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ABSTRACT

A group of adult educators in England conducted seven case studies to identify strategies for recognizing adult students' learning progress in nonaccredited programs. The case studies identified the following elements of good practice in the process of recording and validating achievement: (1) initial identification of learning objectives; (2) initial assessment of learners; (3) negotiation of learning objectives with learners; (4) learning self-assessment; (5) ongoing formative assessment; (6) progression advice and guidance; (7) a record of achievement; (8) moderation of assessment; and (9) celebration of achievement. A framework for good practice was identified, along with key issues and areas for further research and development. (This document begins with an overview of the project. Presented next are the following case studies and papers: "The City Literary Institute," by Jan Grant and Wendy Moss; "Kensington and Chelsea College Partnership: The Learning Postcard Project," by Amanda Hayes; "The Mary Ward Centre," by Olga Janssen; "Park Lane College, Leeds: The Stepping Out Programme," by Philippa Lester and Phill Hopkins; "Wigan and Leigh College," by Bernadette George; "The Workers Educational Association," by Philippa Langton; "Birmingham City Council," by Jenny Kirk; "Recognizing and Validating Nonaccredited Achievement: The Learner's Perspective," by Cheryl Turner and Kate Watters; and "Recognizing and Validating Nonaccredited Achievement: An Overview," by John Vorhaus). (MN)

1

RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING OUTCOMES OF NON-ACCREDITED LEARNING:

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Edited by: Maggie Greenwood, Amanda Hayes, Cheryl Turner and John Vorhaus

research findings

Recognising and validating outcomes of non-accredited learning

Project number: RPM 476

Project Leader: Maggie Greenwood; John Vorhaus

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Summary

This publication describes the developmental work of a group of practitioners who sought to identify strategies for recognising learning progress on non-accredited programmes. Seven case studies make up the main body of the report, and each provides details of work carried out by an organisation that provides non-accredited learning opportunities for adults. In all cases, the centrality of the learner is of key importance, and on-going NIACE research on learners' perspectives provides an important contribution to the debate. The final chapter identifies a framework for good practice and discusses issues that are common knowledge, the areas in need of further development and what further research needs to be carried out in the field of recognising and validating non-accredited adult learning.

Key Findings

1 We identified nine elements in the process of recording and validating achievement. What follows is *one* framework of good practice: it is not suggested that each element is always necessary, nor that all nine are always sufficient. Where appropriate, we indicate how the element of good practice relates to the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework.

■ Initial identification of learning objectives: tutors clearly and accurately identify primary learning aims in advance of the course. Inspection will consider the extent to which teachers and trainers 'plan effectively with clear objectives that all learners understand'.

■ Initial assessment of learners: this provides an opportunity to gather information about learners' knowledge and experience, assess additional learning support needs, discuss and negotiate the learning programme, and adapt the programme to meet learners' needs. Inspection will look at the extent to which 'initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

3

- Negotiation of learning objectives with learners: tutors to share aims and objectives with learners, and to agree on what is to be retained, amended, added to or subtracted from any initial aspirations. All new objectives to be discussed and agreed with students. Inspection will evaluate the extent to which tutors 'with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly'.

- Learner self-assessment: learners to be encouraged to develop an understanding of what is going well or not so well, and how they might improve on progress. It is now recognised that 'learning to learn' is an important feature of the learning process, and that the recognition and evaluation of learning progress plays an important part in this. Inspection will examine the extent to which learners 'develop the skills of critical evaluation' and 'understand how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve'.

- On-going formative assessment: formative assessment is integral to the process of recording achievement. 'Assessment' in this context implies no more (and no less) than a discerning judgement about learner's progress; it is 'on-going' in the sense that it goes on all the time; and it is formative in so far as its purpose is forward-looking, aiming to improve future learning (as distinct from the retrospective nature of summative assessment). Inspection will look at the extent to which 'assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further'.

- Progression advice and guidance: it is a recognised feature of good practice to provide advice and guidance to students about further courses, learning programmes, and employment and other opportunities that are related to the course they have completed. Inspection will look at the extent to which 'careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards the opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training'.

- Record of achievement: a record of achievement is in essence an assessment of learners' progress as judged against their learning aims and objectives. The record should refer to clearly identified learning objectives, and take account of classroom observation, learner self-assessment and tutor assessment. Inspection will look at the extent to which 'achievements towards learning goals are recorded' and also at the extent to which 'assessment information is used to guide course and programme development'.

- Moderation of assessment: internal moderation enables validation of tutor assessment. Tutors make presentations of samples of assessed work to colleagues together with a Head of Department or Curriculum Manager. The purpose of internal moderation is to discuss difficult cases, and identify common standards and criteria for assessment.

- Celebration of achievement: in many cases, nothing is more important for the endorsement of learning than an event at which learners' success is celebrated.

2 We identified several areas in which there is room for further development. Notable amongst these is the area of staff development, and in particular: identifying aims and objectives; negotiating learning objectives; facilitating learner self-assessment; formative assessment; describing learning outcomes.

3 Our research confirmed that we remain without adequate answers to four key questions:

- How do learners benefit from the process of recording and validating achievement?

- What body of evidence will satisfy inspection requirements?

- How do we measure learning (especially 'soft' outcomes)?

- How do we compare achievement rates across providers whose standards may differ?

Background Information

This publication is in large part the work of the Learning Outcomes Group, initiated by Janet Hill and Amanda Hayes, and which now includes members from LSDA, NIACE the WEA, the Mary Ward Centre and the City Lit. Its aims include: investigating methods of validating achievement in non accredited programmes of learning; making recommendations on how best to improve the quality of assessment from the perspective of funders, educators and students; influencing national and local policy formation and strategic planning.

Method

The research comprised 7 case studies, a report of learners' perspectives and a summary presentation and analysis of findings. Priority was given to observing good teaching practice on the one hand, and learners' needs and preferences on the other.

Related publications

Donley, J., and Napper, R., *Assessment Matters in Adult Learning*, Oxfordshire County Council and NIACE, 1999.

Greenwood, M., and Merton, A., *An Evaluation of Non-Schedule 2 Pilot Projects*, LSDA and NIACE, September 2000.

Hayes, A.., et al, *Outcomes of Adult Learning*, FEDA, 2000.

Contact details

For further details please contact:

Maggie Greenwood/John Vorhaus

LSDA

Regent Arcade House

19-25 Argyll Street

London W1F 7LS

jvorhaus@lsda.org.uk

mgreenwood@lsda.org.uk

CONTENTS

6

PREFACE

This publication describes the development work from summer 2000 of a group of practitioners who have been active in analysing the issues and identifying the strategies for recognising student progress in non-accredited programmes. The practitioners have sought to communicate the emerging issues from their research to policy makers in order to influence their thinking. Seven case studies make up the main body of this publication and detail the work that has been carried out by these organisations that provide non-accredited learning opportunities for adults. The diversity of the provision means that readers will need to select from the materials presented in order to meet their local needs.

The centrality of the learners is of key importance and the NIACE research on the learners' perspective is an important contribution to the debate.

The final chapter identifies a framework for good practice and discusses those issues that are common knowledge, the areas in need of further development and what further research needs to be carried out in the field of recognising and validating adult learning in the non-accredited curriculum.

Maggie Greenwood

1. INTRODUCTION

1   Policy Context

'Whilst qualifications are very important and accreditation will continue to be appropriate for the majority of courses, we also want to see the LSC provide opportunities with scope for learners to gain recognition for their achievements other than through qualifications' [1]

1.1   The Learning and Skills Act, 2001 has resulted in the creation of a restructured post-sixteen education sector. Within this new sector there is a plethora of learning provision for adults, some of which leads to qualifications and some for which outcomes are more difficult to quantify in a standard form. Whilst recognising the value of non-accredited learning and in particular the important contribution that it can make to widening participation,[2] the government has made clear its intention to raise standards in education.

The government has now taken steps to promote excellence and to secure radical improvements where standards are unacceptably poor. Quality is at the heart of our new proposals. The Learning and Skills Council will have a formal role to promote high standards and will be expected to fund only learning that meets adequate standards.[3]

1.2   Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) will have to make decisions as to which organisations and learning programmes should receive public funds and to what level.   The distribution of funds will relate to the strategic priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan, March 2001:

- To raise achievement of young people aged 19, measured by the proportion attaining a level 2 qualification, and the proportion lacking the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

- To raise achievement of young people aged 21, measured by the proportion attaining a level 3 qualification, and the proportion lacking the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

- To raise achievement in the entire adult population measured by the proportion attaining a level 3 qualification, and the proportion lacking the basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

- To raise participation post-16, measured by the proportion of 16-19 year olds engaged in education and training.

- To raise the quality and effectiveness of the education and training we support, measured by external inspection grades and by structured feedback from learners, employers and training providers.[4]

1.3 To inform their decisions about the allocation of funds, as well as regulate and quality assure education and training provision, a range of measures have been developed by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in consultation with key organisations involved in the sector. These include: a new inspection framework for the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and quality guidelines for the LSC.

1.4 In order to secure funding through LSCs it will be necessary for providers which include FE colleges, LEAs, the voluntary sector and private training providers, to demonstrate that students are making educational progress and that robust systems are in place in order to ensure continuous quality improvement. There is therefore an urgency for policy makers and practitioners to learn from best practice and develop a robust system for measuring learning in non-accredited provision, which enhances students' experiences and meets the requirements of the LSC. The challenge is to develop a system, which is sufficiently non-threatening to be valued by people who have had few positive experiences of education in the past and/or have minimal language and literacy skills, yet be rigorous enough to satisfy national standards and the LSC. There are fundamental, practical and philosophical difficulties involved in finding solutions.[5]

2 The Project

2.1 This publication describes the development work of a group of practitioners who have been active in analysing the issues and identifying strategies for recognising student progress in non-accredited programmes and have sought to communicate the emerging issues

2.2 This is a practical manual for teachers and managers.[6] Examples of systems and materials that have been developed by staff in a range of adult learning environments are evaluated in order to stimulate lecturers and others working with adult learners, to develop systems for recognising and validating learning within their own organisations. It is also designed to support managers in the development of quality systems, which meet the requirements of inspection and funding under LSCs. The course and staff development issues that need to be addressed are identified and a range of strategies developed by leading practitioners are presented within the case studies

2.3 The first section maps the development of the Learning Outcomes Project and progress to date.

2.4   The case studies that make up the main body of this publication
      detail the work that has been carried out by a number of different
      organisations who provide non-accredited learning opportunities for
      adults. They are an honest presentation of 'work in progress' and
      identify tensions and approaches that do not work as well as successful
      initiatives. The diversity of provision within the sector will mean that
      practitioners have to select from the materials presented in order to
      meet their local situation. The evolving models are not intended to be
      prescriptive. However, analysis of the case studies results in the
      identification of some key themes and issues, which require further
      research.

2.5   The centrality of learners is of key importance; learners are both
      subjects of and participants in identifying achievement in non-
      accredited provision. The NIACE research is investigating the value
      to students of identifying learning outcomes. This chapter looks at
      the issues around involving learners and gives an account of the
      methodology to be used in the investigation. Work with focus groups
      of learners is currently being undertaken and the full research report
      will be published by NIACE in the autumn of 2001.

2.6   In the final chapter we draw out the lessons from the case studies and
      provide an overview of what we know, what we don't know and what
      remains to be done. The chapter includes a framework for good
      practice, and identifies areas for development, emerging issues and
      questions for further research.

2. THE LEARNING OUTCOMES RESEARCH PROJECT

1. CONTEXT

1.1 The Learning Outcomes project which is supported by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), developed as a result of discussion at the 1999 Further Education Research Network (FERN) Conference.[7] Its aims are to:

- investigate methods of validating achievement in non accredited programmes of learning

- make recommendations on how best to improve the quality of assessment from the perspective of funders, educators and students

- provide evidence on the social and economic benefits of learning[8]

- influence national and local policy formation and strategic planning.

1.2 The project has two different but complementary strands. The NIACE strand[9] is concentrating on learners as both contributors and subjects of systems for assessing learning gains from non-accredited formal and informal learning opportunities. The LSDA strand concentrates on models of good practice currently being developed by colleges and other learning providers.

1.3 The first phase of the project comprised: an expert colloquium; desk research and practitioner consultation workshops which drew on other research projects notably the evaluation of the Non-Schedule 2 and Adult and Community Learning Fund projects; Raising Achievement research at the City Literary Institute and Mary Ward Centre and evaluation of the system developed by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA).

1.4 Through this early work a number of key principles emerged which were to inform the development of systems in the case study organisations and the formulation of new national policies and procedures (see Appendix I).

1.5 These principles have been developed into a set of key themes which are summarised below and all of which are illustrated in the case studies set out in chapter 3.

2. THEMES WHICH UNDER-PIN BEST PRACTICE

2.1 The centrality of learners

- Learners' needs and expressed preferences should be central

- Their voices and experience should be evident in the negotiation of objectives

- Students should be involved in the process of assessment.

- Students should be able to recognise ways in which recording learning benefits them.

2.2 Validation and Assessment, which is 'Fit for Purpose'

- Assessment and quality systems should be relevant to local situations

- Not all learning needs to be assessed, although it may be important to the learner that it is recognised

- Systems need to take account of the many forms of personal development and the diversity of recording methods required.

- Validating group, rather than individual, learning may be desirable

2.3 External standards and clarity about the purpose of recording learning

- Organisations need to be clear about their objectives and differences between: assessing learning, validating learning, measuring learning, quality assurance.

- Managers need to decide if different instruments are required in order to meet the different recording requirements of learners, teachers and funders.

- Systems should be congruent with FENTO and PAOLO[10] lecturer standards and the Student Entitlement.

- Systems should support institutional self assessment and provide evidence for inspectors

8

2.4 Staff Development

- Management needs to invest adequate resources in the training and support of staff

- Staff need to be involved in the development of local systems for recording learning

- Practice and principles should be congenial to the motivation of lecturers.

- Training needs to focus on identifying a broad range of learning objectives, developing a dialogue with students about learning and finding imaginative ways to evidence learning

2.5 The LSDA research to date emphasises the need for managers to ensure that the resources required for providing evidence of learning are proportionate to the nature of their organisation, the learning provision and student profile. The amount of time and support required to develop new systems should not be underestimated, especially in organisations where there are numerous part-time staff who may not have a teaching qualification.

3. THE CASE STUDIES

3.1 The case studies, which follow, describe the development of local systems for recognising that learning has taken place. In some, but not all cases, the learning is also assessed. Organisations were selected because they had been involved in the debate concerning achievement in non-accredited learning for some time and had begun to evaluate and adapt their systems in response to feedback from inspectors and their own staff and students. Between them, a range of different adult learning environments are represented including Local Authority provision, the voluntary sector, FE colleges, external institutions and partnerships. Their work spans a broad curriculum range. However, developments in ESOL and Basic Skills are being reported as part of a separate parallel project and are not a feature of this research [11].

3.2 Each case study is presented in a similar format: a context section briefly describes the organisation; the learning outcomes model is then outlined; the next section describes how the model was developed; strengths and weaknesses are then identified and finally each organisation presents its conclusions and planned action which will develop their model to the next stage. In some cases examples of materials used to map learning progress are included in an appendix.

9

NOTES

1. Learning and Skills Council Prospectus, 1999.

2. The FEFC funded some 74 projects over the period September 1999-2000 July 2001 to deliver innovative programmes which did not require a qualification as an outcome. Over 20,000 learners enrolled on programmes in 1999-2000. Ref. Evaluation of NS2 Pilot Projects 1999-2000 FEDA/NIACE.

3. Tessa Blackstone, Minister of State for Education in the House of Lords in FEDA, Inform issue 3 pp5, 1999.

4. In the letter of the Secretary of State of 9th November 2000 to Bryan Sanderson, Chair of the LSC, recognition was also given in paragraph 26 to non vocational learning - *"many adults, including large numbers of older and retired learners, will want to pursue high-quality and rigorous study for its own sake, and I expect provision to be made to meet their needs."*

5. Discussed by A. Hayes, P.Lavender, A.Reisenberger, and J.Vorhaus in Outcomes of Adult Learning: taking the debate forward, FEDA with NIACE, 2000.

6. It is recognised that there are different traditions within organisations concerning the use of terms, which describe the people who manage learning these include: teacher, tutor, lecturer. Rather than select a uniform descriptor, we have decided to respect local practice.

7. Papers were discussed at the conference, which developed out of research work that had been pioneered, by a group of London adult educators who have continued to be central to the project's development. They were: Janet Hill, City Lit; John Vorhaus and Olga Janssen, Mary Ward Centre, Philippa Langton, WEA and Amanda Hayes Kensington and Chelsea College.

8. Research findings from this project are fed into the research into the Wider Benefits of Learning being undertaken for the DfEE by Birkbeck College and the Institute of Education.

9. Directed by Cheryl Turner.

10. PAOLO lecturer standards for Community Education tutors are based on the work of Paolo Friere, a radical South American community educator.

11. *Recognising and validating learning outcomes and achievement in non-accredited basic skills and ESOL.* This LSDA project, being undertaken by Sue Grief, parallels the project discussed in this paper. It recognises the factors specific to these areas including; the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy, the new curricula for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL and the opportunity for LSC funded institutions to claim achievement units for learners on non-accredited basic skills and ESOL programmes where the primary learning goal is "set within" the national standards. Over 150 institutions have responded to a questionnaire and five case studies will be undertaken.The project report is due to be completed by July 2001. This will identify good practice and make recommendations on ways in which the achievements of learners, for whom the new national literacy and numeracy tests are not appropriate, can be recognised.

APPENDIX I

KEY PRINCIPLES

The principles describe good practice, which should underpin good quality provision for adult learners. Managers and teachers can use them as a checklist against practice in their own organisations in order to develop local systems to validate and measure the outcomes of learning. They may also be used as national standards by those bodies responsible for making judgements about the quality of education provided by different organisations.

