quality agenda, the need for evidence of achievements and the CIF and FENTO standards, rather than mechanisms for recording achievements. It was an opportunity for staff to explore fundamental questions about learning as well as developing a new methodology. The two-day programme ran twice and focused on benefits to the learner. There was time for staff to start applying the new approaches to their areas of learning.

A 'what happens next' session was presented at the end of the training and staff were given the opportunity to get involved in a working group to take the draft tools and processes forward.

Recognising staff achievement

All staff development that is offered will show links to national standards including the CIF and FENTO. Participants are encouraged to keep materials from staff training, and subsequent developments they undertake, in a portfolio. It is worth emphasising that this activity will show them the process of recognising achievement their learners will also go through.

Challenge and support

At the heart of developments to recognise achievement are these two concepts – challenge and support. Good practice ensures that learners are fully engaged in the learning process. Expectations (challenges) are high but there is preparation (support) for each step. A structured approach to this, developed across provision, helps ensure that an individual's support needs are anticipated, that there are clear objectives to work for and that learners get the full benefit of what they have achieved. Carefully developed forms of recording will help this and enable organisations to improve, maintain and demonstrate quality. ACL managers are challenged again with the need to create and adapt systems to match the diversity of their provision.

Tutors also face challenges and need support as they set out to raise achievement and make recording processes work. They need opportunities to develop teaching and learning strategies together in teams if they are to set 'challenging learning goals and targets' (ALI/OFSTED 2001 p7). They need new recording processes to fit the strategies they are developing. Where this is the case, tutors will draw on their professionalism to carry them out effectively and unobtrusively.

Motivation and commitment among learners and tutors is high in ACL. Tutors generally provide strong support. They work by consensus with learners, respecting their autonomy as adults, and also, in many cases, recognising that they have paid fees and expect to have some control of the learning experience. Unable to fall back on external syllabus and assessment requirements, tutors on non-accredited programmes have to draw on their own resources and skills to determine challenges and persuade learners to embrace them and set some of their own.

Developing practice with creativity and sensitivity – and learner involvement and support – will bring benefits to learners. The ultimate test of the pursuit of high achievement will be its impact on learners.

Appendix 1 'When to use assessment activities' diagram

Appendix 2 Draft learner record

DRAFT LEARNER RECORD

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Please complete at the start of the course.

Course Title.....

Tutor:.....

Shared Learning Objectives

Here is a list of the shared learning objectives of the course:

Number	Learning objectives

Personal Learning Objectives

Student Name:.....Date.....

Reason for taking the course:.....

.....

.....

Shared learning objective (s) which are most important to me (give nos.).....

Special interests:

I would particularly like to increase my skill/knowledge/understanding of:

.....

.....

Skills or knowledge I need to develop to achieve my objectives/things I find difficult:

.....

.....

Appendix 2 *continued*

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Please complete at the end of the course.

Student Name:……Date……

Course Title……

Tutor:……

The learning outcomes listed below include the shared outcomes of the group and any individual ones you have agreed with your tutor. Tick the box beside each which best describes what you feel you have achieved.

Number	Learning outcome	I am confident/ have made good progress with this	I have made some progress with this	I have made little progress/ haven't worked on this

Please use this space to describe other learning or anything else you have gained from the course

……

……

Next Steps - mention any further course or learning you are planning, or other action linked to this course.

……

……

Student signature……Date……

Tutor signature……Date……

Appendix 3 Workers' Educational Association (WEA) learning outcomes record

Workers' Educational Association

LEARNING OUTCOMES RECORD

You are invited to use this form to help you reflect on what you have learned from your course. Your responses will also help your tutor make future courses more effective and enjoyable and will assist the WEA in ensuring that it is providing courses which really do promote adult learning.

Name: ..... **Address:** .....

Activity title: .....

Where held: ..... **Activity ID:** ..... **Year: 2000/2001**

1 **Learning outcomes** How far do you feel it is now possible for you to:	I have achieved this [please tick]	I'm working towards this [please tick]	Not at all [please tick]

0 Personal learning outcomes

Please use this space to describe what else you think you have gained from this course. Include here any thoughts you have about your overall achievement and your personal progress and development.

0 Next steps

a) During the course were students offered information/advice about further opportunities for learning? (eg suggestions for visits, research or reading, other courses relevant societies/clubs etc)

YES/NO

b) What, if any, individual information/advice did you request and receive?

c) After this course, what might you go on to next? (eg another course, private study, visits, membership of a society, new employment/job search etc)

LORecord form September 2000

Appendix 3 *continued*

0 Course evaluation
Please use this space to comment on any aspects of the course.

(a) the tutor's contribution, class discussion, and other activities

(b) use of audio/visual aids, including documents, texts and task sheets

(c) the amount of time given to different topics within the course

(d) accommodation

(e) other

If you've attended at least two thirds of the class meetings & would like a Certificate of Attendance please tick.....

