

Implementing the SCQF: Development of assessment methods for selected short courses

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by

SCVO

A Report to Communities Scotland

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Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | v |
| 1 The project | 1 |
| 2 Outputs and outcomes | 3 |
| 3 Participants | 5 |
| 4 Short courses selected | 7 |
| 5 The process | 11 |
| 6 Challenges and issues | 23 |
| 7 Opportunities | 27 |
| 8 Next steps | 29 |
| 9 Results | 31 |

Introduction

This report details work carried out by those involved in the SCVO Short Course Programme and the Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL) Support Scotland Programme to take practical steps in the further implementation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

The specific focus of the project was to develop and pilot assessment techniques appropriate to the SCQF and appropriate to the nature of learning which takes place in vocational, work-based or Community Learning and Development learning situations.

A range of courses was chosen and trainers engaged to allow examination of a wide variety of issues and approaches to this subject.

In this report you will find information about the people involved, the methods they used, the issues and challenges they encountered, as well as opportunities and next steps they identified in using the SCQF.

It has been a highly rewarding project and it is especially pleasing that the work begun is continuing to develop beyond the lifetime of the project and that certain elements are already being mainstreamed in the training programme.

1 The project

This project was to work in partnership with trainers, consultants and organisations, contributing to the SCVO Short Course Programme and the Community Access to Life Long Learning Scotland Support Programme (CALL), to develop appropriate assessment for training delivered.

The methods were to be in accordance with furthering the implementation of the SCQF.

The aim was to develop methods of assessment for three selected short courses, for use on the day of training and some time after, so that learners could continue to evaluate the benefits of their learning.

Rationale

The rationale for the project was to encourage the further implementation of the SCQF within community learning and development, vocational and work-based learning.

The aim was to promote life-long learning, widen access to learning and to develop CPD. SCVO is keen to encourage the development of selected short courses as building blocks for further recognition and qualifications. This requires valid, reliable, quality-assured assessment.

2 Outputs and outcomes

Target outputs

- Develop and pilot assessment methods for three short courses, appropriate to the implementation of the SCQF.
- Engage 30 learners in the training events, who will contribute to the evaluation, feedback and further development.
- Involve three external trainers in developing assessment methods and delivering training.
- Provide an interim and final written report to Scottish Ministers.

Target outcomes

- Increased involvement by SCVO staff, external trainers and learners in practical steps needed to widen the use of the SCQF.
- Increased awareness and understanding of the SCQF among learners, across SCVO and among external trainers.
- Increased confidence in robustness of framework and appropriate methods of assessment.
- Increased demand for implementation of the SCQF in vocational or work-based qualifications and Community Learning and Development.

3 Participants

Courses

There were three courses considered, Project Management, Introduction to Quality Frameworks, and Managing and Supervising People.

- **Project Management**

Fourteen learners were involved. All participants were supported by SCVO as part of the CALL Support Scotland Programme.

Participants included larger scale national organisations, representatives from the learning centre network, organisations from the social care sector and the social enterprise sector.

Trainer: Amelia Mallows is an independent trainer and consultant who has worked in a variety of sectors including social enterprise and private sector.

- **Introduction to Quality Frameworks**

Fifteen participants were drawn from a wide range of voluntary sector agencies, including Councils for Voluntary Service, national agencies, large housing associations and smaller local projects.

Although the course was marketed as an introduction, it attracted a high proportion of relatively experienced workers from these organisations.

Trainer: Shirley Grieve is the National Membership Development Co-ordinator for Learning Link Scotland and brought a strong community learning and development perspective.

- **Managing and Supervising People**

Fifteen participants included learners from national organisations, local branches of national organisations and some local projects.

Trainer: Shirley Otto is an experienced trainer who works across a wide range of voluntary sector organisations at national and local level.

SCVO staff

Nicola Gilbert, the Development officer for the SCVO Short Course Programme, acted as Project Co-ordinator, drawing on input from all participants. Her previous experience has included development of training programmes within the voluntary and private sectors and long-term involvement with learning in community learning and development settings.

A wide variety of colleagues in SCVO contributed their knowledge and experience to the project, including:

Celia Carson, Policy Manager, with a particular responsibility for Workforce Development.

Diane Kennedy, Development Officer for the CALL (Community Access to Lifelong Learning) Scotland Support Programme.