The principles support the development of a culture of continuous quality improvement and the performance standards already identified in the FENTO lecturer standards and the Student Entitlement.

1. The Learner

The instrument developed to measure learning is appropriate to the learners'
needs and reflects good equal opportunities and inclusive learning practice.

2. Learning Outcomes

The personal, social and economic benefits of learning to individuals and communities are valued together with planned learning outcomes and are confirmed by lecturers.

3. Evidence

Evidence is: (i) collected systematically and adequately robust for external inspection and LSC quality evaluation requirements: (ii) available for subsequent accreditation if appropriate; (iii) a spectrum incorporating qualitative and quantitative information as appropriate.

4. Quality

The quality framework is responsive to institutional and national agendas. Feedback is used to improve quality at course and institutional level and contributes to organisational self-assessment.

5. National Standard

Practice is underpinned by staff development and linked to FENTO/PAOLO lecturer standards. Wherever possible, the system for learning outcomes allows year on year comparisons of performance and benchmarking against national performance data.

6. Bureaucracy

The bureaucratic underpinning of any system of recording learning and collecting evidence is proportionate to the institution's resources and not unduly intrusive of the learning process.

3. CASE STUDIES

THE CITY LITERARY INSTITUTE

Jan Grant and Wendy Moss

1.   CONTEXT

1.1   The City Lit is one of four designated colleges in inner London funded by the FEFC to deliver programmes which are, primarily, non-accredited adult education.

1.2   The College operates on three sites in Central London and in other community contexts. It offers adult education in: Access and Return to Study, Basic Skills, Centre for Deaf People, Humanities, Computing, Drama, Health and Fitness, Languages, Music, Psychology and Counselling, Section for Independence through Education, Speech Therapy, Teacher Training, Widening Participation, Community and Parent Education and Visual Arts. An extensive Learning Centre offers support for students across all programmes.

1.3   In 1999-2000 The City Lit offered 2,625 part-time classes and eight full-time ones. 5% of these were accredited such as the Access courses in Art, Humanities and Drama and a series of certificated courses in the Centre for Deaf People, Languages, Music, Health and Fitness, Counselling and Computing. 95% of the courses, however, were non-accredited.

1.4   While courses vary in length between a day workshop to a year or more of part-time study, typically a course will range over one term for two hours a week.

1.5   In the last academic year the college had 22,000 adult students, and 44,000 enrolments. This reflects the fact that many students will enrol for more than one course in any given year. The vast majority of tutors are visiting part-time lecturers. There are currently 821 part-time teaching staff and 72 full-time or fractional.

2.   A LEARNING OUTCOMES MODEL FOR THE CITY LIT

Pre-Course

2.1   Tutors make an initial identification of learning outcomes on the course outline sheet.

2.2   Every effort is made to identify **specific** learning objectives. It is recognised that these will not all reflect the richness of potential outcomes, but they are a bottom line for recording achievement.

12

16

2.3 It is stressed that the identification of learning outcomes is one of the most important elements of planning and is intimately connected to matters of assessment.

2.4 It is emphasised that learning objectives relate to the **learner**, and not to the teacher.

2.5 Tutors are supplied with guidance on how to identify specific, learner-centred objectives.

On-Course: First Class

2.6 Learning outcomes to be presented to learners on a **Personal Record of Achievement** form (Appendix 2).

2.7 Tutor to discuss learning objectives with learners. Tutor to make a record of any amendments to the agreed learning objectives.

2.8 Learners make a note of their **personal hopes** on their Personal Record of Achievement. They are asked to write down what they hope to achieve by the end of the course.

On-Course: First Class and Beyond

2.9 Tutors are encouraged to maintain a **record keeping system** to monitor learners' achievements

2.10 Tutors are encouraged to think of assessment as an ongoing process, but are also advised to set work for learners to which they can provide an individual response on at least two occasions during the course. (For example: small project; piece of music; quiz; exercise; improvisation, and so on.)

2.11 Tutors make an initial identification of learning outcomes on the course outline sheet. Students may see these before the course begins and they are given out at the first class. (See appendix 1)

2.12 At the mid point in the course learners are invited to look over their Personal Record of Achievement, so as to consider learning to date and to evaluate the course. This may be either an oral or written exercise.

End of Course

2.13 Learners are asked to **assess their learning**, indicating against **each of the agreed learning objectives** how much they have achieved. There are four options:

13

- I have achieved this;
- I have nearly achieved this;
- I have started working on this;
- I can't do this.

2.14 Again on their Personal Record of Achievement learners are asked to make a note of their personal outcomes. They are invited to answer the following questions:
- How far have you achieved what you hoped?
- What is the most important thing you have gained?

2.15 Learners are asked to give examples of any other achievements stemming from the course (for example, skills learned, tasks completed, personal development).

2.16 Finally the tutor is asked to provide some written comments, indicating on each learner's Record of Achievement:
- strengths;
- points for future development.

2.17 Learners are also asked to assess the course on a 'Course Evaluation' form (Appendix 3). This includes an opportunity to:
- rate the course as Excellent; Good; Satisfactory; Poor or Very Poor;
- provide written comments about the course and/or the teaching;
- indicate how the learning is to be used after the course;
- indicate where, if anywhere, the learner is intending to study next;
- indicate whether the learner would have liked an opportunity to prepare for a qualification in the subject.

3. BACKGROUND

Aims

3.1 Trial new procedures and materials for validating student achievement in non-accredited learning programmes at The City Lit.

3.2 Produce a report and guidelines on the revised framework, which might be implemented, after consultation, across the college.

3.3 Enable consistent recording of retention and achievements on which to base clear targets for improvement.

3.4 Contribute to the national debate on learning outcomes.

14

Participants

- Ten tutors on a range of courses across the college.
- One tutor working with students with learning difficulties
- One tutor working on a speech therapy course.
- Ten students on each course who undertook to have particular involvement and give feedback on the process.

Strategy

3.5 To be consultative throughout.

3.6 Elicit feedback from people occupying a wide variety of roles, including senior managers, programme managers, administrators, tutors and students.

3.7 The importance of feedback stemmed from a perceived gap between those implementing the system and those experiencing it. This gap meant a certain amount of frustration among students, tutors and programme managers, which it was important to attend to.

3.8 It was crucial to learn about the negatives and positives perceived about the current system before designing a new one.

3.9 Feedback seminars were held throughout the project and new forms and procedures were designed together with the pilot tutors, with action for the feedback incorporated.

Problems with Past Practice

3.10 Generally speaking, students had not wanted to fill in forms, had not wanted copies of them, and, particularly if they ate into class time, resented them.

3.11 Many tutors gave out forms in the week before the course ended to fill in at home. They had little time to complete their part of the form during class time during the final pressured classes. The task of photocopying forms for students as they left was enormous.

3.12 The tick box system was confusing. Students found it hard to judge where to place themselves. The column 'I have started to work on this' effectively meant 'I cannot do this' when interpreted into statistics. This did not seem fair to students who might want to see this as an achievement.

3.13 The column 'I am working towards this' was interpreted differently by different departments.

15

3.14 There were problems with the concept of simple 'achievement' in creative subjects: creative process is part of lifelong learning – it was impossible to state 'I can do this'.

3.15 The forms really needed to be done after the class had finished, otherwise they did not reflect the full achievement. However, the administrative difficulties of sending them out to students after the term, was finished was huge. If the students did not see them then they were a meaningless exercise as far as they were concerned.

3.16 The process often did not seem to be meaningful or useful to students and needed to relate more to the teaching process.

Lessons Learned

3.17 Little use in assessing unless starting points were identified.

3.18 Need for more focus on what students could do next.

3.19 The Personal Statement of Learning had to be much more embedded throughout the whole course.

3.20 How the learning outcomes were written was crucial – if they were worded too specifically they did not reflect the range of learning students achieved. They did not include personal or social outcomes, or unlooked-for outcomes (though these were often included in another section).

3.21 Students in classes for people with learning disabilities often had very different individual learning outcomes.

3.22 The tutor working with students with learning difficulties needed to identify individual outcomes for individual students and this was very time consuming.

3.23 One manager commented on the importance of:

'separating the value of evaluation to students and the necessity for monitoring effort by The City Lit. It is difficult to accomplish both tasks without destructive conflict and losing sight of the ultimate aim of The City Lit - student learning. If the evaluation process is basically student-centred, assessment is too subjective. If evaluation is basically tutor-centred, The City Lit drifts towards grading students which can be counter productive. On the other hand a self- assessment needs to be validated by the tutor to get the full picture of progress'. All this emphasised the importance of thorough training for tutors in implementing the system.

Forms: Suggested Changes

3.24 Form to reflect a range of outcomes for individual students, including personal outcomes (particularly important from an Inclusive Learning perspective).

3.25 The key elements of the form needed to be usable across the Institute so comparisons could be made.

3.26 The form needed to include comments from the tutor, and these to be completed.

3.27 A question for students at the start of the course on what they hoped to gain from it and one they filled in at the end to say how far they had reached their goals

3.28 Wider spread of boxes for students to tick, including 'I can't do this' so it gave a clearer idea of the range

3.29 Specific questions on other achievements: including skills, tasks accomplished (more concrete than skills) and personal achievements so the focus was not only on subject outcomes.

3.30 Space for tutor comments which was divided into 'strengths' and 'points for future development' to encourage tutors to be specific in their feedback.

3.31 Description of the purpose of the form, including its funding purposes and a thanks at the end (popular with tutors).

4. REVIEW OF STRENGTHS

4.1 The whole process of educational discussion and development was found to be exciting and much enjoyed by tutors

4.2 The consultative method employed throughout the pilot, starting with "honest" feedback at the level of Senior Heads of Programmes through Programme Managers, tutors and students themselves was crucial to the pilot's success.

We were keen to involve people in as many different roles within the college as possible, since informal feedback had suggested that previously used Personal Statements of Learning caused frustration and resentment amongst part-time tutors, students and, consequently, with their immediate line managers who had to implement the system. There seemed to be a divide between senior management who had a clear idea of what and why the Personal statements of learning were necessary, and other staff and students who often saw them as an unnecessary bureaucratic exercise imposed from above. We therefore

17

built in a considerable amount of consultation with staff at all levels of the college to gather ideas about how we could garner useful evidence of student achievement in a way that was clearly useful educationally to all involved.

4.3 The consultation provided valuable criticism and suggestions to build in to the pilot. It carried tutors and managers along with the project and the educational discussion throughout was exciting, developmental and very much enjoyed.

4.4 Student evaluation of courses always provided important feedback, was seen as essential, and was separate from the validation of outcomes.

4.5 The new question about personal hopes on the learning outcome form was, on the whole useful and interesting to students and tutors alike. Students felt more involved in the learning outcome process because they had thought and written about a personal hope at the beginning of the course and they liked reflecting back on this at the end of the course.

4.6 The focus on learning outcomes at the beginning of the course helped to embed the idea of monitoring the achievements of learning outcomes as a continuing process rather than an "add on" at completion of the class.

4.7 The focus on learning outcomes was useful for students and tutors. For some students they helped them clarify what they were learning and served well to recap at the end of the course. One tutor found that she was forced to teach more to outcomes; for example she spent course time systematically encouraging all students to try improvising (piano class) as she had included this as an outcome. As a consequence, students who might otherwise not have bothered because they were nervous, tried it out.

4.8 Students really liked the feedback given by tutors to them individually on the forms and in class. They all wanted a copy of this.

4.9 Whilst in general not liking the forms, and particularly disliking the review forms, tutors:

- like the feedback about their courses
- think the recording and feedback was worthwhile
- think the new forms a great improvement on the old.

5. REVIEW OF ISSUES AND AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

5.1 Providing comparative statistics on learning outcomes was found to be highly problematic.

22

5.2 Some kind of sampling should be considered as tutors, students and research organisers were worried about the logistics of the system; i.e., the impossibility of doing very detailed paper accounting on a large numbers of short courses. Tutors thought the monitoring and assessment of every student was very useful, but were worried that it was unrealistic, except in the smaller classes.

5.3 Learning progress is often easier to detect and measure at beginners' level than it is at more advanced levels

5.4 All tutors had problems with the time taken to complete the procedures and the logistics of how they managed to put their comments on the forms before the course ended. For example, one tutor felt that her last session was crucial to students' sense of their overall achievement but it was also her most pressurised. How could she manage to get the forms completed and her own comments included?

5.5 All tutors and two research co-ordinators found the comparative statistics on learning outcomes on the monitoring spreadsheet problematic since the results are self-assessed and not comparable, consistent or meaningful.

5.6 We must precede the introduction of new procedures by a training programme, as the training has proved crucial in how both tutors and students react to the process of validating achievement. There must also be a rolling training programme in the writing of learning outcomes.

5.7 We must be careful in our proposals arising out of the pilot, not to introduce procedures that are too bureaucratic or burdensome to tutors and students otherwise they will be very hard to implement.

5.8 We must achieve a consistent system of carefully monitoring our procedures on learning outcomes, which is sensible and straightforward for those who use it.

5.9 The monitoring of achievements is always easier for skill based, rather than knowledge based courses and one student had particular hostility to the use of the procedures in an art history class.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 There will be a number of recommendations from the project, which will go forward to the Quality Committee of The City Lit for consultation. The improved procedures and materials will be recommended for use in 2001, with the changes suggested by the pilot group. It is recommended that:

Students

6.2 Validation of learning outcomes is more embedded in the teaching and learning process because the students address their personal hopes at the beginning of the course as well as considering the learning outcomes as the course goes along.

6.3 Forms are as simple as possible

6.4 The students continue to identify learning outcomes achieved.

6.5 The students state how far personal hopes have been achieved and add any gains (expected or unexpected) they would like to mention.

Tutors

6.6 The City Lit should, through training and classroom observation, aim to improve the quality of assessment on the courses themselves. In particular to aim that tutors:

6.7 Negotiate clear outcomes, differentiated for some learners if necessary.

6.8 Maintain simple records of students' progress.

6.9 Ask students to review the learning outcomes during the course and make it clear which ones they have been working towards.

6.10 Include at least two moments on their courses when they are able to assess student learning in an appropriate way and give *individual* feedback. This might be through small group discussion and written answers to questions, quiz, case study, small presentations, produced work, role-play diaries etc.

6.11 Provide quality constructive feedback orally to students throughout the course.

6.12 Provide written evidence that they have given constructive feedback to individual students, towards the end of the course either on the forms or in their own notes and records. This should list their strengths and areas for development.

6.13 At the end of the programme, to review the evaluation forms and complete the tutor review for:
- what the students had achieved;
- what had gone well in terms of content and methods;
- how problems should be addressed next time.

6.14 Additionally the classroom observation might be used for a more on-going review with examples of case studies of three individual students, their progress, their record keeping and written feedback. This might be an alternative to collecting the paperwork for each course. (If too time-consuming, it might be part of the course review with tutors in planning the curriculum on a rotational and sampling basis.)

Training

6.15 All tutors expressed how vital training and discussion were in implementing the procedures.

6.16 A training programme has been planned to introduce the new procedures for tutors in 2001, with particular attention to training on setting and validating learning outcomes.

6.17 There is an issue about setting learning outcomes, which must be addressed, and also the possibility of setting agreed corporate outcomes for particular subject areas.

Statistical Information

6.18 The attempt to show comparative numbers of learning outcomes gained between courses and programme areas on a monitoring spreadsheet should be abandoned as the results can never be satisfactorily rigorous or consistent enough to provide a statistically comparable or valid overview.

6.19 Consider whether it is still useful to monitor purely the statistical returns on the number of outcomes, evaluations and reviews completed on courses over 18 hours as a way of checking procedures are followed.

6.20 Consider whether multiple and continuing courses should complete forms each term or whether a selection or rotation would be an option so that students attending multiple courses do not suffer from form fatigue.

6.21 Consider whether a method of sampling would be an adequate way forward or whether it would be too dangerous to abandon the current system, and which has taken time and training to achieve.

6.22 The retention was maintained or improved overall in a year by year comparison of the specific courses used on the pilot (overall the retention rate in these courses is high).

6.23 The recording of retention should be added to the spreadsheet.

6.24 Some way is found of recording enrolments and retention together with the information on learning outcomes and evaluation of teaching and learning so that it is included in the review process.

COURSE OUTLINE

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE   Awarded for excellence

PROGRAMME AREA HUMANITIES	PHONE NO 0207 430 0542

Course title: WAYS INTO ANTHROPOLOGY			Course no: Various
Course tutor: Various	Day:	Various	Dates: Various
Time of class: Various	Fee:	Various	Venue: Stukeley Street

1. What is the course about?

To introduce students to various anthropological approaches in understanding different societies, including their own. It will raise some of the current issues in anthropology.

2. What level is the course?

The course is for beginners with no experience of Anthropology

3. What will the course cover? (contents, themes, projects)

The course is theme-based with a different topic raised each week to give students an idea of the range of approaches in anthropology. Different societies will be used to illustrate the themes. The choice of themes will be student-orientated to suit their particular interests as far as is possible.

Religion and Ritual
Witchcraft
Kinship and Marriage
Economic systems: hunter/gatherers, pastoralists
Development and its relationships to the local peoples involved
Identity and Ethnicity

4. What can I expect to achieve?

- Identify various approaches to understanding different societies
- Identify various features of different societies
- Assess the similarities and differences between custom and belief in different societies
- Clarify their own ideas and values through participation in group discussion
- Be sensitive to the value of ways of life other than their own

5. How will I be taught?

The sessions will run as informal seminars with ample time for discussion and the exchange of ideas. Videos, guest speakers and articles by leading anthropologists will be used to illustrate the themes.

