

## Working Towards A Quality Learning Programme A Self Evaluation Tool for Service Providers

This self-evaluation exercise has been developed as a tool for you to evaluate how well you are working towards best practice in relation to any learning (education or training) programme. Whether you are running a two-hour workshop or a year long programme, quality is the key principle that underpins all learning programmes. Best practice is largely aspirational and something to work towards. However, it is not always clear what best practice is or even if you are close to achieving it. The aim of this evaluation exercise is to help you identify where you are doing well and areas that you can improve on. The following statements came from consultations on the *Education and Training Charter of Best Practice 2003*, which was discussed at a conference by those working in community and voluntary organisations. This is their interpretation of ‘best practice’.

### How does this exercise work?

The statements have been divided into two sections – Planning and Designing, Delivering, Monitoring and Evaluating Programmes. Within these sections, the statements are divided into the following:

- A – This statement is mostly true for us.
- B – We are working towards meeting this statement.
- C – We are not currently meeting this statement.
- D – This statement does not apply to us.

At the end of each section, add up your total number of A, B, C, Ds.

### Planning and Designing A Learning Programme:

Success in delivering a learning programme is 90% planning and 10% inspiration. As anyone who runs a learning programme knows, there is a hidden percentage included for the additional hard work that goes on in the background that no-one ever seems to notice.

So you are interested in ensuring you plan and design a quality experience. You are ready to impart your knowledge, but have you incorporated any feedback from previous sessions? Have you discussed the learning needs of the learners and their organisations or will the programme you delivered last month suffice? Are you committed to the Community and Voluntary Sector ethos, which includes principles of empowerment, partnership, equality and inclusiveness? Have you thought about where this programme fits in with what else is on offer to the Sector? Maybe you already run this programme at different levels and offer accreditation for those who wish to pursue it! The following statements all relate to the preparation and planning of a learning programme. As this is a generic tool, feel free to customise your response by ticking ‘D’ for statements that do not apply to you.

Statements	A	B	C	D
The learning environment is supportive to all learners and builds confidence and self-esteem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An objective of the learning programme is to increase the capacity of the individual and in turn the capacity of their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

There is recognition that informal learning through ‘working life’ is meaningful as well as learning achieved through a structured learning programme. Where possible, prior experiential learning is accounted for.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Progression is facilitated where possible and relevant, by identifying paths for learners moving from and into other learning programmes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On applicable courses we offer learners an opportunity to seek accreditation and / or certification for their learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We endeavour to adapt a flexible approach (including timing and location of programmes) in order to make them more accessible to part-time learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning programmes are designed to include the principles of the Community and Voluntary Sector, most especially, empowerment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Issues such as wheelchair access, transport, availability of childcare as well as location, timing and costs associated with learning are explored with a view to removing them as barriers to learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We equality proof all of our training material to ensure that the content does not discriminate in any of the following areas - gender; marital status; family status; age; disability; race; sexual orientation; religious belief and membership of the Traveller Community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any publicity material is clear about the content and the benefits of undertaking the programme as well as who the programme is aimed at.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any training materials are accessible and are mindful of the learner’s literacy level and language skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is facilitated collaboration between trainers, co-ordinators and learners in the planning and design of all learning programmes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An interview or other induction exercise is conducted to re-introduce adult learners prior to commencing a longer-term programme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have regular communication, feedback and evaluative opportunities which we use to update and improve on our trainers and programmes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our programmes are well organised with learners receiving course details in good time as well as information on any special arrangements such as disability access.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We make the best possible use of existing resources, for example encouraging the use of the local school or library as a learning resource.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depending on the length and content of the programme, we have agreed standards of facilities and course materials which are discussed with co-ordinators / learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classes and courses are planned well in advanced with a yearly calendar or timetable available for learners and co-ordinators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The principle of equality* is carried through the learning cycle, from design of the programme to selection, participation and outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals:</b>				

\* Equality relates to the quality or state of being the same in quantity or measure or value or status.

### Delivering, Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning Programmes:

Those working in community and voluntary organisations are entitled to a professional quality learning experience. When asked how they would like learning programmes delivered this is what they said.

Statements	A	B	C	D
Where possible, there is facilitated collaboration between stakeholders in terms of the delivery of learning programmes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
While working within the parameters of a structured course, our programmes remain learner focused and incorporate participative methodologies to suit all learning styles.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On longer programmes, we maintain personal contact with individual learners to reduce drop out rate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our programmes are relevant and reflective of both the needs of the individual and in turn, the needs of their organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trainers' are subject to ongoing evaluation and appraisal with clear performance indicators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our programmes are cost effective and offer value for money.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programmes endeavour to meet the comfort needs of learners in terms of space, light, heat, fresh air and refreshments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learners and their organisations are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and become accountable for it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have internal mechanisms and processes in place to monitor and review programme targets and programme standards on an ongoing basis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where applicable, there is a clear evaluation process in terms of how learners are selected for programmes as well as any assessments of individual outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals</b>				

## How well are you working towards providing a quality learning programme?

### Mostly A's – what an achievement!

Well done! You have a lot to be proud of! You are providing a quality learning experience which not only meets the needs of the learner but also the wider Community and Voluntary Sector. It would appear that you are concerned with any issues that may prevent learners from accessing and experiencing a well-run, well-planned empowering programme. You have set these high standards for yourself based on your expectations and the expectations of your learners.