Jackie Petitqueux, Assistant Director of Networks and Corporate Affairs.

4 Short courses selected

Learning methodology

In CLD learners are self-selecting. Learning provision needs to be especially flexible. In work-based learning, learners may have been “volunteered”, with a resulting issue about motivation. In both cases, learning must be flexible. A learning needs approach is therefore especially appropriate.

Learning needs approach

A learning needs approach or model is particularly relevant for open learning courses that require carefully structured content that can be readily accessed and understood by learners with a range of previous experience. All participants must take a learning “journey” from their existing level of knowledge to the level required to successfully complete the course and have the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and understanding. All participants have their own learning needs that must be met sufficiently well through the course for them to succeed. A learning needs model assumes that all participants are engaged in a learning development process and consequently learning support is built into the design to help all participants meet their goals rather than as a remedial activity to help bring a minority up to an acceptable level. The object is for each participant to build on and develop his or her existing skills.

A learning needs approach recognises that:

- Learners are individuals, each with their own learning needs.
- Learners need to be challenged, but the starting point needs to reflect their current level of thinking.
- Learners need to be helped to recognise their own learning needs and find strategies to meet them.
- The learning process is as important as the content and, therefore, the course design reflects the steps necessary to reach the desired learning outcome.
- With time-management support, learners need to be able to tackle the course at their own pace.
- A range of strategies and learning tasks takes account of different learning preferences.

- Support should be available to all and is not stigmatised.
- Support from peers and others can enhance learning.
- Short self-assessment tasks help learners to understand key concepts.
- Equal opportunities are important to all and should inform the course ethos.
- Learners need to be inspired and motivated.

These principles emerged from discussion around the course, Introduction to Project Management but could be said to apply equally to the other courses which formed part of this project.

Criteria for the selection of courses overall

- The courses chosen formed a cluster of related subjects.
- The subjects chosen were seen as key to the success of an organisation.
- The subjects chosen were viewed as important to CPD.

The subjects chosen were ones SCVO would consider progressing over time within the wider articulation/accreditation agenda.

Project Management

This allowed us to explore the SCQF when engaging with organisations highly active in regeneration work.

Introduction to Quality Frameworks

This subject is particularly relevant in the context of the SCQF.

The choice of this short course allowed us to explore the SCQF with organisations particularly active in Community Learning and Development.

This joint training opportunity with Learning Link Scotland, allowed us to attract our respective members and maximise the reach and impact of training.

Managing and Supervising People

Unlike the first two courses, which are new, Managing and Supervising is a successful, existing learning opportunity (running for over a decade), which rates highly with participants.

This course allowed us to examine particular issues which arise when seeking to apply the SCQF to existing learning opportunities.

The course consistently attracts a very wide range of participants both in terms of knowledge and experience.

Learning objectives for each short course

All courses were presented in the context of this project. Within that, each course had its own individual learning objectives:

Introduction to project management

Learning objectives

Participants:

- To gain an understanding of the purpose of Quality approaches and understand the differences between frameworks and standards.
- To acquire a raised awareness of the range of Quality approaches.
- To have the opportunity to consider the personal skills needed to lead on Quality in an organisation.
- To gain practical experience of using the Big Picture, PQASSO and LEAP Quality Frameworks.
- To find out about current developments in HGIOCLD.

Introduction to Quality Frameworks

Learning objectives

Participants:

- To gain an understanding of the purpose of Quality approaches and understand the differences between frameworks and standards.
- To gain a raised level of awareness of the range of Quality approaches.
- To consider the personal skills needed to lead on Quality in an organisation.

- To get practical experience of using The Big Picture, PQASSO and LEAP.
- To find out about current developments in HGIOCLD.

Managing and Supervising People

Learning objectives

Participants:

- To better understand the purpose of supervision.
- To extend their skills for managing and supervising people.
- To have strategies at their disposal for managing people in teams and during periods of organisational change.
- To have greater confidence in dealing with problems of performance.

5 The process

The objective: To develop and pilot valid, reliable, quality-assured assessment.

Valid: Ensure any assessment methods are appropriate to the needs of the SCQF and the nature of the specific course concerned.