6. What course can I do next?

    Advice on other courses at the City Lit is available during drop-in advice times (see prospectus for details). Appointments for a guidance interview can be made with the City Lit's Advice and Guidance Service on 0207 430 0543.

    Progression to anthropology degree course in institute of higher education.
    Other related courses in City Lit prospectus.

7. Are there any other costs (e.g. certification, materials, equipment or books I need to buy before or during the course?)

    Students on the daytime course (Terms 1 & 2) can work towards a qualification (London Open College Federation). If you are interested please contact Humanities on 0207 430 0542.

8. How will I know how I am progressing?

    There will be the opportunity for you to write an essay, submit other work of make a presentation and receive feedback if you wish. Informal evaluations are also offered. On the daytime course (Terms 1 & 2) formal assessment is available through LOCF.

9. Will I have a chance to give my views on the course?

    At the end of the course (for courses over 18 hours) you will given the opportunity to complete a record of your achievements, which will be verified by your by tutor

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Personal Record of Achievement

This sheet asks you and your tutor to record your learning during your course It provides The City Lit with record of our students' achievements which we can use as evidence to our funders. It is also a record for you.

Name:_____ Course Code:_____

1. **Personal hopes (fill this in at the start of your course)**
   What do you hope to achieve by the end of this course?

2. **Learning Outcomes (fill this in at the end of the course)**
These are the learning outcomes you agreed with your tutor at the start of the course. Please tick to show how far you feel you have achieved them.

Learning Outcomes	I have achieved this	I have nearly achieved this	I have started working on this	I can't do this

3. **Personal outcomes (see question 1)**
   How far have you achieved what you hoped?
   What is the most important thing you have gained?

4. **Can you give examples of any <u>other achievements</u> as a result of the course?** (If you have several others, choose the most significant ones for you)

    a. Skills you have learned?

    b. Tasks completed: eg piece of work/performance/projects/book or article you have read

    c. Personal (eg confidence, relationships, appreciation of the subject)

5. **Tutors Comments:**
    Your strengths:

    Points for future development:

    Sig:_____(Tutor)   Sig: _____(Student)
    Date: _____   Date: _____

Thank you very much for your time

Course Evaluation

1.   How would you rate the course overall?

           ☐   Excellent
           ☐   Good
           ☐   Satisfactory
           ☐   Poor
           ☐   Very Poor

2.   Please use this space to comment on any aspects of the course and/or the teaching

3.   How will you use the learning gained on the course?

Further study ☐   work (paid or voluntary) ☐   other ☐

If you are going on to further study, are you going to
☐   Study the same course at a higher level at The City Lit
☐   Study another course at The City Lit
☐   Study somewhere else

4.   If this course did not offer a certificate, would you have liked the opportunity of preparing for a qualification in the subject?

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Not relevant

5.   Do you have any suggestions for future courses?

FEDA Pilot Study on Validating Student Achievement

DRAFT
Course Review and Evaluation Process
(To be completed by the course tutor)

(Standard text)
This report, together with student evaluation forms, is designed to help The City Lit identify successes and areas for future development of courses.

Your programme manager will use this report, together with student evaluation forms and registers, to review and plan future programmes. You should complete it at the end of the course having read student evaluation forms and the record of achievements. Please give it to your Programme Head, together with completed student evaluation forms and Records of Achievement.

1. Course Number:

2. Course Title:

3. Name of Tutor:

4. Numbers attending regularly:

5. Please comment on the attendance and withdrawal from your course.

6.   **Evaluation forms**

Please tell us:
6.1   Number of students completing the form.

6.2   How many students rated your course

Excellent

Good

Satisfactory

Poor

Very Poor ☐

6.3   How many students are going on to

Further study ☐

Work ☐

Other ☐

6.4   If going on to study at the City Lit, how many are going to

Study the same course at a higher level at the City Lit ☐

Study another course at the City Lit ☐

Study somewhere else ☐

If relevant, how many students would have liked the opportunity to study for a qualification? ☐

What do you think were the strengths of the course?

What do you think were the weaknesses of the course?

What will you change next time?

7. Record of Achievement

Please tell us:

7.1 The number of students who completed the Record of Achievement. ☐

Personal Outcomes

7.2 How many students felt they had achieved their personal hopes for the course?

☐

7.3 How many students ticked they *achieved or nearly achieved* all of the learning outcomes? (Columns 1 & 2)

☐

7.4 How many students ticked they *achieved or nearly achieved* more than half of the learning outcomes?

☐

7.5 How many students ticked they achieved or nearly achieved **less than half** of the learning outcomes

☐

7.6 Please comment on the student response to these questions from your perspective.

7.7 Please give some examples of specific achievements students mentioned on their forms.

7.8 What can The City Lit do to help you, including any staff development?

KENSINGTON & CHELSEA COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP
The Learning Postcard Project

Amanda Hayes

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Kensington and Chelsea College is a Further Education College in central London. It is situated in one of the mostly densely populated areas in England. Economically, the area presents sharp contrasts between poverty and affluence. North Kensington has one of the highest rates of unemployment in London. The FEFC has identified the college as one of a group, which recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas.

1.2 The college primarily serves the needs of adult students (over nineteen years old). In 1999-2000 the college had 16,529 students of whom 7,226 were following non-accredited programmes. Of these students 80% were female: 20% male (74%:26% in the total college population). The age profile was 1% under 18, 80% 19 – 59 and 19% over sixty. 13% identified themselves as belonging to minority ethnic groups (against 43% in the college as a whole) and 611 people indicated that they had a disability.

1.3 The programme is delivered in four college buildings and a variety of venues within the local community. These include local schools, community centres, hospitals and clubs.

1.4 The college employs more than 700 staff of whom only 20% are full time. A high proportion of staff involved in non-accredited learning are part-time staff who teach two to six hours per week. Whilst all staff are encouraged to attend training events, many staff do not have a teaching qualification.

1.5 The college budget is approximately £10 million with 70% coming from the FEFC and 6.7% from the Local Education Authority for non-schedule 2 provision, as part of the borough's Lifelong Learning programme. There is additional income from fees, project work and customised training for local businesses.

1.6 The college offers programmes designed to meet the needs of all groups within the community. The largest curriculum areas in the non-accredited provision include: art, craft and design; modern foreign languages; cultural and community studies; performing arts, health and sport.

30

1.7 Since 1993, the education department of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea had contracted with the college and other organisations, for the provision of Adult Education. Local inspections commissioned by the LEA revealed that the college was further ahead in the routine use of quality systems than the majority of community groups. Thus, in preparation for funding via the Learning and Skills Council, the LEA was keen to work in partnership with the College to develop a robust system for measuring student learning outcomes in 3 – 30 hour courses.

2. THE LEARNING OUTCOMES MODEL

2.1 *The Learning Postcard Project* was an attempt to identify learning outcomes from 3 – 30 hour, non-accredited adult education classes, in a way that would be meaningful to students and lecturers, yet provide evidence robust enough to satisfy inspectors and funding bodies. The idea behind the project was to make documenting learning as simple, non-threatening and familiar as writing a holiday postcard. The card is a prompt for discussions between lecturer and students, about learning objectives and the learning process, throughout the course. It follows the best practice of Inclusive Learning and gives lecturers the opportunity to focus on their students' learning goals and where appropriate, modify the content or teaching methods to suit individuals.

2.2 Process

2.21 At the start of the course

- Lecturers explain the purpose of *The Learning Postcard* to their students:
  - o Help the lecturer support each person's learning objectives
  - o Give students a target and sense of achievement
  - o Develop a body of evidence about the quality of learning in the college in order to make improvements and ensure continued public funding.

- Lecturers help students identify their learning goals:
  - o selected from the course objectives
  - o personal targets such as 'to meet new people' or 'decorate a cake for my parents' golden wedding'

31

2.22 During the course

- Each student's progress against his or her targets is discussed with the lecturer over the duration of the course.

- Lecturers encourage students to keep other evidence of learning such as photographs, audio and videotapes, diaries, samples of work.

- Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and identify additional 'incidental' learning outcomes, which they had not identified at the start of the course.

- Managers make teaching observation visits to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and support lecturers in improving their practice.

2.23 At the end of the course

- The lecturer validates the statements of learning by completing and signing the card

- The cards are then copied and returned to the students as a personal record of their learning.

- The copies are used by the lecturer as part of the course evaluation process and kept as evidence for managers or inspectors

- The learning outcomes from the group are summarised (as statistics) and areas for course improvement identified in an end of course review.

2.3 The course review for non-accredited courses fits within the overall college quality monitoring and improvement system. Each department makes an annual self-assessment report to Academic Board. This includes a review of performance against targets and an action plan for the forthcoming year.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYSTEM

3.1 College Quality Assurance (Appendix I - college quality framework diagram)

After incorporation in 1993, the college developed a Quality Assurance system which monitored the effectiveness of both FEFC funded qualification based work and RBKC adult and community provision. It had been a challenge to develop a system which was based on a common notion of quality and service as detailed in the college quality

policy and student charter, but which embraced the demands at one end of the spectrum, of full time externally validated courses and the participant 'fragility' at the other end, in provision such as family learning 'drop in sessions' or 'first steps' classes in community centres.

3.2 The system of course quality review used a range of data including:

- course evaluation by lecturers and students
- teaching observation reports from managers
- performance statistics
- student satisfaction surveys
- moderator reports (qualifications courses)

3.3 External scrutiny of learning outcomes in non-accredited provision included:

- Annual RBKC student satisfaction survey
- Statistical returns on recruitment and retention
- Inspection
  - o RBKC by external consultants
  - o FEFC inspectors
- Moderation by accrediting bodies for FEFC funded courses

3.4 The annual College Self Assessment Report summarised feedback from course reviews, teaching observation and management reports and external scrutiny as strengths and weaknesses and identified priorities for quality improvement in an action plan.

3.5 Whilst student achievement was a central feature in the evaluation of the quality of accredited provision, this was not always the case in the adult and community courses, which did not lead to qualifications. RBKC Inspectors reported that the quality system was well embedded in the College, but practice was not consistent, especially in relation to measuring learning. The biggest challenge was to demonstrate 'distance travelled' by students without the introduction of structured initial assessment by the lecturer. The inspectors and managers who observed these classes identified that in the best courses students had grown in confidence, could articulate their learning and had been helped to identify ways to take their studies to another level. These lecturers understood that skilful discussion of learning is a strong motivator in even the most un-confident learner and a major factor in good retention. However, discussion with other lecturers revealed that some of them saw keeping records of student progress as an additional burden and a bureaucratic 'nonsense'. Some lecturers were vociferous in asserting that students did not want records either. It was clear that the development of a more rigorous system for recognising and recording student achievement would need to gain the full support of staff if it was to be successful.

33

3.6 A new system for measuring learning in non-qualification courses

It was decided that as a first step a minimalist approach would be taken which did not require complex documentation. This was especially important given the high proportion of second language speakers and students with low literacy skills or learning difficulties and disabilities (Appendix II – materials adapted with Makaton). The new system was however capable of sophistication. For example, the postcard could be used for mixed level or mixed ability groups. It allowed students to identify their own personal learning goals or select from the course objectives provided by the lecturer, it could be used for a one-day course or over a longer period. The requirement for the lecturer to validate the students' statements was intended to encourage a dialogue between them about learning.

- **Documentation** – the learning postcard (Appendix III – worked example)
  - o wording and layout designed with help of basic skills lecturers.
  - o low print-run was arranged so that the cards could be piloted with a small group of experienced staff
  - o amendments made in the light of feedback from staff and students.

- **Range of courses in pilot**
  - o Subjects - arts and crafts, sport, languages and cultural studies.
  - o Venues – college centres, community venues
  - o Timing – day and evening
  - o Duration – 2 hours per week for 10 or 30 weeks

- **Teachers** [1]
  - o college lecturers including part-time, full-time and curriculum leaders
  - o RBKC staff
  - o staff in voluntary sector organisations.

3.7 Initial briefing sessions were held at the start of the term followed by review sessions at half term and the end of the first term. Lecturers discussed the introduction of the system in their classes and identified areas of good practice and issues to be resolved.

3.8 Lecturers were asked to tell students that they were part of a pilot project and that the project managers would be interested in their feedback on the process [2].

3.9 In addition to feedback from lecturers, an internal verification process is being developed for more substantial courses where lecturers are invited to present case studies of a small sample of students to their peers and demonstrate the progress that they have made.

34

4. STRENGTHS OF THE MODEL

- The personal, social and economic benefits of learning to individuals and groups can be identified and valued together with planned course objectives.

- Most students in the pilot reported that they found the process of setting targets and reviewing learning was motivating.

- Evidence of performance at student and group level is collected systematically

- In some courses evidence of learning such as art portfolios, is available for the students to at a later date as credit towards a qualification

- A spectrum of evidence can be used which incorporates qualitative and quantitative data

- Fits within a quality framework which is responsive to institutional and national agendas

- Feedback is used to improve quality at course and institutional level and contributes to organisational self-assessment.

- Practice is underpinned by an established staff development framework (Investors in People)

- The system for learning outcomes allows year on year comparisons of performance.

- The bureaucratic underpinning of the system of recording learning and collecting evidence is proportionate to the college's resources and those of its partner community groups

- Procedures are not unduly intrusive of the learning process.

5. WEAKNESSES AND DIFFICULTIES

5.1 **Language** - There needs to be a shared understanding between staff and students about how to communicate 'learning gain'.

5.2 **Staff development** – It has been difficult to find training times, which suit part-time lecturers working in the college, RBKC staff and voluntary sector partners[3].

5.3 **Communicating with students** – More needs to be done to communicate the positive reasons for measuring learning within all courses to students. This will need to be through course documents and publicity as well as via lecturers. Lecturers sometimes found it difficult to 'sell' change in practice to students, some of whom have been regular participants of adult learning activities over many years.

5.4 **Evidence of learning** – There has been a lack of imagination displayed by lecturers as to the form evidence of learning might take. The adequacy of the model for external inspection and LSC quality evaluation requirements is yet to be tested

5.5 **Audit requirements or administrative Systems/data-base information** - The College will need to be clear what auditable evidence will need to be kept.

5.6 **Benchmarking** - Where the collection and comparison of performance statistics are required a robust system needs to be developed. The capacity to benchmark against national performance data will depend on what is required.

5.7 **Course records** – Records held by the lecturer, which map individual progress against learning goals are of variable quality. There is a powerful case to be made for lecturers also presenting case studies e.g. two or three per course, which gives a more rounded illustration of learning progress – these case studies should include statements made by the students themselves in order to reveal the difference that learning makes to an individual's life.

5.8 **Student control of their own learning** - Some lecturers tended to tell the students what they had learnt rather than engaging them in a discussion, which helped them to identify their own progress.

5.9 **Staff attitudes** - Lecturers need support if the model is not to revert to a 'token' paper exercise

5.10 **Timescales** - It takes a long time to introduce change, which requires a shift in attitude, especially in a climate of uncertainty such as that created through post-16 restructuring.

5.11 **'Distance travelled'** – the model does not include diagnostic testing, therefore can not 'objectively' identify skills and knowledge acquired as a result of attending the course – but then most qualifications courses do not do this either e.g. GCSE.

5.12 **Identifying provision that does not 'fit'** - It should also be recognised that some provision of an outreach nature, may not fit happily into any framework and to try to force all adult learning into a 'system' may damage some very valuable and effective work. There may be other activities, which have a strong therapeutic value to the participants and

36

rather less educational value, such as some exercise classes in centres for the elderly. Consideration needs to given as to whether this type of provision needs to develop a stronger focus on learning or whether it should be funded via a different source such as Health or Social Services. Unfortunately the pressure on resources in these services means that these classes may not be a priority. It will be important to include a number of such courses in the next stage of the research in order to identify more precisely what the issues are [4].

6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 The centrality of learners

At its best the model allows lecturers to work with students and help them identify and articulate their learning needs and record progress. However, some lecturers are not yet developing a dialogue with their students and are tending to 'mark' them at the end of the course. More time needs to be spent talking to students about to find out their views on recording and recognising their progress.

6.2 Validation and assessment

The model focuses on student achievement but the demonstration of distance travelled relies on the quality of evidence collected by the individual lecturer. In the best practice, lecturers have found sensitiveways to identify students starting points and work with them to record increased skills and knowledge. These strategies need to be shared with colleagues.

Concepts about teaching and learning are not necessarily shared, which results in mis-communications between members of staff and between lecturers and students.

Some lecturers are assessing their students against national standards when this was not the declared aim of the course. Management needs to clarify objectives for non-accredited work with staff.

6.3 External standards

The model is being modified as information becomes available about the way that the Common Inspection Framework will be applied to adult and community learning and quality monitored by LSCs. It will be important to keep the needs of learners central as concerns about the requirements of funders start to impact.

6.4 Staff development

The development of the model has highlighted the amount of time and management support needed to successfully introduce new approaches to teaching and learning. Administrative staff will also need to contribute to system development.

6.5 Next Steps

- Review how the system is working with lecturers and students involved in the pilot, amend and extend to other staff.

- Revise college quality system to ensure focus is on learning and the impact of teaching rather than satisfaction with the services provided.

- Get view of external consultant/inspector on the rigor of the process

- Set up training/dissemination events for other staff

- Focus teacher training offered to local voluntary organisations and college staff on:
  - o negotiating the curriculum
  - o identifying learning objectives
  - o developing creative ways of evidencing learning progress.

- Develop an internal verification process for more substantial courses

- Investigate products available from accreditation boards to evaluate their usefulness in assuring quality and benchmarking.

NOTES

1. A high proportion of the lecturers teaching non-accredited programmes are not qualified teachers although they may have done stage one training. One of the issues that emerged through the project was that a number of lecturers were not sure about what a learning objective and were anxious about discussing the learning process. Qualified staff experienced in working on accredited programmes also had some problems in supporting students identifying their own objectives and incidental learning.