The Workers' Educational Association devised a Learning Outcomes common template that individual Districts could then adapt to suit the needs of their particular provision and student groups. This is, therefore, one example. This form has now been further adapted with the Student Evaluation appearing separately, so that it may be completed anonymously if so wished.

SAMPLE

Tutor Record: Learner Participation and Progress

Shakespeare: The Roman Plays 2hrs x 12 weeks Learning Objectives 1. Discuss political and moral ideas and issues in 2 plays, backing points with evidence 2. Comment in detail on dramatic verse 3. Explain how characters interact and action develops 4. In a group, plan and take part in a "walked" reading of a scene							Learning activities will include: A. Group discussion and plenary feedback B. Detailed discussion of speeches chosen by learners C. "Walked" readings prepared by groups D. Short presentations on topics chosen by learners	
Record of Learner Activities Column 2: Record learners' completion of assignments or activities. Column 3: Identify the relevant learning objectives. Column 4: Comment on progress. Column 5: Record planned next steps.							**Learner progress and next steps**	
1) Name of student	2) Date(s) and description of activities.					3) L. objs.	4) Tutor comment on achievement future plans	5) Planned next steps
	A. 30 Sep	*B. 15 Oct*	*C. 8 Nov*	*A. 21 Nov*	*D. 5 & 13 Dec*			
Alice Brown	✓		✓	✓		1, 3, 4	*Good progress on analysing themes. Led & directed "walked" reading.*	*Cont. Shakespeare*
Tina Fisher		✓	✓	✓	✓	1, 2, 3, 4	*Very good progress – excellent close work on language.*	*Access to HE*
Mary Richard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1, 2, 3, 4	*Good progress. Very strong contribution to group cohesion.*	*19th Century Novel*
Salwa Daoud			✓	✓		1, 3, 4	*Very good progress – quiet at first but became very good in readings.*	*Leaving area*
Brigitte Four	✓	✓		✓		1, 2, 3	*Good progress, good on language. Needs to gain confidence in reading.*	*Business Studies Cert.*
Henry Day	✓		✓	✓	✓	1, 2, 3, 4	*Very good. Continues his high level of well-researched contributions.*	*Cont. Shakespeare*

Appendix 5 Leicestershire Youth and Community Education Service learning review

Leicestershire Youth and Community Education Service

COLLEGE/CENTRE : _____ **LEARNING REVIEW**

Course: _____ **Tutor Name :** _____

Student Name: _____ **Date:** _____

This is your record of what you hope to learn, where you started from and what you achieve by the end of this course. It is your self-assessment of your own progress. Your tutor values your feedback.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

1. **At the beginning**: Please help your tutor with course planning by indicating how confident you feel about each of the learning outcomes, at the start of the course. Choose a grade from 1 to 5 as shown in the boxes below and write it in against each learning outcome, in the Start of Course column.

1 Very Confident	2 Confident	3 Some understanding /ability to do this	4 Not very much understanding or ability to do this yet	5 I cannot do/do not understand how to do this yet

2. **At the end:** Please complete the end of course column to indicate which grade fits with how you now feel about your learning.

	LEARNING OUTCOMES (What you will learn)	Start of course		End of course
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5				
6.				
7.				
8				

3. **At the end of the course**: There are a number of things which influence how well you can learn. Some will have been more helpful than others. Please indicate how helpful you have found each one listed using the scale below. Please add any others you feel are relevant for you..

1 Extremely helpful	2 Very helpful	3 Some help	4 Not very helpful	5 Hindered my Learning

	LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES (How you will learn)		End of Course
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

Appendix 5 *continued*

Start of Course - Additional Information

Do you need help or advice? Some of the followingmay be available to support you with your learning:
For example – help with : *(please tick any which may apply to you)*

- Additional course costs e.g. materials ☐
- Help with reading, writing or basic maths ☐
- Transport ☐

Childcare ☐

Additional needs – e.g. access, large print, hearing assistance ☐
(your needs can be discussed in confidence with your tutor or a member of staff)

Other – *Please give details*

Is there anything else you would like your tutor to know?

End of Course – Review

1 **Has the course met your expectations?** (please circle one choice)

Definitely Mainly Partly Not at all

2 **Do you feel you have gained from the course?** (please circle one choice)

Greatly Moderately Slightly Not at all

3 **After this course do you intend to:** (please tick **any** which apply to you ***and give details)***

Continue with this course
Move to a more advanced course in the same subject area
Move to a different course/subject area
Move to another college/centre
Seek new employment
Seek voluntary work
Don't know
Study on my own
Other:

4. **Would you like any more information or advice about further learning opportunities here or elsewhere?**

Yes No

5. **Would you like to add any further comments or suggestions?**

Signed Learner	Signed Tutor
Date	Date

Appendix 6 Mary Ward Centre moderator's report form on individual tutors (sample from Mary Ward Centre assessment strategy)

Mary Ward Centre
Moderator's Report Form on individual tutors

Course Tutor's Name:..... *T. T*.....