Reliable: Consistent with Kirkpatrick's Four Level Evaluation

- Did they like it? Was the learning experience appropriate, enjoyable, and stimulating?
- Did they learn from it? Did it achieve its stated learning objectives and allow the learners to achieve theirs?
- Did they do it? Did the learners apply what they learned to their roles?
- Did it make a difference? What impact has the learning had on the individual, the team and the organisation?

This process seeks evidence from a variety of perspectives and blends elements of learning, evaluation and assessment.

Given the timescale (both in terms of the length of the courses – two were one day courses, while one was a two day course – and the project itself) information was most readily gathered about the first two of Kirkpatrick's questions. However, follow-up exercises have yielded data about questions three and four.

Quality-assured: Robust systems were sought and applied. It was vital a strong case could be made for the methods chosen. It was also identified as important to take into consideration the wider quality frameworks, used by organisations across the sector, in this context.

Communication

Learners

The learners were informed of the pilot nature of the work. They were provided with background to the SCQF in advance or on the day of the course. There was the opportunity for further contact and feedback in the follow-up exercises.

Trainers

Dialogue with and between the trainers was one of the most valuable elements of the project. Their different experiences, perspectives and subject areas resulted in a good number of issues being raised, discussed and tackled using a variety of approaches. Materials and communications produced by each of the trainers were circulated to each trainer, so that all could benefit from each other's experience over the course of the project.

An active online forum provided the opportunity to exchange ideas, experiences and opinions. A joint meeting involving all trainers and the project co-ordinator drew out key findings from the project, and helped with examination of the challenges and opportunities involved in the project and with the consideration of next steps.

Employers

An important aspect of the project was starting to gauge the support participants would gain from their organisations after the courses.

Participants were canvassed on this and encouraged to share learning with their colleagues. This was seen as an important element in supporting the culture of a learning organisation.

Assessment

Learners

There is initial assessment of baseline information about their knowledge and experience coming to the course. Then assessment of learning accumulated over the course of the training. "Distance travelled" by the learner during the course emerged as a key concept. There is also scope for determining how the learner intends to apply the learning.

Trainer

The evaluation process allows the learner to give feedback on how effective the trainer was in assisting the learner to achieve the stated (and sometimes the unexpected) learning outcomes.

Course

While assessment helped the learner to judge progress made in the subject, the learner's feedback allowed adjustments to be applied to allow the course to be made more effective in achieving the learning outcomes.

Levelling

In order to be able to develop appropriate methods of assessment, in terms of the SCQF, the first step was to notionally level the course. While the descriptors were not the only tools used in establishing a Level at which to offer each of the courses, the knowledge and skills attached to each level are very helpful in suggesting indicators for what needs to be evidenced.

Levelling the course

To notionally level their courses, the trainers adopted the following approaches:

Project Management

The course was designed for participants with no previous formalised knowledge of project management and welcomed project managers who would like to learn more formalised tools and techniques. It was appropriate for beginners as well as more experienced participants. The subject matter focused on management of a project and dealt with managing a team.

This suggests responsibility for managing and supervising others. This element suggests SCQF Level 7. However, it was noted that a participant could be managing a project, but not managing people.

Taking all descriptors into consideration, the trainer levelled the course at Level 5, as learners needed to demonstrate aspects of all the descriptors at SCQF Level 5 throughout the course.

Introduction to Quality Frameworks

The trainer decided that the course could sit comfortably at level 5 or 6 and could accommodate learners at either of these levels, depending on their skills or experience. For the purposes of describing this particular learning episode on 14th March and reflecting on the experience of the participants, then the course would sit at SCQF Level 6.

Specifically participants clearly demonstrated that they could:

- Apply knowledge and understanding in known practical contexts.
- Use some of the basic routine practices, techniques associated with the implementation of Quality Frameworks.

- Plan how skills could be used to address set situations and/or problems and adapt these as necessary.
- Use a wide range of skills.
- Work with a range of facts and ideas.
- Exhibit a generalised knowledge of the subject.
- Obtain, organise and use factual and theoretical information in problems solving.
- Take responsibility for carrying out a range of activities both in the group work of the course and through verbal indication, within their respective organisations.

Managing and Supervising People

The course was piloted at Level 6. The descriptors at Level 6 suggest:

- Specialised knowledge.
- Specific capacity to relate theory to practice; organise facts, make generalisations, draw conclusions, devise solutions and act on the result.
- Proactive approaches to issues and problem-solving.
- The ability to communicate, using standard and non-routine forms of communications, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.
- Learners directly manage people, teams and/or work groups, either on a short term basis or as an integral aspect of the job.