2. Interviews with groups of students about their reaction to the process are scheduled into the next stage of the project.

3. Stage 1 teacher training in the college now has places available to community organisations, with two making use of the offer at the time of writing. Stage 2 will be available from Sept 2001.

4. This provision is currently (Feb 2001) the subject of a review by a team of experienced managers and an external consultant and inspector using ALI guidelines. The findings will inform policy.

Kensington ano Chelsea College

COURSE PLANNING, QUALITY MONITORING AND REVIEW (Revised September 99)

EXTERNAL INSPECTION
Inspection by FEFC to monitor College's own self-assessment and ensure standards are maintained in all areas of the College.

GOVERNING BODY

GOVERNOR's CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE
The remit of this sub-committee is
- To monitor and advise the Governing Body on the development and delivery of a market responsive curriculum to meet the College's mission and aims
- To monitor and advise the Governing Body on matters relating to internal and external quality assurance
- To advise the Governing body on the setting of targets and standards relating to students' entry, retention, achievement and progressions

ACADEMIC BOARD
The Academic Board holds a review day each year to consider receive reports from all areas of the College and identify actions required for continuous improvement.
Committees of the Academic Board are
- College Quality Committee
- Curriculum Innovation Committee

FACULTY BOARD
Courses agreed and programme reviewed annually.
Annual Reports using self assessment further based of course reviews, teaching observations, performance against targets for recruitment, retention and achievement are forwarded to Academic Board.

COURSE TEAM/LECTURER
Course syllabus is written and an outline is submitted to the Faculty Board copies to course information.
Targets are set for recruitment, retention and achievement.
Continuous course evaluation, curriculum negotiation and forward planning by lecturer and students.
Lessons are planned with clear aims and objectives. Students' progress is continually monitored and recorded.

END OF COURSE REVIEW
The course is evaluated using all available information:
- Student evaluation forms
- Retention and achievement rates and performance against targets
- External verifier/moderator's report
- Comments from employers
- Student destinations
Information is passed to departments to form the basis of the self-assessment report.

COLLEGE QUALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE (TLQE)
This is a sub-committee of the Academic Board who continuously review quality systems, monitor effectiveness and sample the quality of the documentation making changes where necessary.

STAFF APPRAISAL
All full-time and fractional staff are appraised annually. Personal targets for the previous year are reviewed and new ones set for the coming 12 months. Training needs being identified where appropriate.

CLASS OBSERVATIONS
All lecturers are observed a minimum of once every 2 years to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Feedback following the observation provides support for the lecturer in identifying any areas for improvement and training needs.

STUDENT SURVEYS
These are used to determine student satisfaction with the learning experience and identify areas for improvement

EMPLOYER SURVEYS
Feedback from employers identifies their needs and the levels of satisfaction with the teaching and learning provided.

INTERNAL VERIFICATION
This process ensures consistent practice and standards across courses and/or programme areas. This process can provide useful feedback to the evaluation of the course

EXTERNAL VERIFICATION/MODERATION
This ensures national standards are met. The reports identify any areas for action by course teams and contribute valuable information to the Course Review process

☐ Planning & reviewing   ☐ Internal monitoring   ■ External monitoring & inspection

44

KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA COLLEGE – APPENDIX II

Student Record Sheet

Kensington and Chelsea College

Date	What did you do?	What did you learn?	Tutor feedback

45

46

Learning
Postcard Project

Kensington and Chelsea **College**

Welcome to Kensington and Chelsea **College**

The information on this card will help us to support your learning and recognise your achievements.

Please fill out this section at the start of your course and give the card to your lecturer.

Please complete this section at the end of your course and give the card to your lecturer.

This is what I want to learn: **VEGETARIAN COOKERY**

	I can do this	I'm working on this	I will work on this later
1) Understand nutritional values to ensure a balanced, healthy diet.	☐	☐	☐
2) Find out about cultural and personal reasons for vegetarian diets.	☐	☐	☐
3) Develop creative vegetarian meals that my family will enjoy	☐	☐	☐
4) Develop practical skills to make a range of vegetarian dishes correctly.	☐	☐	☐
5) Meet new people who like cooking.	☐	☐	☐

This is why I want to learn:

I have recently moved to the area, and want to entertain some new Muslim friends

Other things I have learned/achieved:

How to get information off the internet.

Student name:_____ *A. Student* _____ Class: _____ _____ ___

Tutor Comment: *Objectives achieved, thinking about progressing to a LOCN course next year.*

THE MARY WARD CENTRE

OLGA JANSSEN

1.   THE CHALLENGE

1.1   The challenge to us at Mary Ward has been to devise an assessment strategy for learning in non-accredited courses which supports the learner, encourages reflective practice amongst tutors and satisfies the Centre's quality assurance. The strategy must be sensitive to both the needs and the views of students and tutors. It should provide learners with a constructive and positive sense of their own progress and achievements. It should also offer tutors the opportunity to reflect on and develop their own practice with the minimum of additional paperwork. Finally it should enable the Centre to assure the quality of assessment on each of its courses. This paper examines the background and production of an assessment strategy that meets these disparate goals.

2.   THE MARY WARD CENTRE

2.1   The Mary Ward Centre is a designated adult education institution, funded by the FEFC to provide both schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 courses. The Centre has recently increased its accredited provision, but even now in the region of 90% of students opt not to pursue certification.

2.2   The curriculum areas are: an Over 60s' programme; Humanities, which includes Health and Physical Exercise, Personal and Professional Development, Liberal and Social Studies and Communication Studies; English and Other Languages; Computing; and Visual and Performing Arts. All 170 tutors are part-time and the total number is equivalent to 18 full-time teaching staff. The Centre runs over 1,000 courses whose average length is 18 hours.

2.3   The Centre is working to full capacity for its current accommodation, with just under 7,000 students and 15,000 course enrolments. Between the years 1997 and 2000 there has been a year-on-year growth in concessionary fee take-up, which now stands at 39%. During the same period there was a year-on-year growth in take-up by non-white students, which now stands at 20%. 6.7% students identify themselves as having a disability or learning difficulty. The percentage of female students has remained at a constant 74%/75% over the last three years. Just under 10% of Mary Ward students are under 25. This compares with 70% under 24 in the FE sector. The FEFC's 95/96 postcode analysis of students' addresses showed that 65% of Mary Ward students come from disadvantaged areas, which is a very high incidence on the national scale.

3. ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES: A BRIEF HISTORY

A Change Of Culture

3.1 Recently there has been growing pressure from the FEFC inspectorate to assess learning in non-accredited courses and we may expect this to continue under the new Adult Learning Inspectorate. At the same time, the FEFC has stated: '...it is not possible to measure outcomes on non-schedule 2 courses in any systematic way.'(Circular 00/01 Annex B Paragraph 3) The onus has therefore been on colleges to develop their own assessment strategies to suit their local conditions.

3.2 Formal assessment of learning has not traditionally been required of tutors in adult education. Tutors can relate to concepts like 'encouraging, helping and supporting students to learn' and most are very good in this. Indeed the 1998 FEFC inspection of Mary Ward, whilst stating that the college had 'insufficient recording and assessment of students' achievements', graded 79% of lessons observed as grade one or two (outstanding or good), compared with 65% nationally.

3.3 The expectation that tutors of adult education non-accredited classes should assess students is a cultural change and, like all cultural changes, takes time to be accepted and become common practice. It takes even longer in an organisation where all tutors are part-time. At Mary Ward, we have experimented with various approaches over the last seven years and are still developing our methodology. Many of the developments have been conditioned by changes in the external environment and we expect this to continue in the current climate of change. Our approach has also been dependent on the level of resources available to us. Current practice is outlined below and has been influenced by the successes and failures of earlier methodologies.

Why We Abandoned Our Earlier Methodologies

3.4 We knew from the start that it would not be feasible to keep records on all 1,000 of our courses, given that the amount of time required to measure outcomes would be disproportionate to the very short nature of many of the courses. Our requirement was therefore limited to courses which were 20 hours or more in length. Initially we used a formal approach with standardised written forms to assess each individual student's learning. At first these were based on written student self - assessment. Later we introduced a requirement for written reports from the tutor instead. About a third of the required reports were good. A third were less than satisfactory, in that they told us very little about the learning achieved. A third of tutors did not submit a report, even though we paid them £2 per student assessed. Many of the tutors in the latter two categories were in all other respects very good tutors.

43

3.5 Our main problem was that many tutors and students saw the requirement as an imposition, to be got out of the way as quickly as possible. They could not see its relevance to them; as they saw it: it was not in the interests of their teaching and their learning. At best it was a task to be tolerated in order to secure funding. Many students as well as tutors had come into non-accredited adult education precisely because of the freedom from formal assessment. Had they wanted assessment, they would have taken courses leading to qualifications.

3.6 As education managers we are convinced that assessment of learning is an essential component of successful teaching and learning. But try as we might to introduce a mandatory requirement for written records for all students across the curriculum, painful experience had taught us this was not feasible. For students and tutors it was not even desirable. If we were to win over tutors and students, an informal system with a minimum of paperwork would be necessary.

Finding Out What Students Wanted

3.7 In 2000, as part of its inclusive learning initiative, the Centre decided to research students' perceptions of their needs for assessment. Then we could make our assessment match more closely what students wanted. A series of student focus groups were undertaken to investigate this.[1]

3.8 What the students told us was not only informative: it challenged some of our preconceptions. The key points for students were:
- Getting honest, detailed and regular feedback from their tutor on their progress and advice on the next step. They also wanted more of it than they were getting from their tutors.
- Very few students wanted any formal or written assessment.
- Frequent informal, formative assessment was their priority. Summative assessment mattered less for students who were not learning for a qualification.
- Self-assessment had limited value for them; it became meaningful only when combined with tutor assessment.
- Students were happy to talk at length about their learning, but they did not want to fill in forms about it, unless this was a requirement of funding.

3.9 Our students were giving us a steer to move away from concerns about a written record of what they had achieved. They were advocating an approach which would emphasise informal, continuous, on-course assessment of progress. They also wanted us to prioritise active interchange between tutor and students on how they were getting on and what to do next.

44

4. ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES: THE MARY WARD MODEL

The Model

1. Write a course description, which the Head of Department approves, and a copy of which is given to all students on the course.

2. Make an initial assessment of student needs.

3. Make on-course assessment of student progress.

4. Make a final assessment of student achievements and advise students on the next step

5. Write a written report on each course, using a simple standardised form.

6. Write three examples of assessments of student learning in any one of their courses, to demonstrate the range of learning on that course.

7. Present these assessments at a meeting of tutors for peer moderation and verification by a Head of Department or another experienced assessor.

How The Model Applies To Our Tutors

- All tutors, irrespective of course length, required to complete stages 1- 4.
- Stages 2 to 4 must be shared with students, but a formal written record to the student is not required.
- In addition to stages 1-4, tutors teaching courses of 20 hours or longer are required to complete stage 5.
- In addition to stages 1-5, all tutors engaged for 20 hours or more per annum, irrespective of the length of their courses, are expected to complete stages 6 and 7.

5. THE MARY WARD MODEL: STAGE BY STAGE

Course Description – Stage 1 [2]

5.01 We already had a very well established house requirement that all tutors write a course outline which is available to all enquirers from the moment the annual prospectus of courses is published. This includes a section on learning objectives for the course: 'what you should be able to do by the end of the course'. The primary purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for students about what they can expect when they enrol for a course. At the first meeting, all students receive a copy and the tutor is expected to go through the course outline. There is an opportunity to

amend the objectives, both at this stage and subsequently in the light of experience as the course progresses. Since non-accredited courses do not have a prescribed syllabus, the principle of negotiation of the content between tutor and students is an important one. What matters is that the learning objectives are clear and are agreed by the students.

Initial Assessment Of Student's Needs – Stage 2

5.02 Tutors are expected to make an initial assessment of their students' needs. This can be a whole class, public activity or a private student-tutor dialogue, as appropriate to the subject, the sensitivity of the information and the time available. The assessment involves finding out:

- Why students have chosen to do the course;
- What previous learning, skills, knowledge, including qualifications, they have in this and related subjects;
- What their future aspirations are once they have completed the course;
- What learning difficulties or disabilities they may have and what special support, if any, they require.

5.03 Whilst we would want tutors to keep notes on this initial assessment, and many of them do, there is no mandatory requirement for them to do so. The required evidence of the assessment is limited to the three individual student assessments, as explained below.

On-Course Assessment Of Student Progress – Stage 3

5.04 Throughout the course we expect tutors to assess students' progress against the agreed learning objectives. Guidelines are given to them on a range of informal and formal strategies, some paper based, some not. Tutors may choose existing strategies appropriate to their course and students, or develop their own. Our experience has been that some tutors are very imaginative in devising assessment strategies and to be prescriptive would inhibit flexibility and creativity, two of the real strengths of uncertificated teaching and learning. Others are only too glad to have a menu of options to choose from. These will form the basis of their on-going feedback to and discussion with students on their progress. As with the initial assessment, documented evidence of on-course assessment for all students is not a requirement, other than in the three student examples.

End-Of-Course Assessment And Advice On The Next Step – Stage 4

5.05 At the end of the course, we ask tutors to discuss with students what they have got out of the course. Very often students will speak of additional benefits, not related directly to the course learning objectives. These may include things like personal skills, learning skills, social or

46

economic benefits derived from the course. At the same time the tutor will confirm what they have achieved relative to the course's learning objectives. Finally the tutor will discuss with students what their next steps might be. These will vary according to the student's aspirations. Experience at Mary Ward is that few students in non-accredited programmes are looking for entry to further or higher education or for career advancement. The majority will be looking into the options for more non-accredited learning. As with the initial assessment and the on-course assessment, the time spent on this final assessment may be in plenary session or one-to-one with students, as appropriate to the subject and the length of the course. The only documented evidence required of this assessment is in the three written-up examples of student learning.

Written Course Report – Stage 5 [3]

5.06 Where a course is 20 hours or longer, within one week of the course completion, tutors are asked to submit a written report on their course, using a simple standard pro forma. This has three sections: student retention; student achievement; course evaluation.

5.07 The Centre holds statistics on student retention for all its courses. The reason for requiring in addition a commentary from tutors is two-fold. Firstly, it is to establish with tutors that retention of students is important and a measure of the success of the course. Secondly, our statistics do not tell the whole story and we want to safeguard against any false interpretation where retention is poor. Tutors are asked to say why students have discontinued. The Centre support staff operate a telephone follow-up service of absent students and a good tutor will usually know why students are no longer coming. Often the reasons are beyond the tutor's or the college's control.

5.08 For achievement, we ask tutors to indicate against the register of attendance for each and every student what their achievement is on a four-point scale, as described below. No supporting documentary evidence needs to be submitted.

5.09 In section 3 of the course report, to assist curriculum planning, we ask the tutor to complete an evaluation of 7 key aspects of the course, with supporting comments.

5.10 The course reports are just one of the devices used to inform the Centre's course review. Other sources of information are: departmental and course retention rates; class visits made by the Head of Department to assess the quality of teaching and learning; feedback from students about the quality of the course through student satisfaction surveys as well as through informal conversations. We also have a survey of students who have discontinued, based on telephone interviews. All these sources of evidence are collectively used not just for course review but also for tutor appraisals and in-service training. The Mary Ward

47

strategy for assessment of learning operates alongside all these other quality assurance measures.

5.11 Like the course description, the course report is now a contractual requirement, for which tutors receive no additional pay. We are in our third year of course reports and although we have not yet quite achieved 100% completion, both the number of returns and the quality of responses have improved since our early days.

A four-point scale of achievement

5.12 We have two measurements: progress made by the student against learning objectives and the 'added values' for students from attending the course. These two aspects combined show the 'distance travelled' by the student.

5.13 Our four-point scale is based on a qualitative assessment of the student's learning. At the same time, since it is a graded scale, we do have a quantitative measure of the learning that students derive as a whole from the course. The four point scale is:

1. The student has made substantial progress against *all* the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course.

2. The student has made significant progress against *some* of the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course.

3. The student has made some progress against the learning objectives *and/or* has gained additional benefits from attending this course.

4. The student has not progressed against any of the learning objectives and has gained no additional benefits.

An example of the four-point scale in practice

5.14 Critical to the understanding of the 'distance travelled' concept is the way in which non-accredited adult learning differs from accredited programmes. Most courses have no entry requirements and students' starting points vary enormously. Secondly, when students are not learning for a qualification, the additional benefits are often more important to them than achieving all the course objectives. Thirdly, for many students on these programmes learning is a life-long commitment.

5.15 Unlike accredited courses, the measure of achievement is not the level of attainment achieved by the course end, but the progress made by the individual student relative to that student's starting point : the 'distance travelled'. And, unlike accredited courses, the additional benefits or 'added values' are also recognised as achievements.

48

5.16 This can be illustrated by two students attending the same life drawing class:

One is a graduate in fine art who wants to refresh her life drawing skills, the other is a complete novice wanting a taste of what life drawing is all about. The former is reactivating skills acquired some time in the past; the latter is learning for the first time about proportion, perspective, use of materials, mark making etc. Relative to their starting points, the novice might progress against all the course's learning objectives, though the level of execution in the completed work of the graduate is much higher, and so our novice merits a grade 1 in our definition. Yet the graduate might have been suffering from a creative block, which was released by the life drawing course, enabling this student, while technically no more competent at life drawing than at the start, to make a real break-through in confidence, an undoubted 'added value' for that student. And if the learning objectives included alongside the technical competences: demonstrate a willingness to take risks; explore and experiment with different approaches; engage in critical evaluation of their work; and all of these were gained by the graduate on the course, then we might place her as grade 2.