Course Code and Title:..... *559 Shiatsu*.....

Tutor's Grade given to case studies: Case Study A: *1*
Case Study B: *2*
Case Study C: *3*

Moderator's name:..... *M. N*.....

Date of Moderation:..... *10/10/01*.....

GRADE DESCRIPTORS	
1	Excellent
2	Very Good
3	Good
4	Satisfactory
5	Unsatisfactory
6	Poor
7	Very poor

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY								
1. Method of initial assessment was effective in establishing entry level	✓							Initial assessment method did not establish student level
2. On-going assessment methods were appropriate and regular			✓					On-going assessment methods were inappropriate and irregular
3. Method of Final assessment was appropriate	✓							Final assessment methods were inappropriate
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT								
4. Judgement of student progress was fair and appropriate			✓					Judgement of student progress was unfair and / or inappropriate
5. Judgements were clearly made against the learning objectives				✓				Judgements did not refer to learning objectives
6. Judgements considered additional benefits of learning			✓					Judgements did not consider additional benefits of learning
7. Evidence given to support judgements		✓						No evidence given to support judgements
FURTHER PROGRESSION								
8. Advice given to student about their next step was clear	✓							Advice on progression was unclear
MAKING USE OF THE ASSESSMENT								
9. Assessment was clearly used to monitor student progress	✓							Assessment not used to monitor progress
10. Assessment used to give feedback to students		✓						Assessment not used to give feedback
11. The student was involved in the assessment process			✓					The student was not involved in the assessment process
12. Assessment used by tutor to evaluate and alter course where appropriate			✓					Assessment not used by tutor to evaluate or alter course, although appropriate

13. From the information you have, and using the four categories of achievement given on the Case Study form, where would you place each of the three students presented in the case studies? (For tutor's assessments, see top.)

Case Study A				Case Study B				Case Study C			
(1)	2	3	4	1	(2)	3	4	1	2	(3)	4

14. Moderator's Overall Grade for the tutor's assessment of student learning: **2**

Appendix 6 *continued*

Moderator's supporting comments

Please make notes below on the tutor's performance for each of the following area. Include any additional evidence or thoughts given by tutors during the moderation meeting.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The methods used to assess students were effective in measuring student progress, in understanding the theory and practice of shiatsu.

Initial assessment and final assessment were particularly strong - the final assessment seemed to pull the totality of students' learning together extremely well.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Plenty of specific examples given as evidence (more given in the meeting). I would like to see closer evaluation against the learning objectives in the case studies, although the tutor did bring this out to some extent during the moderation meeting.

FURTHER PROGRESSION

TT is particularly good at giving advice on the 'next step' - it is clear, aimed at the individual student, and seems appropriate. Other tutors could learn from his approach.

MAKING USE OF THE ASSESSMENT

It wasn't clear in the case study how much feedback the students had got regarding their progress. TT. said that feedback is on-going, and gave some nice examples of how he advises individual students during the practical session.

TT. also said that he is going to have another look at the course learning objectives, as it was clear that some theory was creeping into the course, and was much appreciated by students.

References and further reading

Note

Back-up material for this booklet and others in this series can be found at www.qualityACL.org.uk

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Reisenberger A, Dadzie S. *Equality and diversity in adult and community learning: a guide for managers*. LSDA, 2002.

Turner C. *Squaring the circle: funding non-accredited adult learning under the Learning and Skills Council*. NIACE, 2001.

Turner C, Watters K. *Proof positive: learners' views on approaches to identifying achievement in non-accredited learning*. NIACE, 2001.

Useful websites

www.ali.gov.uk

www.basic-skills.co.uk

www.LSDA.org.uk

www.lsc.gov.uk

www.niace.org.uk

www.qualityACL.org.uk

www.rqa.org.uk

adult and community learning
quality support programme

The Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme is a 3-year programme to support ACL providers to meet quality requirements of inspection and funding agencies and improve their provision. It is run by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in partnership with the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and is funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Details of the programme, extra copies of this guide and back-up materials are available on the website www.qualityACL.org.uk

These guides are currently available:

- Self-assessment and development planning for ACL providers
- Observation of teaching and learning in adult education
- Listening to learners
- Fit for purpose: self-assessment for small providers
- Equality and diversity in ACL: a guide for managers
- Involving tutors and support staff in the ACL quality agenda
- Using quality schemes in adult and community learning: a guide for managers.

Further guides and workshops are planned on:

- curriculum leadership in ACL
- making sense and use of management information systems
- leadership and management in ACL
- staff development for quality.

adult and community learning
quality support programme

Adult and community learning providers need to respond to the needs and values of their learners, who may have deliberately chosen non-accredited learning, and also to national priorities and standards, which require evidence of learner achievement. This booklet discusses practicalities of how these often conflicting needs can be met. The value and uses of assessment in adult learning are explained and the discussions are illustrated with exercises for tutors to follow, case studies and examples of forms used to record and recognise achievement.

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