The responsibility for enactment of authority, roles and tasks whose purpose is the evaluation and improvement of practices and processes.

The key consideration for the trainer was whether course participants did indeed already have responsibility for the activities and outcomes described above and whether the course itself actually addresses, and extends, the skills and knowledge cited as the descriptors for Level 6.

The data gathered in the pilot indicated that the course could usefully be described as being levelled at 6 in the SCQF. This was on the basis that the information in the report pointed to the course broadly meeting the following three criteria. Firstly that it attracts people who have direct responsibility (or were about to have) for the support and performance in their

workplace. This is based on the assumption that the job remits of these people managers require the level of authority and autonomy necessary to manage complex tasks, groups and organisational change, i.e. the activities, skills and cognitive ability required at SCQF Level 6.

Secondly it must address topics relevant to managing people, both theory and practice, and do so in ways that extend the participants' knowledge, skills and confidence.

And it should produce evidence of impact on learners, i.e. that participants did indeed report pertinent changes and developments in their knowledge, skills and confidence – and that these were located positively in the course itself.

Levelling and the learner

The effect of the level at which the learners operate already can have an impact on the level at which the course can be delivered. This re-enforces the concept of the importance of demonstrating “distance travelled” by the learner – each learner will have a different starting point. The group and group dynamics can have an impact on the level at which the course can be delivered.

Assessment methodology

Guiding principles

The assessment tools had to be sound, valid and quality-assured. The assessment approach needed to be integral to the delivery of the course to act as an enabler to learning not a barrier.

Formative assessment

Informal assessment, carried out within the training course. This can support both learner and trainer to establish the individual's starting point and progress during the course.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is often a more formal approach, where information is collected to give measurable results about understanding and level of achievement.

Role of evaluation

Evaluating the impact and value of a training session is important for refining content, the development of training procedures and the effectiveness of assessments. It can also be used as part of the assessment.

Tools

A package of indicators and assessment tools was devised for use in the various courses, drawing on well established assessment techniques and underpinned by key indicators which were based on course objectives and descriptors.

Questionnaires and quizzes

These could be used before or at the beginning of the course and could help establish baseline information about entry level of learner. Data collected could be both quantitative and qualitative. Used on the day(s) of the course this could establish distance travelled during course. Questions could collect either quantitative or qualitative data – using either multiple choice or open questions requiring fuller answers.

Concept mapping

Assessed each learner's starting point and progression, but also provided a record of development. The trainer benefited from the insight the maps provided about the participants.

Evaluations and icebreakers

Served a dual purpose, and were adapted for use as part of the assessment process.

Evidence gathered during group activities – including “Tough Questions”

Group work yields some of the most valuable results in short courses and the “tough questions” approach helped focus the groups' thoughts and draw out the individual responses, which were collated.

Assessment before the course

Project management

Organisational Audit

Because of the nature of the CALL Support Scotland Programme, organisational audits had been carried out in advance of the training programme. As a result strong baseline information already existed. In other circumstances, a pre-course questionnaire would have been issued.

Introduction to Quality Frameworks

A Pre-Course Questionnaire was sent out in advance of the course:

- What previous experience had the participant had of the subject?
- What were the main things the participant wanted to gain from the course?
- How would the participant expect to use the learning gained from the course?
- What would the participant's organisation require of the participant after the course?

Responses were collated and analysed

Managing and Supervising People

A questionnaire was filled in at the beginning of the course to evaluate the learner's starting point at the beginning of the course in relation to the Level 6 descriptors. This asked:

- The participant's role or job (e.g. do they directly manage others?) and prior knowledge of managing people (e.g. the purpose of supervision).
- What skills and knowledge the participant required from the course (e.g. help with issues associated with exercising their authority).
- What the participant wished to learn from the course (e.g. to become more confident in, and capable of, tackling difficulties about the performance of other staff).
- What the participant's organisation expected of him/her both before and after the course.

Key indicators:

These were identified based on the combination of the following and information needed for levelling the course:

What people brought to the course – pre-course confidence, knowledge and experience of managing and supervising people.

Participants' goals for the course – their expectations of the course and the extent to which participants regard the course as having met their goals.