5.17 Students are not informed of their 'grade', but are informed of the underpinning assessment. This is because what matters to them is the quality of the feedback they receive on their progress, not a quantitative measurement of it. Our grading is a quality assurance exercise, to ensure a consistency of understanding of what is meant by 'achievement' and a yardstick of the numbers achieving each of the four grades.

Documented Examples Of Assessing Learning – Stage 6 [4]

5.18 As evidence of the tutor's assessment practice, each tutor is asked to write up three detailed examples of student learning, from any one of their course that year. They should illustrate the range of learning within the class.

5.19 We use a standard pro forma for the examples. This covers:

- The assessment strategy used by the tutor for the initial assessment, on-course assessment, end of course assessment as well as advice on the next steps.
- The initial assessment made by the tutor on the student in question.
- An assessment on the progress made by the student against the course objectives.
- A description of any 'added values' or additional benefits derived from the course by the student.

- Advice on the next step for the student.

- A placement of the student in one of the Mary Ward four grades of achievement.

5.20 Tutors are given two hours' pay for the drafting of these three written assessments. In our pilot of this scheme, we found that tutors took between two and four hours to write the assessments, but became faster once they had got the hang of what was required. The quality of these assessments was in nearly all cases very high. Tutors presented their assessments to fellow tutors at peer moderation meetings, described below. Our Inclusive Learning Facilitator also attended and commented later : ' I thought the tutors handled the whole issue as a formative process i.e. part of learning and not part of college paperwork and that this was excellent and should be emphasised in any written guidelines. I also thought they demonstrated considerable care and empathy with their students, which again was wholly professional and is the meat of what we are talking about.'

Participation In Peer Moderation Meeting – Stage 7 [5]

5.21 Tutors are expected to attend a tutor peer moderation meeting, chaired by a head of department or an experienced tutor assessor, who has the role of internal verifier. Levels of staffing at the Centre do not permit the roles of chair and verifier to be split between two people as we would like. At the moderation meeting, the tutors read the three student assessments and then have an opportunity to ask questions about the assessments in order to make a judgement about the quality of assessment using the moderator's form to record their evaluation.

5.22 The purposes of this peer moderation are: to share and disseminate good practice; to problem solve in difficult assessment cases; to achieve a consistency of approach and judgement. To date we have conducted three meetings, as a way of piloting the scheme, with a total of 18 tutors. Although we are still developing the format of the moderation meetings, we are confident that the principle of tutor peer moderation is a good one because it encourages tutor reflection on good teaching and assessment practice and is an opportunity for continuous professional development of our tutors.

The Group Moderation Process

5.23 The group moderation process is as follows:

- The meeting consists of a chair/verifier (either a Head of Department or another approved verifier) and 4/5 tutors.

- The chair outlines the process of the meeting to those present and the moderation process.

- The chair is clear about the timing of the meeting: 2 hours split into 10 minutes introduction, 20 minutes for each tutor's presentation and moderation, 10 minutes to sum up.

- Each tutor distributes copy of their three documented student assessments to the group for reading and discussion, answering questions prompted by the moderation criteria.

- Immediately after each discussion the verifier, and the 3/4 other tutors, complete a moderation pro forma.

- After the meeting the verifier grades the tutor's assessment, making use of the moderation pro formas and confirms or adjusts the grade awarded to the students according to criteria agreed by the Centre.

5.24 Tutors are given feedback by the verifier on their assessments and advised what, if anything, needs further development in their assessment practice. Tutors are paid the standard hourly tutor rate for the amount of time spent at the moderation meeting. Those tutors who achieve a moderation report which gives them a good or excellent profile are considered to be 'approved' assessors. We then take on trust the judgements they make about student achievements, just using the grades and without documentary evidence on all students, Tutors who do not achieve approved status are given support to improve their practice.

6.   INSPECTION FRAMEWORK [6]

6.1   The Mary Ward strategy for assessing learning has been matched against the quality criteria of the ALI and Ofsted Common Inspection Framework for inspecting post-16 education. How the evidence generated at Mary Ward meets the criteria is explained in the grid in Appendix 5.

7   CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

7.1   One of the most fulfilling aspects of non-accredited learning for students, tutors and providers is its power to promote creativity. Alongside our assessment of student learning, we feel it is important to take every opportunity to show-case and celebrate student achievements in imaginative ways. Displays of student work in the Centre, public performances and presentations - both in-house and outside in our local community - publications of student writing, a 'student successes' notice board, sound and video recordings of student work – all these contribute to a sense of pride in what students have achieved.

7.2   The NIACE individual student and group awards have done much to raise the profile of what adult students achieve. With no 'certificates' to show for their learning, just how much students do achieve is all too easily hidden. At Mary Ward we have started to address this lack of acknowledgement by introducing our own Mary Ward awards, based on

51

the NIACE individual and group models. Nominated students have improved their own lives and/or the lives of others as a result of their learning experience. It is not the level of learning that is important, but an awareness of the benefits the learning has brought and the evidence of personal achievement. These Mary Ward certificates are awarded at a public ceremony attended by students, their family and friends, as well as staff and governors. Our experience has been that those who really appreciate this public acknowledgement are those who have struggled most to achieve and in many cases have never been awarded a certificate before.

8. EVALUATION

Strengths and Benefits

- Tutors encouraged to identify course aims and objectives, and reflect upon and improve their role as assessors of learning

- Assessment and reflection upon learning incorporated into process of teaching

- Better understanding of student needs for assessment in uncertificated courses

- Moderating samples of assessment is a good opportunity for staff development, and provides an opportunity for tutors to learn from their peers

- Opportunities for questioning practice, and discussion of examples, gives a more rounded picture than written documentation on its own, and puts those tutors who find written documentation difficult at less of a disadvantage

- The moderation and verification process means that assessments are validated

- Some models of good practice in assessment of learning

- Higher profile of 'student achievement' at the Centre

- On-going commitment to giving students quality feedback on their progress

- The assessment of learning contributes to course review

- Benchmark for achievement in the Centre's uncertificated courses
- Assessment process can be made congruent with quality assurance procedures

- The strategy matches the quality criteria of the ALI and Ofsted inspection framework.

Weaknesses

- Some tutors and learners find it difficult to focus on learning, as distinct from, e.g., course evaluation.

- Paperwork/repetitive 'tick-box' tasks can (i) intrude into teaching and learning; (ii) lead to diminishing returns (owing to ennui, etc.)

- Some judgements difficult to assess – e.g., levels of confidence and self esteem

- Student self-assessment sometimes left to stand without tutor comment; tutor assessment sometimes passed to management only (ie.not also to students)

- Some tutors struggle with assessment, either because they are bad at assessment, or because, though good at assessment, they struggle to present assessment in the form of a written report

- Organising peer moderation where all staff are part-time is difficult and time consuming

Issues

- A remaining danger that tutor assessment is thought of as a discrete, end-of-course activity, as opposed to an activity that is integral to the teaching process

- The relative priority given to assessment of learning, and the auditing of that assessment, as distinct from other pedagogic tasks, e.g. instruction and practice

- Stakeholders' interests are polarised. On the one hand, students do not seek documented, formal, summative assessment, but do want informal, qualitative assessment. On the other hand, funders may well want a formal, summative assessment or at least some quantitative indication of the levels of student 'achievement' in uncertificated learning

- Devising a reliable yard-stick of learning within the same class, given the range of variables to be taken account of (for example, a locally negotiated curriculum; multi-level learning)

9. THE PAY-OFF FROM A SYSTEM BASED ON EXPERIENCE

9.1 After seven years developing a system, we are confident that we have now arrived at a strategy which is both pragmatic and feasible for the Mary Ward ratio of students to staff. There is no mandatory requirement either for tutors or for the college to hold documentation on the achievements of all students. Many tutors will hold their own documentary evidence, but we recognise that there will be a minority of otherwise excellent tutors who do not. The trade-off for the abandonment of a mandatory requirement for written records is the quality feedback to students on their progress, and the moderation and verification of standards of assessment. The Centre will continue to refine and fine-tune its practice. We are now much closer to a system which meets the needs of all the stakeholders: students; tutors; managers and, hopefully, funders too.

NOTES

1. Findings summarised in Janssen, O., 'The Students' Voice', 'Adults Learning', NIACE, October 2000 Volume 12 No 2.

2. See Appendix 1.

3. See Appendix 2.

4. See Appendix 3.

5. See Appendix 4.

6. See Appendix 5.

The Mary Ward Centre
– the friendly place to learn –

Course Description, Session 2000-2001 – 559 SHIATSU FOR BEGINNERS   **24hrs**

Your course tutor will discuss this with you at the beginning of the course.

Who this course is for and what previous knowledge/experience/skills we expect students to have

---

The course is open to anybody, although those with a disability may find it difficult to work on the floor. No previous experience or knowledge is required, only a willingness to learn. For students who have English as a second language fluency of spoken English and good comprehension are a prerequisite.

Course content

Shiatsu means 'finger pressure'. It is a body therapy, based on the same principles as acupuncture, focusing on the internal energy of 'Ki'. Do-In (self-Shiatsu) exercises and meditation are included in the courses to increase fitness, self-awareness, perception of energy and the ability to give Shiatsu.
The course aims to give a basic understanding of Shiatsu, and will teach you how to give a full body Shiatsu working in prone, supine and sitting positions.

What materials you will need for the course and estimated cost

---

Blanket, cushion, notepad and pen.
Loose, comfortable clothing should be worn.

What you should be able to do by the end of the course

---

1. *Work in the prone position (on the back).*
2. *Work in the supine position (on the front).*
3. *Work in sitting position.*
4. *Give a simple full body Shiatsu treatment to family and friends.*

The teaching and learning methods we use on the course

The course is taught through demonstration and practical application with the students working on each other.

How we assess your progress on the course

The tutor observes students' practice and offers advice while they are doing the practicals. He also gives tutorial feedback on a one-to-one basis. Students are encouraged to continually evaluate their own posture and comfort while working.

What extra study/practice we expect you to do outside the class

---

None is expected but practice of the techniques on family and friends will help progress.

What you can do next, after this course

Further Shiatsu courses at Mary Ward or professional Shiatsu schools. The tutor will advise. The Centre also runs introduction to acupuncture and a range of courses in alternative medicine, both accredited and non-accredited.

Mary Ward Centre

Tutor's Course Report
Deadline for receipt by Head of Department ......21/12/00 ....

Course code and Title ... *559 Shiatsu for Beginners*................. Academic Year...*00/01*....

Course Tutor's Name...... *T T*... Date of report... *15/12/00*........

Duration of the course in hours ......*24*.................................. .....

Please note: it is a contractual requirement that you complete and return this form to your Head of Department within one week of the course ending.

Section A   Student Retention

The Centre database will give us a retention rate for your course. You, as the course tutor, may know why students have withdrawn or not completed the course. Please give us below information or observations you have on reasons for students discontinuing. Indicate too the number of students who discontinued for any reason. For instance: 2 students – work commitments. 1 student – course unsuitable.

6 discontinued:-
> *3 due to work commitments. They had initially been able to leave work early for this 4 o'clock class, but in practice found it very difficult.*
> *1 decided Shiatsu was not for her.*
> *2 not known.*

Section B   Learning Outcomes for Students

1. Please make a photocopy of the class attendance register towards the end of your course or at the final meeting. Indicate alongside each name one of the following: X; 1; 2; 3; 4. In the boxes below left give the number of students awarded that 'grade' and total at the bottom.

6	X : No assessment, the student's attendance or participation was insufficient for you to make an assessment
5	1 : The student has made substantial progress against all the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course
4	2 : The student has made significant progress against some of the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course
2	3 : The student has made some progress against the learning objectives and/or has gained additional benefits from attending this course
0	4 : The student has not progressed against any of the learning objectives and has gained no additional benefits
17	Total

Note: where a student has attended this course before, it is important that you make an assessment on progress made within the timespan of this particular term or year's course, as appropriate.

2. Please attach to the register a copy of the course description.

Course Code: 559 **Title:** SHIATSU BEGINNERS

Tutor: T. T.

Day: Thursday **Times:** 16.00 to 18.00 **Total Hours:** 24

Start Date: 21/09/00 **End Date:** 14/12/00 **Number of Meetings:** 12

Class Maximum: 18 **Room Number:** 33 **Term:** 1

Student No	Name	Achievement Grade	21/9 1	28/9 2	5/10 3	12/10 4	19/10 5	26/10 6	9/11 7	16/11 8	23/11 9	30/11 10	7/12 11	14/12 12
1 7878	Student 1	X	/	O	O	A	W							
2 7979	Student 2	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	O	/	O	/	/	/
3 8080	Student 3	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	E	/	O	/
4 8181	Student 4	X	/	/	/	/	/	/	W					
5 8282	Student 5	1	/	/	/	E	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
6 8383	Student 6	2	O	O	/	/	/	E	/	/	/	/	/	/
7 8484	Student 7	X	/	/	/	/	/	W						
8 8585	Student 8	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	O	O	/	/	/	/
9 8686	Student 9	X	O	/	W									
10 8787	Student 10	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	O	/	/	/	/
11 8888	Student 11	3	O	O	O	A	E	E	/	/	/	/	/	/
12 8989	Student 12	2	/	/	E	E	/	/	/	/	O	O	/	/
13 9090	Student 13	2	/	/	/	/	/	E	/	/	/	/	E	O
14 9191	Student 14	3	O	/	/	E	/	O	/	/	E	O	/	/
15 9292	Student 15	X	/	/	/	W								
16 9393	Student 16	X	/	/	W									
17 9494	Student 17	2	O	/	/	O	/	O	/	O	/	/	/	/
Total Number Attending			12	14	12	8	12	7	9	8	7	9	9	10
Tutor Initials			TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT	TT

/ = present; O = absent; V = visitor; E = student excused; W = student withdrawn; A = absence enquiry requested

Achievement Grade:

X : No assessment, the student's attendance or participation was insufficient for you to make an assessment

1 : The student has made substantial progress against all the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course.

2 : The student has made significant progress against some of the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course.

3 : The student has made some progress against the learning objectives and/or has gained additional benefits from attending this course.

4 : The student has not progressed against any of the learning objectives and has gained no additional benefits.

Section C   Tutor's Evaluation of the Course

Assess by circling the appropriate number on a scale of:
1 : entirely true; 2 : mostly true; 3 : partly true; 4 : not true

Please write comments alongside to support your score, where appropriate.

Statement	Score	Comment
1. The objectives given on the course description were appropriate for the class.	①2 3 4	
2. I was able to cover all the contents given in the course description.	①2 3 4	
3. Students were appropriately placed on this course.	1②3 4	3. One student decided Shiatsu was not for her. One student was disabled & unable to give Shiatsu, but I demonstrated on him & he learned a lot about the therapy.
4. The room allocated, equipment and materials for the course were appropriate.	1②3 4	4. Room 33 was adequate, but the carpet was not always as clean as I would have liked for floor exercises.
5. The course length and timing were appropriate.	1 2③4	5. Timing proved difficult in practice for those coming from work (4pm start). Course length appropriate.
6. The teaching strategies I used were appropriate.	①2 3 4	
7. There is nothing I would change on this course if I were to teach it again.	1②3 4	7. I like to introduce something new in every course. But in principle I'm happy with the course. The practical emphasis is appropriate.

Section D   Optional Additional Comments

Add, if you wish, any information which you think the department or Centre should know about how the course went. This will help your Head of Department support you and plan for the future. Mention anything which should be taken into account when reading sections A to C above.

Within a week of your course ending, please return the course report to your Head of Department.

Mary Ward Centre
Assessing Learning – Student Case Study

Course Code and Title: *559 Shiatsu*   Start Date: *21/9/00*   End Date: *14/12/00*

Course Tutor's Name:.... *T.T* ....   Duration of Course (hours):...... *24* ....

Date of Assessment:. *15/12/00* ....   Student Example Number:.... *2* ....

Outcome for this student: | 1 | | (2) | | 3 | | 4 |

1 :   The student has made substantial progress against <u>all</u> the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course.
2 :   The student has made significant progress against <u>some</u> of the learning objectives and may have gained additional benefits from attending this course.
3 :   The student has made some progress against the learning objectives <u>and/or</u> has gained additional benefits from attending this course.
4 :   The student has not progressed against any of the learning objectives and has gained no additional benefits.

1. Description of Assessment methods used:

(i) At the beginning of the course: *Students are paired and asked to 'interview' each other to find out:*-
   ◦ *why the student enrolled for the course and what they hope to get from the course*
   ● *what previous experience the student has of Shiatsu & any other alternative therapy and whether they hold any qualifications in orthodox or alternative medicine.*
This is then relayed to the whole group so that knowledge can be shared and students feel they know each other. I check students' medical history for any contraindications which need to be taken into account in Shiatsu practice.

(ii) During the course: *Students practise giving Shiatsu in the different positions and I go round, observing their practice and giving advice on their individual practice. I also allocate 15 minutes per meeting for 3 individual tutorials while the rest of the group are practising. I encourage students to continually evaluate their own posture and comfort while working and to ask for feedback from the 'client', when they give Shiatsu treatment.*

(iii) At the end of the course: *Students give a whole body Shiatsu to their partner, which I observe and comment on. I invite students to say what they feel they have got out of the course. We then go through the various options for further learning in Shiatsu or other health courses offered at Mary Ward and elsewhere, depending on the students' interests. I conduct this as a two-way question & answer session with the whole group.*

2. Background information on student, including previous learning experience and aspirations

Student No.2 came to the course with some knowledge of bodywork having gained some experience of site massage. She was investigating Shiatsu to see what was involved in treatment and how this would suit her as an additional therapy. She has had no formal training in orthodox medicine or alternative medicine.