The main challenge for you is how to sustain such a great programme(s). While you are doing so well it is important to plan ahead to ensure that you continue on this path. In doing this exercise, you have identified the areas that are working well. No doubt, there is always room for improvement! Are there any B's or C's which could be worked on? If so, check the "Where to next?" for an easy step-by-step guide on creating a plan for improvement. But for the moment, sit back and enjoy the feeling that comes from being committed to quality.

### Mostly B's – you are nearly there

William Butler Yeats said that education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. You are well on your way to providing a quality empowering experience for your learners which will enable them to bring a spark of new learning back to their communities and / or their organisation. You recognise that an objective of any programme is to broaden and validate the learner's experience while also striving to derive benefits at individual and organisational level.

If there are areas where you scored a C, check back and see if there is any action that you could take to make progress in this area. Remember that it doesn't always require huge resources to make changes. You are nearly there and it may only require a shift in one direction. If you aren't sure how to make those changes, move on to the "Where next?" section which has some useful tools to facilitate you making your plan. Schedule to check back with this evaluation tool in the future and you may be surprised at your achievements. Be proud of yourself, you are committed to working towards achieving the highest standard for the learner and meeting their needs in all aspects of the training cycle from planning right through to delivering and evaluation. Keep up the good work.

### Mostly Cs - you have high potential

Completing this questionnaire shows that you have an interest in quality. Look at the statements where you ticked A or B and identify why these are working for you. Write down the reasons. You will probably find things like – it is a priority here in our scheme, it is absolutely essential or we organise these activities particularly well.

Now look at the statements where you marked yourself Cs!

Choosing mostly Cs highlights the opportunity for you to identify and realise your potential as a quality-training provider. Think possibilities! Remember you can make efficient and effective changes in your training without breaking the bank. You just need to think creatively and take action! The results can be quick and will be useful. Remember the old maxim **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore (TEAM WORK). Involve if and where you can learners, tutors and anyone else you think will be useful in helping you reach your potential as a training provider.

## Where to next?

Learning isn't just about how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It includes being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't. Having worked through this exercise, you may have identified areas you would like to improve on.

The following is a brief step-by-step guide, which will enable you to creatively work on a vision for improving and building on what you are already doing. This works for any changes you wish to implement, no matter how big or small they are:

- If you won the lotto, what improvements to the quality of your training would you make? Don't hold back!
- Read over what you have written. You may notice that a lot of what you have suggested is actually listed in the statements above.
- Okay, so which of these improvements are the most realistic for your service **at any level?** Sometimes we have a tendency to think of the barriers that have stopped us from taking actions in the past. Forget about these for the moment. Just focus on realistic improvements at any level for the moment.
- Select some options that are the most feasible for your organisation to start working on at this time or in the near future?
- Identify the benefits and investment associated with each of these options?
- Drill down and pick one improvement that you can start working on now and that will have the greatest chance of (a) being successful for your centre or (b) improving quality in your training/education?
- What specific actions do you need to take to achieve this option?
- When will these actions be complete? Who will do them?
- Is there anyone who can help? E.g. similar organisations to your own might be able to give useful information, advice, resources etc.
- If you find you are stuck at the implementation stage, here is a useful tool to organise your plan. You can copy the headings and add your own information.

Action	Person taking responsibility for this	Person/s assisting	Interim deadline	Final deadline	Any comments

- Do it!
- Once you have done it, revisit what you have done and check how well it went.
- Repeat if successful, modify if not, now repeat the above process for a new action. Small but sure steps...

## Education and Training Charter of Best Practice for the Community and Voluntary Sector

**Quality** is the fundamental value that underpins all Education and Training. It is the firmly held belief that a quality learning experience can be achieved by all stakeholders, including those providing, co-ordinating and receiving (as individuals and organisations) education and / or training when the following principles are put into practice.

**Education and Training within the Community and Voluntary Sector supports and facilitates:**

- ❑ **Access** to and **Equality** in learning experiences for learners and potential learners.
- ❑ **Accountability** on the part of all stakeholders (purchasers, providers and participants) by making best possible use of resources, with outcome evidenced at the level of an individual's performance through monitoring, review and evaluation.
- ❑ **Enjoyable, creative and challenging** learning experiences, thereby acting as a stimulus for further learning.
- ❑ A **transparent approach in relation to the selection criteria** for participants as well as the planning, design, delivery and monitoring of programmes and any assessment or certification that may emanate there-from.
- ❑ **Participant centred** design and delivery, incorporating a variety of participative methodologies and mediums to suit all learning styles.
- ❑ **Personal and collective empowerment**, within an atmosphere that enables growth and capacity-building at an individual, organisational and community level.
- ❑ **Prior learning** by taking into account relevant previous work practice and learning experience.
- ❑ **Progression and continuous learning** from an individual, organisational and community perspective.
- ❑ A **needs-led** approach with a clear indication of the purpose of the education / training for the learner, the organisation and their community.
- ❑ **Planning and management** in terms of facilities, course material and delivery.

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