- What is learnt on the course – the “distance” covered between what participants came with and the knowledge, skills or confidence gained as a consequence of attending the course?
- The consolidation of learning after the course – how much of a difference in the participants’ managing of staff is attributed to learning associated with the course.

Assessment during the course

Project Management Concept mapping

This was used as the formative method of assessment. Maps showed the overall structure of the subject and the links between points.

At the start of the course participants were asked to note down, in concept map form, all the information they already had about project management.

At the end of the day participants returned to their concept maps and, in a different colour, added all the new information they had learned throughout the day.

Benefits for the learner

This method of assessment is particularly learner-centred; as they structure it themselves. It gave participants the opportunity to assess their own learning and the progress they had made. The maps proved popular with the participants and served both as an ice breaker and an assessment method.

Benefits for the trainer

The initial concept maps gave the trainer an insight into the knowledge, skills and attitudes of each participant at the start of the training, enabling her to focus individual attention on resolving specific difficulties, enhancing existing concepts and developing understanding throughout the day.

The final concept maps provided a valuable record of the participants’ learning and for that reason participants were keen to keep them.

Multiple choice questionnaire

This was the summative assessment at the end of the course. The questionnaire consisted of five questions, each with four possible answers relating to important aspects covered during the day.

Evaluation

The evaluation pro-forma was designed using a five point scale. As well as evaluating the course, seven of the fourteen questions related to assessment of the participants' performance during the course. This was created to enable the evaluation, which is generally part of a short course, to also be used as an assessment method.

Introduction to Quality Frameworks

Icebreaker

“Starting to Think about Quality”

This served a dual purpose as it was also part of the assessment process.

Participants were asked to start to think about how we use quality. They were asked to discuss and answer a simple set of questions designed to gauge experience and knowledge.

Responses were collated and analysed.

End of short course evaluation form

The purpose was to obtain an indication of movement/distance travelled in terms of knowledge and understanding. A five point scale was used, with room for comments, where appropriate. It aimed to uncover the links that the participant made to the aims of the workshop and gain an idea of future action and impact. Responses were collated and analysed.

Assessment evidence from the group activities

Group work activities, in particular “Tough Questions”, formed a considerable part of the methodology, allowing for discussion and sharing of ideas and growth. The responses to activities could be used as evidence of learning, particularly in relation to growth in confidence and ability to implement Quality.

Managing and Supervising People

End of short course evaluation form

The purpose of the evaluation was to gather information on the value of the course, its organisation, the trainer and the use the participants were likely to make of the course.

Assessment after the course

Project management

Multiple choice questionnaire

The same questionnaire, as used at the end of the day's training, was emailed to all participants five weeks after the course. The participants were consistent in their answers, demonstrating retention of knowledge. For future courses the trainer would rephrase the questions to assess whether the learners could apply their understanding of the concepts in a different context. Where participants gave incorrect answers, the trainer sent personal feedback, via email, to suggest a different perspective and suggested ways of development.

Post-course evaluation proforma

This was emailed to participants five weeks after the course. Four of the questions from the evaluation on the day were used to assess the element of hindsight. The questions also ascertained whether they had been able to use the tools and techniques they learnt on the day and whether they would use them in the future. It was important to assess whether the participants were able to apply their skills to the workplace. The post-course evaluation form included a section for comment which was not included in the end of day evaluation form.

Online learning

The concept map and self-assessment-style questions have been used in the design of the online Introduction to Project Management training course.

Simple Yes/No answers are required to the questions asked in the online version. However, when the learner chooses the wrong answer he/she is referred back to the relevant part of the course. When the learner chooses the correct answer he/she gets a brief

explanation about why he/she is right. This means the assessment method also re-enforces the learning as well as measures/demonstrates it.

This version of the course will be available in the coming months.

Introduction to Quality Frameworks

Post-course questionnaire

The form was sent to participants one month after the course, to assess impact, confidence and support needs. It was noted that a useful approach to introducing Quality Frameworks is to do so through practical application to a specific subject – such as a “Quality Approach to Fundraising” - which made something apparently quite theoretical more real to learners.