3. 'Distance Travelled'
i.e. Student's progress as measured against course learning objectives (to be attached)

Student 2 was keen to learn new techniques, possibly at the expense of mastering those already taught, but she was keen and confident to maintain practice outside the teaching space and would give her partner Shiatsu treatment at home between sessions. Her enthusiasm to progress was an area in which she needed to learn some patience, since it resulted in practice which was not always appropriately paced for the recipient. That said, student 2 was quick to interpret the use of the techniques & adapt them to her own particular treatment and style.
Student 2 can easily and safely utilise the new techniques learned within her on-site massage treatments.

4. Additional benefits of learning
i.e. other outcomes, not included in the learning objectives, that are gained by the student from the course: e.g. personal benefits (growth, development, confidence, initiative, motivation), economic (career progression or development) or interpersonal (negotiation, collaboration, interaction)

Student 2 found being in a group with a mixture of ages and abilities something of a challenge, but she coped well and gained greatly in self-confidence and became more skilled in social interaction from the experience.

5. Advice to student on 'next step'

My advice for this student was that if Shiatsu were to become part of her further career development, she should enrol on a practitioner diploma course, where she could fully experience Shiatsu and make it part of her foundations in bodywork. This would strengthen her whole understanding of body energetics. I would encourage her to try out Shiatsu schools' practice classes to find which school she feels most comfortable with and to continue her learning whilst making this selection.

Mary Ward Centre
Moderator's Report Form for Assessment of Learning

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

Course Code and Title:..*559 Shiatsu*

Tutor's Assessment: Case 1: *1*; Case 2: *2*; Case 3: *3*

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

Date of Moderation:...*10/1/01*......

	GRADE DESCRIPTORS
1	Excellent: a model for others to follow
2	Good: strong in this area
3	Satisfactory: a minimum standard which we would hope to see bettered
4	Less than satisfactory

		1	2	3	4	
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 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		✓			Assessment not used by tutor to evaluate or alter course

12. Please make any further comments here on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the methodology and judgements

T. T. is particularly good at giving advice on 'the next step' and other tutors could learn from his approach. His integration of assessment into the course is another strength.
I would like to see a closer evaluation against the 4 course objectives.

13. From the information you have, where would you place each of the three students presented in the case studies? (For tutor's assessments, see top.)

Example 1				Example 2				Example 3			
(1)	2	3	4	1	(2)	3	4	1	2	(3)	4

i.e. confirmation of all 3 of the tutor's own placements.

How the Mary Ward Assessment Strategy matches the Common Inspection
Framework for inspecting post-16 education

Common Inspection Framework criteria for effective assessment:	Evidence in the MWC Strategy of effective assessment
• forms of assessment and recording are suitable for courses	• Moderator Report • Verifier's Report • Departmental Self-Assessment Report • Examples of student assessments
• assessment is fair, accurate and regular	• Moderator Report • Verifier's Report • Examples of student assessments
• initial assessment is effective	• Moderator Report • Verifier's Report • Examples of student assessments
• assessment is used to monitor progress	• Tutor Course Report • Examples of student assessments
• assessment is used to inform learners about progress	• Moderator Report • Examples of student assessments
• achievements towards learning goals are recorded	• Tutor Course Report • Examples of student assessments
• assessment information is used in programme development	• Tutor Course Report • Moderator Report • Verifier's Report • Departmental Self-Assessment Report
• assessment procedures follow regulatory body requirements	• n.a. for non-accredited courses
• those with a legitimate interest, e.g. employers or parents, are informed of learner's progress	• n.a. for adults not sent by employers

PARK LANE COLLEGE, LEEDS
The Stepping Out Programme

Philippa Lester and Phill Hopkins

1. CONTEXT

1.1 **Park Lane College** is a large general education college in Leeds. The Department of Adult and Community Education had over 12,000 students in the year 1999/00 and offers a wide ranging programme focussed on widening participation and enabling adults to access new opportunities in education and training.

The work of the Department of Adult and Community Education is funded by Non Schedule 2 (NS2) through the local authority, and other sources such as European Social Fund and the Basic Skills Agency and Adult and Community Learning Fund grants.

In the year 1999/00 the college received £140,000 for the delivery of its Non Schedule 2 provision in partnership with Leeds City Council. £30,000 of this sum was allocated to working with adults with mental health difficulties through the Stepping Out Programme.

1.2 **The Stepping Out Programme** – Learning Opportunities for Adults with Mental Health Needs, provides over 30 part-time courses city-wide at 12 different venues, including day hospitals and centres, community centres and college centres. Courses last from between 10 and 30 weeks each academic year, depending on the particular needs of the learners. In 1999/00 38% of the courses were Schedule 2, leading to formal accreditation and 62% were Non Schedule 2, unaccredited. In the same year there were 224 student enrolments of which 52% were female and 48% were male.

The present curriculum offer consists of: Basic Skills – Literacy, Numeracy, Confidence Building, Speaking and Listening, Study Skills and Information Technology; Animal Care, Creative Writing, Pottery, Cookery, Art, Aromatherapy, Woodwork, Sculpture. The staff team is made up of a full-time programme manager and eight part-time tutors, including a basic skills organiser, who teach between two and eight hours each week.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES MODEL

2.1 Scheme of Work

- All tutors, whether teaching an accredited or unaccredited course, produce a general scheme of work for each of the courses that they deliver

- Each scheme is designed with the assistance and specialist knowledge of the programme manager, using prior knowledge and information that has been gathered via formal and informal discussions with current and prospective learners, and professionals/agencies working with this particular client group.

- The schemes are directed at both the needs of the individual and those of the group.

2.2 Learning plans

- Within the first half term of a course the tutor will negotiate, within the framework of the general scheme of work, an individual learning plan with each learner [1].

- Tutors and learners complete a standard pro-forma to monitor progress.

- Tutor is encouraged to help learners to devise alternative means of target setting and record keeping.

- Students are encouraged to develop ownership of their learning.

- Students are encouraged to identify and work towards their own individual learning goals as well as meet the programme and course learning outcomes

  N.B There my be a tension between the empowering experience of students having control over their own programme of study, and involving essential paperwork.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF MODEL

3.1 The programme has its own steering group that is made up of senior management from the various mental health services, agencies and organisations; the programme manager and senior departmental staff. The programme manager also represents the college locally as a leading member of the Education & Training Sub-group of the Leeds Mental Health and Employment Consortium and nationally as the convenor of the SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) Mental Health Special Interest Group.

64
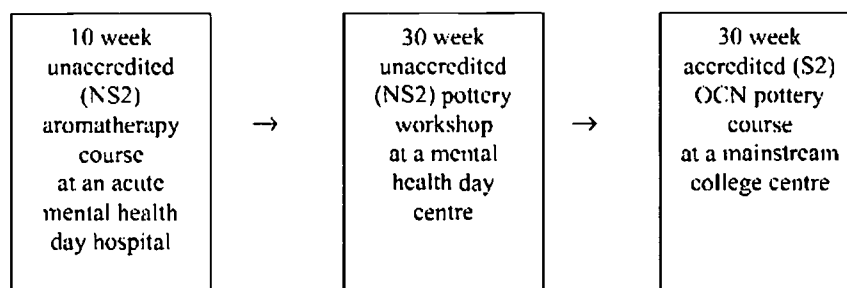
3.2 The development of individual learning outcomes

On NS2 unaccredited courses individual learning outcomes can be very wide ranging. Subject based outcomes in the form of 'products', such as personal project based work, e.g. in a pottery workshop, one student's desire was to "*make a dish and decorate with slip*". Whilst one student's target during a term was to work towards recording, producing and distributing a CD of his own writings and piano performances. Learners have also identified outcomes in regard to progression into the mainstream provision. Here a student recounts her experience and increased confidence gained during an unaccredited creative writing course:

"(The) atmosphere made it feel comfortable to test myself out with reading out loud things I had written, knowing that it would be okay to make a mistake, and then okay to try again. Without the pressure of feeling a failure or being left behind, it seemed a natural progression to become more confident with my efforts at writing creatively and enjoying it."

Then she describes her experiences of progressing beyond the course:

"With the feeling of success in this group, I felt as though I could try to step out of the day centre setting into a creative writing course 'outside' in the community...I have recently started a W.E.A. course on Creative Writing, and now feel, rather nervously, included in their group. It feels a big step to take but, preparing for it first, by being introduced to the subject, on my own terms and my own ground, has definitely made it feel possible"

Outcomes concerning personal progression pathways can be illustrated by the tracking of an individual learner's progression, in this case, over a two-year period.

10 week unaccredited (NS2) aromatherapy course at an acute mental health day hospital	→	30 week unaccredited (NS2) pottery workshop at a mental health day centre	→	30 week accredited (S2) OCN pottery course at a mainstream college centre

The above illustrates not only an improvement in an individual's state of mental health, but more significantly here, the benefits from individual learning outcomes being more than just subject based and allowing the learner to develop their own learning pace. The 10 week aromatherapy course was not only seen and used by the learner as an end in itself, but as an introduction to the rest of the programme and then the college as a whole.

65

This is what the learner's spouse has said:

"(Name) needed pushing...he lacked so much confidence to go onto other courses. He's always been interested in art and we are ever so pleased that he can now move on"

3.21 Sometimes a learner may only be able to identify that they have met learning outcomes in retrospect. This can be as a result of periods of memory loss due to symptoms of a particular illness or from the varying side effects of medication. With the help and guidance of the tutor the learner may need to excavate positive aspects of their learning when things aren't going so well and from their view point, they have made little progress. This is where the Student Learning Diaries play an important role. They can be used to illustrate progress (and the lack of it) during the course and help a learner to see areas of success, as well as those areas of study that need to be re-addressed.

3.22 For some learners who have identified a personal outcome to progress into the mainstream provision, it may also be important, and often vital to their success, that they remain in contact with their Stepping Out Programme tutor. There are a number of learners who have enrolled on mainstream courses, often at a college centre near to where they live, who continue, for varying lengths of time, to attend a Stepping Out Programme course. In these situations the learner, the tutor and sometimes support staff from the mental health services, can all work together to help the learner focus on the areas of difficulty that they continue to encounter. This learner has progressed in to the mainstream but continues to access the programme:

"The class has helped me greatly to gain confidence, first in a protected environment and then hopefully to more mainstream education. I am already studying French at Park Lane. I still find this difficult but hope it will get easier."

3.23 The majority of the programme learners are generally attracted to the NS2 courses because they do not have the added pressure of, what learners understand to be, formal qualifications. But this is not an excuse for the learning outcomes of a course to be vague, imprecise and inaccessible to the learner. It is vitally important that the tutor, when necessary, is explicit in their description of the aims and objectives that are attached to the course. For this reason it is important that the course has a definite structure for those learners to adopt if they do not have the confidence and ability to develop their own lines of enquiry. Often a learner will drift in and out of a course if they feel insecure about their own learning and progress. This is where an Individual Learning Plan is important as it can translate the often jargonistic language of a tutor's general scheme of work in to terms that can then be understood and owned. When visiting individual classes, where this infrastructure is in place, one can immediately sense the buzz of learning of a group who are on track.

3.24 With all these things in mind though, some learners will continue to enjoy the added kudos of gaining a formal qualification, as this learner simply puts:

"I wish we were working towards some certificate".

3.3 Group learning outcomes

Group learning outcomes can often be devised by the use of a Group Learning Agreement. Learners can agree to specific outcomes that they would want to meet at different periods during or by the end of a course. These are one group's comments recorded when reviewing their learning:

"We have gained confidence to write something and then feel able to read it out loud. We supported each other in our writing, with ideas, feedback and artistic criticism. We have gained interests. We have entertained others. We have achieved a lot and have more confidence...being able to communicate with less embarrassment at lack of education".

3.31 A group of learners at a day hospital have collaborated for the past three years in the production of a high quality full-colour calendar. The production process involved a great deal of individual and group work. Each learner developed and then produced a piece of artwork. The group then had to make decisions regarding selection, design and layout, costing and printing, and then the distribution of the finished product. The third calendar produced also involved collaborating with a group of learners from a literacy course, in the production of pieces of prose to accompany photographs. This year a group of learners from the programme have been nominated for an Adult Learners' Week Award. The goals that the group has identified include:

- Ensure creativity and self-expression.
- Help students returning to learning by improving their skills in writing and discussion.
- Enable members to enjoy writing their own work and reading that of established authors"

Many projects were identified, including:

- Performance of own work at retirement celebration of centre worker
- Write and perform play at centre open day
- Stage exhibition of creative writing
- Take part in training day with social services staff for college tutors

The group also highlighted the following as being some of their collective outcomes:

- The audience at the open day was much larger than we expected.

67

- The group has also collaborated with the Sculpture and IT classes at the centre, writing material to stimulate artwork and for use at the open day in the form of captions and headings.
- The trip to France and Germany was very successful, organised by one member with those travelling helping each other.
- Several individuals have obtained publication in newsletters and one in the Radio Times.

3.4 Monitoring Learning Outcomes

Outcome data is tracked both internally from within the programme and externally. At the Programme Staff Team meetings tutors are able to discuss and compare the types of experiences and learning outcomes that learners have met, or are working towards at any given time. There are regular celebrations in recognition and to highlight both individual and group successes to family members, friends, peers, and other professionals working in the field.

The programme manager and administrative staff track progression data on a database to research into the numbers of learners moving onto further provision. The programme manager maintains links with other departmental colleagues at half termly programme managers meetings and on a less formal basis by visiting other college centres. These relationships have proved vital when setting up new courses.

The programme is subject to standard college monitoring procedures. These include mid year and end of year reporting on retention, achievement, and progression and triennial programme reviews.

As well as recording individual outcomes and tracking this data, the programme is inspected externally by Leeds City Council who monitor attendance figures on a weekly basis and make observation visits to selected courses annually.

4. STRENGTHS

4.1 The development of the unaccredited part of the provision where an individual can start to (re)discover how best they learn.

4.2 Students have been able to develop competence in the following areas:

- To become comfortable and feel at ease in the 'classroom' or group situation.
- To develop necessary and particular social skills that are needed for such an environment.
- To develop study skills, such as concentration, time keeping and portfolio building/organisation.
- To build confidence and improve self esteem.
- To develop specific skills associated with the subject, for example, pottery.

4.3 Learners have acknowledged the importance of these particular kinds of skills. Their comments include:

"Being embarrassed to share work or express an opinion because lack of experience in a group"

"Gained in confidence and understanding"

"Had fun mish-mashing ideas and learning new ways of writing"

"Being in a group gives me ideas"

"Getting to know members more closely and understand them"

"I made a cling-film dish. Glazed my dish. Enjoyed every minute. Had a good morning with determination to make something good"

"This class stimulates the thinking and brain and we try to concentrate for the two hours we are there"

4.4 Bite sized chunks of learning.

4.5 Established progression routes from NS2 to S2 provision.

4.6 Flexible approach to programme planning and organisation.

4.7 Programme is fully embedded within the department of Adult and Community Education.

4.8 Programme is held in high regard by all of the major mental health service
agencies and organisations in Leeds and has attracted sponsorship.

4.9 Positive community profile which includes:

- Adult Learners' Week events.
- Creative writing publications.
- Open days and art exhibitions.
- Poetry recitals and play readings.

5. WEAKNESSES AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Tension between the empowering experience of students having control over their own programme of study, and involving them in essential paperwork.

5.2 A citywide council questionnaire for all learners enrolled on NS2 courses identified a need to improve information on the opportunities available to them when the course has finished.[2]

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 Three types of post course progression information have been identified that will compliment that which is already available:

- ● Progression opportunity citywide connected to the course subject.

- ● Local progression opportunities within easy access of a particular centre(s).

- ● Tailor-made information sheets for individual learners with particular needs, for example, college centres that are located on a particular bus route.

NOTES

1. The individual needs of a learner are no different whether they are enrolled on a S2 or NS2 course and their experience of any of the programmes courses should be that there is no difference between the two, apart from accredited outcomes. It should be seen as a seamless provision.

2. Within the programme, and of those surveyed, to this particular question they answered, 12% said 'definitely' (department 16%), 26% said 'mainly' (department 14%), 38% said 'partly' (department 28%) and 21% said 'not at all' (department 22%).

76

WIGAN AND LEIGH COLLEGE

Bernadette George

1. CONTEXT

1.1 **Wigan and Leigh College** is one of the largest Further Education Colleges in the country with approximately 27,000 enrolments during 1999-2000, of whom 5,000 were full-time students. Just fewer than 8,000 adult part-time students followed their studies in over 80 community venues across the Borough.

1.2 The College itself comprises four main sites within the Borough of Wigan, an area of over 300,000 people within two towns, Wigan and Leigh, and their surrounding districts. It is approximately 20 miles equidistant from the cities of Manchester and Liverpool.

1.3 The College has a regional catchment area for its specialist vocational programmes, part-time management provision and for most higher education programmes and a national and international client group for consultancy work, distance learning programmes and for collaborative provision.

1.4 Adult outreach provision is largely undertaken through College in the Community located within the faculty of Access and Continuing Education. It was created in 1995 to manage a partnership arrangement with fourteen high schools across the Borough; further partnerships were formed by extending links with other agencies, both public and private. For example, Family Learning and Basic Skills programmes enabled partnerships to be formed with numerous primary schools.

1.5 A wide range of Schedule 2 courses from GCE A' Levels to Accredited Vocational courses are delivered across nine faculty areas alongside a broad non-vocational programme in a variety of venues.

2. THE LEARNING OUTCOMES MODEL

2.1 Students

People from all eleven socially excluded groups outlined in the initial FEFC circular 99/16 inviting bids for NS2 projects were targeted

2.2 Categories of outcomes

- intended course outcomes – the agreed subject specific learning outcomes
- individual learning outcomes - personal to the individual learner, such as confidence building.

2.3 Staff

- subject tutors
- learning facilitators.