Managing and Supervising People

Assessment questionnaire

This was distributed two weeks after the course. This questionnaire linked back to the pre-course questionnaire. Its purpose was to establish what participants had learnt and their level of confidence in carrying out the tasks associated with managing and supervising people. It was used to discover the take-up of tools and techniques from the course and attitudes to supervision and appraisal. And to identify any support from their organisation in following up their learning. The first nine questions were subject-related. The final five questions related to the impact of the course. A five point scale was used to provide quantitative results. With certain questions room was left to prompt further comment about aspects of the impact of the course, so that vital qualitative information could be gathered to inform the qualitative results.

Data for individual participants in managing and supervising people

The information about each of the participants was summarised and used as a basis to explore the impact of the course on individual participants and what this contributes to the discussion about the levelling of the course. Two questions were addressed in looking at this data – what evidence is there of:

Learning between the pre-course questionnaire and the immediate post-course evaluation.

Learning between the pre-course questionnaire, immediate post-course evaluation and course members filling in the follow-up assessment.

Where did assessment take place?

The short courses themselves took place in a training room environment.

The pre- and post-course contact and assessment was workplace-based, or via email. In the case of Project Management, this is also being developed as an e-learning course to increase its accessibility and the accessibility of support materials to those who have attended the course and to encourage sharing of learning in the workplace.

6 Challenges and issues

This section examines the main issues and challenges which arose out of consultation with trainers and learners throughout the project.

The participants

Learners on CLD and work-place courses are self-selecting. This is one difference from Higher and Further Education, where the SCQF has made its strongest impact to date. In Higher and Further Education an element of selection will almost certainly have been involved, with the result that the lecturer/trainer is likely to have a good idea about the level already achieved in a subject by a learner. In workplace learning, there is the added challenge that a learner may have been “volunteered”, which may have an influence on level of motivation.

The process: Communication

Employers

The issue of reaching the employer and involving him/her in the learning process was discussed. There can be significant challenges in reaching the employer and involving him/her in a participant’s learning experience.

Where a negative organisational learning culture exists – i.e. should the employer view training as a threat (perhaps through fear that the employee will be skilled up in certain areas beyond the existing capacity of the employer, or that the employee will be skilled up and then leave), the employer could prove a barrier to learning, both for the individual and the organisation.

However, where a positive learning culture exists in an organisation, or is developed, the employer can prove a major element in progressing learning for the individual, providing them with the opportunity to apply what they have learnt and offering ongoing support, to the benefit of the organisation as a whole. The role of certain Quality standards, such as Investors in People, in encouraging employers to support a learning culture within organisations was welcomed.

Who and what is being assessed?

Methods

Key challenges here are that assessment methods should be appropriate, proportionate to the level and length of the course and integral to the delivery of the course, so that learning time and outcomes are maximised. Some assessment already exists within short courses, though it is not necessarily recognised as such. A notable aspect of the project was the way in which various aspects of the courses, including icebreakers, energisers and evaluation exercises, also formed part of the assessment process. Learning, assessment and evaluation all flowed into one another, each element re-enforcing the others.

Assessment methods should also protect the crucial value of short courses, namely that they should:

- Introduce people to another way of thinking or viewing a subject.
- Increase the confidence of a learner in that subject area.
- Signpost to further information, training and support.
- Offer the opportunity to network and to learn from fellow learners as well as the trainers.

Levelling

This was easier to apply to some courses than to others. For example, it was relatively simple to use the descriptors to help suggest a level for the Project Management course, perhaps due, in part to the nature of the subject.

It was a less clear-cut process for the courses in Quality Frameworks and Managing and Supervising People where, possibly, more variables come into play.

Different elements of a course could fit with different levels within the Framework. Therefore, establishing a level for a course required the trainer to balance a number of factors and apply a degree of judgement. Decisions were made not just by considering the level which seemed most appropriate, but also by considering the levels above and below and ruling them out as inappropriate.

The issue of progress within short courses, levelled using the framework, was discussed. For example, would a follow-up short course to an Introduction to Project Management still be at Level

5? It was decided that such a course would be likely to be still at Level 5, but perhaps broadening out the areas considered or exploring them in some more detail.

As described previously, the level at which the members of the group operate was a factor in the level at which the course could be delivered and therefore pre-course questionnaires proved an essential tool in this respect.

Results did, however, need to be used with some caution as answers, on occasion, suggested a level of knowledge, experience or seniority which differed from that evidenced on the course itself.

Accreditation

The possibility of developing clusters of short courses for accreditation was seen as potentially attractive to some learners, but could prove a barrier to others. Potential ways of approaching this issue included running courses in a format where learners could choose whether or not they wished to accumulate credits – as is the case with the Open Studies Programme provided by the Office of Lifelong Learning at the University of Edinburgh.

The process of gaining accreditation for courses was also discussed. At present significant resource issues apply in achieving this. Discussion took place on the subject of what it might mean were there an accreditation body specific to the Voluntary Sector. This was seen to have both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages:

A body which has experience of the voluntary sector and the training it delivers. A cost-effective solution as the body would be geared towards the level of resources available to its target client group.

Disadvantages:

Would this approach risk devaluing training delivered by the voluntary sector – separating it from other training which is currently accredited?

Is it more a matter of ensuring effective engagement with existing bodies?

Framework

A good deal of discussion took place about the nature of the Framework itself. Trainers were keen that, in applying a framework, flexibility and innovation were maintained, so that the needs of the voluntary sector were met. Discussion also took place about assessment in a context such as Community Learning and Development, where group activities are often the richest element. It was seen as a challenge to relate the group learning with individual growth.

7 Opportunities

The project identified a number of opportunities in using the framework. It provides a potential common language for the description of learning opportunities, assisting learners in making an informed choice about what is appropriate for them. It plays a part in the progress towards a common currency in training provision, assisting learners as they move between learning environments and sectors. It potentially provides a means to increase the perceived validity of training provided by the voluntary sector.

The SCQF levels and descriptors could provide a useful reference for trainers in the design of new courses. Where a short course exists, the SCQF and the descriptors can act as an enabler/catalyst for the trainer to re-examine how elements of learning acquired can be drawn out. It encourages increased sharing of learning in the sector, as practitioners and learners work together on projects such as this. For example, as a result of this project, the trainer for Project Management had an hour at the end of the day to discuss the course with the participants. This was longer than would normally be possible.

8 Next steps

Development of tools for sharing learning

When designing courses, more consideration could be given to the development of tools for sharing learning in the workplace.

For example the ability to download templates from e-learning and share with colleagues and the employer, as will happen with the Project Management course.

Individual learning records

The development of individual learning records was seen as an important factor in learners using short courses as building blocks to creating a picture of their own lifelong learning, wherever it takes place. It was also seen as important in assisting learners to access further learning opportunities.

Follow-up techniques

Return rates for post-course assessments were strong in two of the three courses – introduction to project management (85% per cent) and introduction to quality frameworks (60% per cent).

However, ways of addressing the low return rate for the managing and supervising people course (25 per cent) will be explored.

This may include exploring ways of motivating people to fill in follow-up questionnaires, or investing more in on-site techniques (e.g. collecting information during the course), or resourcing of face-to-face interviews with participants in their workplace.

The trainer has suggested that the pilot be taken a stage further to explore the potential to more fully assess the levels of existing short courses by using an assessment package that combines measures for (i) assessing learning during a course and (ii) common scales and open questions for collecting pre- and post-course data.

Employers

Further work will be undertaken to investigate effective methods of employer engagement.

9 Results

Outputs

We developed and piloted assessment methods for three short courses as described in section seven of this report. We engaged 44 learners in the training events, fourteen more than our original estimate. They have contributed to the evaluation, feedback and further development. We involved three external trainers in developing assessment methods and delivering training, as well as members of staff from across SCVO and reported on our work.

Outcomes

- Increased involvement by SCVO staff, external trainers and learners in practical steps needed to widen the use of the SCQF. This project offered the opportunity for joint working internally with staff across SCVO as well as externally with learners, trainers and relevant organisations. We had the chance to examine a wide range of issues detailed in this report and, in developing and piloting assessment techniques, we were able to start to take some practical steps to widen the use of the SCQF.
- Increased awareness and understanding of the SCQF among learners, across SCVO and among external trainers. This was achieved by the methods described in chapter 5 with particular reference to communication.
- Increased confidence in the robustness of the SCQF and appropriate methods of assessment. While recognising there are challenges and issues which need to be addressed as detailed in chapter 6, these are after all quite early days in the implementation of the SCQF in CLD and workplace learning – all involved recognised that the SCQF offers significant opportunities.
- Increased demand for implementation of the SCQF in vocational or work-based qualifications and community learning and development which we intend to monitor through the short course programme.



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