2.4 Identification of objectives

- Tutor for the first subject choice meets the group and negotiates an agreed set of learning outcomes, which are specific to that subject. Tutor is expected to use his/her expertise and experience as a guide for identifying and setting aims and objectives, for example in computing learners might have nothing more specific than the single aim of using a computer.

- Tutor and learners log the agreed learning outcomes on separate paperwork:

  o **The tutor record** - a simple assessment grid for every learner with general learning outcomes, which are very specific and fundamental to the concept of learner involvement and progression and remain the same across the range of subjects offered under.

  o **The learner's record** – a log of personal as well as subject specific learning outcomes under the general heading 'What I want to Learn'[1] (*Appendix I - examples of completed forms)*

- A learning facilitator visits each group during the second or third session to assist learners complete an individual action plan, encouraging learners to think about the subject choices they have made, why they were made, and begin to formulate goals. *(Appendix II - example of Action Plan)*

2.5 Recognising learning progress

- Learning progress within the each subject is assessed by the tutor against the general and specific learning outcomes, and by the learners against their subject specific and personal learning objectives.

○ Assessment of 'added value' and 'distance travelled' identified through 'Managing Learning', which encourages self-assessment and an evaluation of the learning process (see development section).

2.6 Sources of evidence

- student self assessment
- direct tutor observation
- audio tapes and video recordings
- photographs
- examples of written work
- examples of practical work
- computer disc
- peer assessment

2.7 On course quality monitoring

- Weekly review by NS2 manager

- Regular report made to Head of Faculty, Director of Curriculum and NS2 Co-ordinator for the Wigan Lifelong Learning Partnership

- Regular meetings to review quality of provision with managers, tutors and learning facilitators.

- Visits to groups by learning facilitators and NS2 Manager for feedback.

2.8 End of course review

- Learners' review of action plans supported by learning facilitator.

- Progression information disseminated by learning facilitator.

- Evidence of assessment provided by tutors via learning outcomes data and a sample of learners' work.

- Attendance registers analysed

- 'Making Choices/Managing Learning' documentation reviewed including individual student action plans and evaluation forms

- Information reviewed on progression to a more advanced level course by individual learners or the group [4].

- Database and Spreadsheet information on retention, achievement and progression analysed at group and individual learner levels.

73

2.9 Recognition of student achievement

- Certificate awarded itemising the programme studied.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

3.1 The College in the Community team at Wigan and Leigh College, with its extensive community partnerships, undertook the work on learning outcomes as part of the FEFC non-schedule 2 pilot project.

3.2 During 1999-2000, approximately 1,000 students took part in non-schedule 2 courses, choosing learning programmes of between 30-60 hours. Programmes were not usually delivered as single subjects. Learners were encouraged in group discussions to select at least 3 subjects from a menu of choices and to negotiate an appropriate day, time and venue, since a major objective of the project was to develop and offer a range of quality, learner-centred and accessible programmes delivered in the methods best suited to the needs of the target groups, at times and places best suited to them.

3.3 In order to give a coherent framework to the whole concept, 2 National Open College Network courses which had been produced in response to the Kennedy Report on Widening Participation were used [1]:
(Appendix III - Making Choices/Managing Learning paperwork)

- 'Making Choices' - for the initial negotiation to set up learning programmes
- 'Managing Learning' - to enable learners to evaluate the learning process itself.

3.4 Staff development was undertaken to train tutors in:

- Negotiation of learning outcomes with different types of learners
- Identification of learning progress against target outcomes
- Methods of delivery in non-accredited learning

3.5 With the exception of an advocacy course for visually impaired people who required specially adapted computer equipment and a welding course for a group of travellers, which for health and safety reasons had to take place within the College, all NS2 programmes took place in community venues.

3.6 Care was taken to ensure that all the services enjoyed by students within the College were extended to NS2 learners within the community. Tutorial support was extended by the innovation of learning facilitators.[2]

80

3.7 The project's work on learning outcomes evolved with the support of information meetings led by the FEDA. Ideas were formulated on paper and presented to the tutor team. Once the process was initiated further meetings took place to evaluate the process with follow-up visits by the NS2 Manager to various community groups.

3.8 The process was adapted in response to regularly sought tutor/learner/learning facilitator's evaluation.

4. STRENGTHS

- Learner participation in setting learning goals and measuring own achievement

- Learners' achievement recognised through attaining personal and subject outcomes, certification and progression.

- Listening to and responding to the voice of the learner through self-assessment and subject evaluation.

- Tutors thinking less in terms of a syllabus and more in terms of negotiating a learning programme which is responsive the learners motivations and needs

- Tutors devising ways of teaching and assessing outcomes in ways, which accommodate different levels of student learning.

- Tutors more aware of the learning process through mapping achievement.

- Staff development and a stimulating exchange of ideas between peers.

- External commendation for learning facilitator initiative

5. WEAKNESSES AND AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

- Paperwork not necessarily tutor or learner friendly – use of education jargon

- The concept of negotiating learning outcomes bewildering for some learners with negative previous experiences of education

- Unfamiliarity of new learners with the concept of self-assessment.

- Unfamiliarity of new tutors with the concept of negotiating learning outcomes with apprehensive learners – often requiring 'on the job' staff development
- Lack of understanding by new tutors of the need for assessment in non-accredited courses. Much staff development required, particularly on assessment methodology and what counts as acceptable evidence.

- Personal outcomes such as confidence building and self esteem difficult to assess

- Paperwork sometimes seen as intrusive to teaching and learning and required careful introduction

- Some subject tutors completed the paperwork on behalf of all their learners, particularly in mental health groups, rather than working with the study support tutors.

- Producing documentation which is learner held and of value in mapping individual progress and achievement.

- Identifying what counts as acceptable evidence of achievement and 'distance travelled' for inspectors and funders as well as students

6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 During this academic year, tutors have been visited within the learning situation to gauge their response to the learning outcomes paperwork. Further changes were made in the light of those responses.

NOTES

1. Discussions were held with Greater Manchester Open College Network to gain their permission to adapt the basic concepts of the courses to suit the learning needs of non-schedule 2 learners.

2. Learning facilitators were a feature of provision, which was favourably commented on by the FEDA/NIACE evaluators and by **Learning Northwest**. The facilitators are former students who draw on their own experience to encourage people to return to education. They mentor individuals, help with action planning and feedback to the college co-ordinator.

3. The initial heading **Negotiated Learning Outcomes** was felt to be inappropriate on a form retained by learners, on which they logged their own progress.

4. Students on the programme progressed to courses which include: City and Guilds 4242 Basic Competency in IT from NS2 Computers Made Easy, or NCFE Practical Craft Skills / Mixed Crafts from NS2 Mixed Crafts, or Family Learning from NS2 Introduction to Family Learning etc.

82

WIGAN & LEIGH   APPENDIX 1

Learning Outcomes for Non-Schedule 2 Provision

Learner's Name: A.Student

Subject: Computers Made Easy

Tutor: A.Tutor

Centre: Community Centre

Date: September 2000

Negotiated Learning Outcomes:	I can do	I am working towards this	I cannot do this
I can plug in and switch on computer I can get to my file I can switch off and close down	✓	Not confident	
I am learning spell check I feel more confident		✓	
I can do basic word processing I am not confident with spreadsheets	✓		✓
I can scroll up and down I have learnt to open 'file' and use 'tools'. I can save my work	✓		✓
I feel much more confident I can size and alter margins I can embolden	✓		
I can use cut and paste I can open and close files	✓		

Signature: A.Student   I think that I have accomplished more than I realise
(Student)   I feel much more confident now, but I sometimes have to
                        'play about' to achieve my objective.

77

83

WIGAN & LEIGH
APPENDIX I

Non-Schedule 2 Programme
To be completed by tutors for individual learners

Learning Outcomes negotiated with the Learner		Yes /No	Evidence (Assessment Activity)		Yes /No
	Global:				Yes
1.1	*Take control of own learning*	Yes	1.1	*Negotiate learning outcomes and complete an action plan.*	
1.2	*Work to an appropriate standard*	Yes	1.2	*Direct tutor observation*	Yes
1.3	*Demonstrate requisite competence*	Yes	1.3	*Audio tapes of discussions, photographs of activities, peer assessment, video evidence of practical demonstrations, saving material on disk.*	Yes
1.4	*Make significant progress towards fulfilling goals and potential.*	Yes	1.4	*1, 2 and 3 above*	Yes
1.5	*Negotiated Learning outcomes:* Developed skills in group works and decision making.	Yes		*An ability to discuss, reflect and consider other students thoughts and ideas.*	Yes
1.6	Demonstrated an ability to discuss ideas.	Yes		An ability to debate effectively	Yes
1.7	Developed ideas into practical activity	Yes		Explain thoughts and work out, how to put them into practise.	Yes
1.8	Increased awareness of colour mixing and matching	Yes		Describe complementary colours	Yes
1.9	Demonstrated an ability to apply emulsion and acrylic paint	Yes		Explain what materials/tools are needed to apply paint.	Yes
1.10	Recognised the difference between stencils & templates.	Yes		Describe how to make stencils and templates	Yes
1.11	Developed confidence in the practice applications of decorating materials/ tools	Yes		List in order of importance the basic steps used when decorating a room.	Yes

Further Comments

Tutor   ....A.Tutor..

Learner ....A.Student....................................

Learning Programme ....Interior Design (5 weeks)..........

Venue   ....Social Club......................................

C:drive/Ahayes/Presentations/App20.03

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Name:- ....   Date:- ....

Centre:- ....

What do you hope to achieve through the choices you have made?

_____

_____

_____

What factors may affect your personal goals e.g. family and other responsibilities; costs and other financial issues; travel, timescales; help needed with study or basic skills?

_____

_____

_____

How could you achieve your personal goals e.g. information on courses; support from College services such as study or basic skills; more courses at a higher level at your centre?

_____

_____

_____

Further comments

_____

_____

Signed:- ....   Signed:- ....
      (Student)   (Tutor)

C:drive/Ahayes/Presentations/App20.03

Making Choices

Name: ....   Date: ....../....../......

Centre: ....   Learning Programme: ....

The Method of Study:

Group discussions
Teacher's notes
Gathering information
Teacher/group negotiation
Teacher demonstrations
One to one instruction
Other

Which methods have been the most useful to your learning progress?

One to one teacher help
Teacher led lessons
Group work

Following the learning Programme
has the information been:

Clear
Relevant
Delivered in a logical order

Learning Process:
Have there been any difficulties with following the learning programme?
What would help to achieve your learning goals?

Yes/No
Help with English
Help with Maths
Better location
Better facilities
A longer learning programme
A shorter learning programme

Identify a learning achievement within the learning programme
identify a new skill
identify a new interest:

....
....
....

Personal Goals:
What personal goals are being achieved through the learning programme?

....

C:drive/Ahayes/Presentations/App20.03

THE WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Philippa Langton

1. CONTEXT

1.1 The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is the largest voluntary provider of Adult Education in the United Kingdom. It is organised in England into 13 districts and in Scotland through the Scottish Association. Wales and Northern Ireland have their own independent WEA structures

1.2 WEA learners vary enormously in age, background and interests and so do their learning needs. It is the WEA's aim to promote and deliver high quality learning, which is responsive and relevant to all these adults. In line with this, the WEA promotes three main course programmes, which continue to diversify in response to new needs and initiatives:

- The general education programme, open to all adults, now includes a far wider range of science and technology courses as well as many more courses with a distinct practical element to them than was the case even five years ago.

- Community learning focuses on the needs of particular groups in the community and now makes up the second largest and fastest growing part of the WEA's overall provision

- The WEA's workplace learning programme is particularly concerned with the needs of low paid workers most of whom left school at the minimum age with few if any qualifications. This programme is also growing in size and becoming more diversified.

1.3 While the proportion of externally accredited courses within the WEA continues to rise, a significant number of courses in both the general and the community learning programmes are not subject to external assessment for sound, educational reasons (1). Since the mid-90s these courses have been subject to the WEA's Learning Outcomes process, which enables individual learners to reflect on their own learning aims and learning achievements. From the outset the application of Learning Outcomes in the WEA has been seen as a way of validating the learning experience of learners; it is **not** an attempt to quantitatively measure learning.

1.4 The WEA is one of a number of institutions, which received FEFC funding for non-schedule 2 work. Issues of quality assurance and student learning gain from its non-accredited programmes have therefore been a focus for development for several years.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES MODEL - WEA London District for the General Programme

2.1 Process (Appendix I – Tutors' briefing)

While the WEA's Learning Outcomes process is applied across the whole of the Association, there have been slight differences in the practices applied by different WEA Districts. The procedure followed by the London District is described below. It takes into account the fact that there are specialist members of staff in London District responsible for different areas of the curriculum and that these members of staff are organised into three programme teams:

Step 1: Tutors submit a **course outline** for approval by the Subject Officer prior to the course. This is brief, includes Learning Outcomes, and gives some indication of proposed teaching methods (Appendix II – completed course outline).

Step 2: At the first meeting of the class, the tutor discusses and agrees the Course Outline, including the Learning Outcomes, with the learners, and explains that at the end of the course they will be asked to describe what they judge they have learned and achieved. Amendments and additions may be made to the Course Outline at this stage.

Step 3: At the start of the course the tutor also receives copies of the **Student Learning Outcomes Report** that has the agreed Learning Outcomes on it. Tutors are responsible for making learners aware of this and distributing it for completion at or towards the end of the course (Appendix III – completed student report).

Step 4: The tutor also receives a **Tutor Report** proforma. The tutor reads all the Student Learning Outcomes Reports and:
- Describes and evaluates the students' learning and achievement generally using the learners' self-descriptions and their own perception as the teacher.
- Evaluates the course as a whole using the learners' judgement of the course process, together with their own evaluation of the course.

Step 5: There are two key stages:
- The Subject Officer reads all the Student and tutor reports for each course, and identifies any points for action
- The Subject Officer produces an overall report for his/her subject area, together with key recommendations, for review, discussion and action at Team and at District Committee.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

3.1 In 1993 the WEA London District and the Working Men's College convened a conference on how to describe quality learning on non-accredited courses as a way of evolving a strategy for measuring learning outcomes which was fit for purpose, rather than waiting for one to be imposed from the outside. This was followed by a period of intensive developmental and design work which culminated in a number of detailed Learning Outcomes pilots which took place in both rural and urban settings, but which were limited to the Association's branch-based general programme.

3.2 The WEA's three year National Strategic Plan launched in 1995 contained the objective that Learning Outcomes would be applied throughout the general programme and would be developed for the non-accredited part of the community education programme by 1998. This was achieved.

3.3 In 1999 a national seminar was held to appraise the Learning Outcomes strategy to date. This took into account:

- The experience gained during the past five years

- The views expressed by the FEFC Inspectorate following inspections of the WEA in 1995 and 1999

- The new post-18 educational world

3.4 On the whole, it was felt that the experience of the past five years, especially in relation to the general programme, confirmed the validity of the approach taken.

4. STRENGTHS

- Student evaluations showed that they had benefited from the clearer course outlines and proposed learning outcomes, which had been prepared by tutors trained and supported in this approach.

- FEFC inspectors welcomed the initiative as a "valuable and distinctive contribution in helping to assure quality of learning" (1995) and "a major addition to the Association's quality assurance processes...(which)...provides tutors with measures of students' engagement in study, the assessment of students' opinions, and the evaluation of students' learning and personal achievements".

5. WEAKNESSES AND AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

- The varying rate of return from learners and the general nature of some of their responses reinforced the view that data emanating from this approach to learning outcomes should not be used for any quantitative purpose.

- It had proved much more difficult to develop Learning Outcomes on the community education programme. Experience here had highlighted the following issues:

  - o Tutors' concern about the time required for the process and its suitability for some learners
  - o The process was more applicable to some subject areas than others
  - o In Basic Skills/ESOL classes the process was very tutor-led (2).

- FEFC inspectors reported (1999) that the Learning Outcomes approach "does not provide an adequate record of students' progress and the measurable *advances they make in learning.*"

6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 The reservations expressed by some tutors have led to suggestions that for Basic Skills and ESOL students, individual learning goals are more appropriate while further work needs to be done to make the Learning Outcomes approach more suitable for short, community-based classes and their learners.

6.2 A tutor review/validation of learners' Learning Outcomes is being introduced on an individual student basis in order to address FEFC inspector concerns.

6.3 General conclusions are that:

- Tutor training and commitment was crucial to the effective use of Learning Outcomes

- The approach was most effective when used together with a systematic class visiting programme

- The Learning Outcomes approach needed to be integrated into the course and not bolted on.

6.4 Next Steps

In April 2000 the National Operational Plan contained three new objectives in response to the findings of the national seminar:

- That further advice be given on the management and administration of the Learning Outcomes process in order to ensure consistency across the WEA

- That Learning Outcomes for a course should include both those specific to the subject and those general to the learning process

- That the notion of tutor review of students' Learning Outcomes should be developed based on 'informed judgement' (3).

- That a manageable process for capturing individual learning goals appropriate for use on short, community-based courses with inexperienced learners, should be developed.

The timetable for this work would enable full implementation of any changes in 2002/03.

NOTES

1. Much of the WEA's community-based provision is with educationally disadvantaged adults who are often taking their first steps back into education since leaving school at 16 or earlier and for whom formal qualifications at this stage would form a significant barrier to their participation. Many learners on the WEA's general education programme, on the other hand, already possess a number of qualifications and/or are experienced learners who want to help shape the curriculum and determine their own learning objectives.

2. The WEA is developing a national approach to its Basic Skills and Key Skills work whether this is in the form of discrete provision or part of a wider curriculum and whether it is qualification bearing or non-qualification bearing provision. All learners on courses targeted at educationally disadvantaged adults will undergo an appropriate initial assessment to determine their Basic and Key Skills needs and will work towards completing successfully an Individual Learning Plan.

3. The London and Eastern WEA districts have undertaken development work in relation to the second and third objectives

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX I - Extract from WEA 'Notes for Tutors 2001'

The next thing you receive will be the Course Outline and Student Report forms. Please ensure that you meet the deadline for returning these, as we need time to process them and send you copies for your students. You are asked to inform your Subject Officer if for any reason you cannot meet the deadline.

Please use the form provided or type it out in similar format on your own computer or word processor. You need not type – hand-written outlines will be typed up in the office. The outline should be written with your prospective students in mind: use the style that you find most helpful to set out what your propose to cover and how you plan to go about it.

In the course outline, you will need to describe:

(a)   **The aims of the course:** these need to reflect the active and co-operative nature of teaching and learning within the WEA. As such, every class will have as its written general aim the encouragement of active learning within a well-structured and supportive environment. Your written aims must work towards this general goal.

(b)   The main topics you plan to cover, including an indication of the level of the course if appropriate (you do not need to specify the content of each session).

(c)   The main teaching learning methods you plan to use. Whatever mixture of methods you plan to use (slide shows, group and small group discussions, lectures, practical activities), they must ultimately serve the general unwritten aim of encouraging active learning (see above). As with (b), students should be involved in planning and assessments through regular discussions as to the appropriateness of course content and method of delivery.

(d)   Any course requirements (preliminary reading, previous study, equipment/materials, etc.)

(e)   Examples of further study or activity to which the course could lead.

(f)   Between three and six proposed learning outcomes, indicating what you suggest students should gain as a result of taking part in the course.

(g)   A short book-list showing essential, background and reference reading.

Learning Outcomes

The proposed learning outcomes should provide students with a clear framework for a course. The statement of learning outcomes is not a course plan which the class must rigorously follow. Rather the learning outcomes should state the knowledge, experience, or other benefits that students might reasonably expect to derive from having taken the course. The learning outcomes will identify the skills, forms of understanding, or appreciation of the subject which the course is intended to develop.

When setting the aims and outcomes of the course, try to reflect the active and co-operative nature of teaching and learning in the WEA. Students should, as far as possible, be involved in the planning and assessment of their own learning. Teaching methods should encourage the exchange and development of ideas and opinions and should be reflected in the aims e.g.

- enable students to develop the appropriate skills .....
- enhance a critical understanding .....
- encourage an informed, analytical and creative approach to .....

Outcomes should precisely reflect these educational aims e.g.

As a result of taking part in the course, students should

- have acquired the appropriate skills to ....
- have gained knowledge and understanding of the themes/issues/debates within the study of
- have the confidence to express/discuss ....
- apply knowledge and understanding gained during the course in their own approach to the subject.

The booklist asks you to indicate essential, background and reference reading for students. It should not list your sources. A paperback covering general aspects of your subject will be invaluable as a course text. if one is in print.

The course outline with clearly identified proposed learning outcomes is one of the ways in which the WEA can monitor its provision and quality of courses, for internal purposes and to meet the requirements of funding bodies. Outlines are read by the Subject Officers. Any suggested amendments will be made in consultation with you. When the Outline has been approved your will be sent copies for distribution to students and copies are also sent to the Branch.

Further study:

Reference will be made to a wide range of drama both by the authors of the chosen plays and by their contemporaries so that students can read as widely round the core texts as they choose and design a full programme of future reading and theatre-going for themselves. Plays that are not on our syllabus will be reviewed regularly in class so that members will be aware of current productions wh may interest them.

Proposed Learning Outcomes:
As a result of taking part in the course, students should be able to:

- understand and appreciate in detail six or seven contrasting plays

- consider the work of several playwrights in relation to the theatre of their day

- understand something of the development of the theatre and criticism of drama
- apply analytical and critical skills to your own future reading and experience of productions

- express your opinions, defend judgements and enter confidently into discussion of theatrical topics
- expand your knowledge of plays, dramatists and theatrical topics which particularly interest you

- appreciate and enjoy more reading plays and attending performances

---

COURSE TITLE: DRAMA - PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE
TUTOR:
BRANCH/CENTRE:
COURSE NO: WEAM15
NO. OF SESSIONS: 20   NUMBER OF HOURS : 40
SUBJECT OFFICER: LIZ CARLIN ADMIN: LIN BACUS

Course Outline: 1999/2000

WEA LONDON DISTRICT

Aims of the course, main topics and approximate number of sessions for each, what will be required of students, possible further study or activity

The course is designed to enable students to develop their critical and analytical skills in relation to both play texts and productions, leading to a greater appreciation and enjoyment of theatre. Through the study of a variety of plays in performance the course will provide a framework of the history of drama and practices in the theatre of yesterday and today.

Each meeting will include introductory talks by the tutor, general discussion and readings from the texts. Some aspects of the course may be illustrated with slides, tapes or videos.

Introductions will be given to the lives and works of the authors of the selected texts, which will be set in a historical framework. The theatres and audiences of the day, the social, cultural and economic background, current dramatic practice and relevant critical theory will be covered to provide a firm foundation for the understanding of the chosen plays. Aspects within the text, which we shall explore will include: sources, plot and theme; characterisation and relationships; dialogue, imagery and style. Questions of staging, design, music and effects will be considered both before and after seeing a production.

Six or seven plays in current production will be chosen for special study by the class in consultation with the tutor. It is intended that these should include established works, unfamiliar revivals, translations and examples of the work of writers of today, according to the interests of members. Group theatre visits, at modest prices, will be arranged to London theatres, including the national companies, fringe theatres and local theatres.

Plays expected to be in production from September 1999 from which our choices may be made include:

The Royal Shakespeare Company: The Royal National Theatre:
A Midsummer Night's Dream   Candide
Timon of Athens   Private Lives
Tales from Ovid   The Merchant of
Oroonoko   Venice
King Lear (Nigel Hawthorne)
Macbeth (Antony Sher)
A Servant of Two Masters

Barbican Theatre:
Gate Theatre, Dublin Beckett Festival
Waiting for Godot
Happy Days
Krapp's Last Tape, etc

Other productions are yet to be announced

Please continue to Proposed Learning Outcomes overleaf

B) What else did you gain from the course?

It was interesting to tackle two Irish writers, and especially interesting to see how relevant 'Juno and the Paycock' still was. I would never have tackled 'Timon of Athens' without a good Tutor and group to encourage me.

C) i) Do you think the course will help you to go onto a further course or activity:

I feel confident to join a summer school at Stratford, tackling more Shakespeare in one go, than I have ever done before.

ii) Was the relevant information available

The Tutor seems to be able to get information and texts without any difficulty, but I suspect that there is a lot of hard work behind the scenes.

C) Evaluation: Please comment on any aspect of the course, how it was taught, materials and equipment, organisation and accommodation etc.

A very wide ranging and interesting programme.

If you would like this form to be returned to you, please write your name and address here:

96

PTO

WEA — LONDON DISTRICT

COURSE TITLE: DRAMA - PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE
TUTOR:
BRANCH/CENTRE:
COURSE NO:
NO. OF SESSIONS: 20   NUMBER OF HOURS : 40
SUBJECT OFFICER: LIZ CARLIN   ADMIN: LIN BACUS

Student Report: 1999/2000

You are invited to use this form to help you to reflect on what you have learned from your course. Your responses will also inform your tutor and will help the WEA to monitor the quality of our courses.

A) To what extent do you feel you have achieved the proposed learning outcomes of the course?

Are you able to:

	Yes	To some extent	Not at all
1 understand and appreciate in detail six or seven contrasting plays?	✓		
2 consider the work of several playwrights in relation to the theatre of their day?	✓		
3 understand something of the development of the theatre and criticism of drama apply analytical and critical skills to your own future reading and experience of productions?	✓		
4 express your opinions, defend judgements and enter confidently into discussion of theatrical topics?	✓		
5 expand your knowledge of plays, dramatists and theatrical topics which particularly interest you?	✓		
6 appreciate and enjoy more reading plays and attending performances?	✓		

Please comment further on the outcomes if you wish:

95

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

Jenny Kirk

1   CONTEXT

1.1   Birmingham City Council's (BCC) key forum for lifelong learning is the
Corporate Lifelong Learning Strategy Group (CLLSG). The group has
representation from Adult Education, Libraries, Sport, Youth, Community
and Play, Education, Economic Development, Neighbourhood Advice
and Benefits; Equalities, Policy and Personnel.

1.2   A research project to look at the range of approaches BCC used to value
non-accredited learning was undertaken in February and March 2000,
funded by the DfEE Standards Fund. This chapter focuses on the work
of four of the Birmingham City Council Departments and Services
represented on the CLLSG. It describes their adult learning activities
and the efforts made to recognise achievement.

2.   RECORDING LEARNING OUTCOMES: FOUR EXAMPLES

Adult Education Service

2.1   The Adult Education Service is currently developing methods for defining
non-accredited learning outcomes in beginners' IT courses, including,
for example, 'Computers for the Terrified' and 'Make the Most of your
Computer'.

2.2   One aim is to offer a "guarantee" of learning outcomes for each student.

2.3   The exit evaluation questionnaire completed by every student asks for
information about progression plans. This is being developed by the
service to elicit details of learners' perception of their learning outcomes.
Questions asked include: what did you get out of the course? Did you
get what you wanted out of the course?

2.4   This process has been initiated in order to address the issue of students
returning to the same course time after time - indicating that they are not
recognising their learning and so not moving onto the next stage. This
causes a bottle neck for new participants who want to learn IT - a major
need amongst non participants - and so has implications for preventing
Widening Participation.

Economic Development Department

2.5 Economic Development has a lead role in economic regeneration with a focus on community capacity building and business workforce development - particularly small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). It also supports a network of 25 Employment Resource Centres (ERCs). These provide vocational advice, guidance, information and support to unemployed people. Many of the ERCs are not directly involved in formal training; others have partnerships with colleges or other training providers, who provide tutors for the in-house delivery of accredited training.

2.6 Examples of non-accredited learning taking place at ERCs include:
- Open and flexible learning in core skills using IT and print-based resources.*
- Drop-in access to computers for internet and general IT familiarity, informally supported by ERC staff.*
- Group and individual work on how to produce CVs, together with job search, interview skills etc.
- Informal training and advice to clients considering setting up enterprises, prior to referring them to enterprise agencies.
- Information sessions on how the education and health systems operate, particularly for minority ethnic communities.
- Confidence building and assertiveness sessions.
- Customised training for ERC management committees (usually local residents acting in a voluntary capacity).*

2.7 Participants on some courses (marked *) complete an evaluation form.

2.8 There is a registration procedure and some tracking of learners' progress.

2.9 Quarterly monitoring data is collated annually.

Action Learning for Community Enterprise and Development (ALCED)

2.10 The Action Learning for Community Enterprise and Development (ALCED) is a 2-year ESF (European Social Fund) project which has local and trans-national partners. The aim of the project is to provide an action learning opportunity for up to 150 adults from the inner city areas of Birmingham (the unemployed, lone parents, Black and other minority ethnic people). The project is designed to empower groups and individuals to translate their own vision for community enterprise into concrete practical proposals and business plans, as well as develop their capacity for community leadership and participation.

2.11 At the start of each course a Skills Audit is undertaken in each group to identify the skills and knowledge which individuals already have, those they want to improve and those they want from their mentors.

2.12 Review and evaluation is built into each learning programme - midway and upon completion.

2.13 Each participant is given the opportunity to develop an exit strategy from the programme, in a residential study context, with one-to-one support available.

2.14 All participants are encouraged to run a project, or look into an issue of concern to them. This provides the vehicle for making learning relevant to the needs of each person.

2.15 An essential learning outcome is also the production and presentation to a group of people of a computer generated presentation about individuals, or group learning experiences. This takes place in workshops, seminars and conferences in the UK and in European cities.

2.16 Every participant is encouraged to produce a testimony. They reflect upon their experience of action learning, highlight key learning points and identify improvements they would like to see built into the programmes together with their next steps in terms of action planning.

2.17 A variety of certificates such as Action Learning Certificates and Certificates of Achievement are produced and presented to learners at a Celebrating Success Awards Ceremony.

Education Department Schools Advisory Service

2.18 As a result of a variety of initiatives, schools are being recognised as a key community outlet for delivering learning to adults in partnership with Further Education Colleges and the Adult Education service. This is described as Family Learning or Family Education.

2.19 Through a range of carefully planned activities and projects, Family Learning activities seek to get one or more people from a family group involved in learning which they can then share and develop with other members of their family.

2.20 Two examples of on-going projects:

(a) Two hundred of the 350 Primary Schools in Birmingham (and some secondary schools) offer an annual workshop session for parents of every child on the register. The focus is on the child - about parents helping their children to learn. Success of the service is measured in terms of attendance (90% of parents take up the invitation). Sample surveys are undertaken to evaluate the impact of the service.

(b) One Standards Fund project has involved the delivery of four taster programmes of Family Literacy or Family Numeracy each comprising three workshops (a total of 6 -9 hours class contact). Forty adults have benefited from the project and the aim is to deliver six programmes next year. Although some participants may begin to work towards a unit of Wordpower or Numberpower, there is as yet no customised accreditation.

2.21 The Basic Skills Agency Kit provides checklists and guidance for tutors to engage the adult learners in a self-assessment process. However, some Basic Skills' tutors have found that the steps of achievement are too big and the Kit therefore is inappropriate for their learners (there may be a staff development issue here).

2.22 Work is currently being undertaken to encourage the Adult Education tutors to identify skills and knowledge derived from the National Curriculum.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The first stage of the project involved working with Steering Group members in order to begin to map non-accredited adult learning activities provided or funded by BCC, share experience of recognising learners' achievements in non-accredited learning and consider ways of assessing the value of non accredited learning activities.

3.2 A survey was carried out in order to gather information on the range of adult learning activities delivered by departments or sections of the BCC. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were undertaken by the author in a series of one-to-one meetings with representatives from Adult Education, The Library Service, Equalities, Economic Development, Schools Advisory Service and the Neighbourhood Advice and Benefits sections.

4. STRENGTHS

4.1 There is a range of excellent practice in collecting learners' own perceptions of achievement, student satisfaction data and course evaluation comments

4.2 Defining learning outcomes for all learning programmes and recording small steps of achievement is perceived to be an essential basis for learning by Steering Group members.

4.3 The work was found to complement the quality improvement strategies across City Council Departments where there is no systematic and common means of assessment.

4.4 The work was perceived as a project which would serve to inform a wider range of partners, for example community and voluntary groups who are involved in the delivery of adult learning opportunities.

5. WEAKNESSES AND AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

5.1 There is no common approach or instrument of measurement across Departments. It is therefore difficult to provide information in a consistent and systematic way to funders, politicians and other stakeholders including partners.

5.2 Though Open College Network and other forms of accreditation are widely used to provide learners with formal recognition of their achievements, there is evidence that some learners who want it do not have the opportunity of submitting their work for accreditation.

5.3 There is a range of issues concerning the role of the tutor/facilitator/trainer/learner supporter and their professional development needs. For example: how is quality of delivery to be assured?

6. NEXT STEPS

6.1 A number of recommendations for action were agreed by the project Steering Group.

6.2 A corporate learning outcomes strategy would be developed to enable Departments to assess (both quantitatively and qualitatively) the impact of non-accredited adult learning in terms of economic outcomes, social participation and community benefits and personal benefits.

6.3 All Steering Group members would consider the implications of the research undertaken for the project and take into account when developing their individual Department's plans.

6.4 A body of evidence would be gathered which makes the case for the value of small steps of learning achievement.

4. RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING NON-ACCREDITED ACHIEVEMENT: THE LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE

An interim report on the NIACE research

Cheryl Turner and Kate Watters

1. **Introduction**

1.1 Learners are both subjects of and participants in the different approaches to identifying achievement in non-accredited or 'progression' learning that are outlined in this publication. But what are their views of this endeavour? How do they weigh the benefits and disadvantages of their engagement and what impact does this have on their experience of learning?

1.2 A deeper understanding of learners' responses to assessment processes is crucial to the realisation of the Government's vision of a demand-led planning system and to the achievement of its ambition to raise standards and levels of participation, particularly in more informal, community based provision.

1.3 From the inception of this research, the intention was to complement the work of the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in identifying generic guidelines for effective practice (supported by illustrative case studies) with a parallel enquiry by NIACE into the value of such practices to learners. This reflects the first theme identified in the Introduction – the centrality of learners – and the first of the unresolved questions listed in the final 'Overview', "How do learners benefit from the process of recording and validating achievement?"

2. **Context**

2.1 The Remit Letter from the Secretary of State to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), setting out the operational priorities for the Council's first year, makes it clear that the LSC is expected to have a strong focus upon raising standards.

It [the LSC] *will need to introduce robust arrangements to tackle deep seated problems of inconsistency of standards by challenging poor and coasting providers, and by ensuring excellence in teaching and training which meets the needs of all learners, and which promotes equality of opportunity* [1]

2.2 All providers funded through the LSC will have a responsibility to establish and sustain a culture of continuous quality improvement. The main elements of this process will be self-assessment and development planning (a key contractual requirement), monitoring and review, and external inspection.

2.3 The documentation argues unequivocally and consistently that this is

meant to be a learner-focused system. For example, the guidelines on *Self Assessment and Development Plans* maintain that "The new arrangements have been designed to ensure that the interests of the learner come first and are of paramount importance" and that the underpinning principles are there to achieve the "objective of placing the learner at the heart of the system". [2]

2.4 The LSC, as part of its Corporate Plan, will publish a QualityImprovement Strategy, which will shape and drive this forward. This will be informed by the outcomes of various consultation processes including the enquiry into raising standards in post-16 learning, proposals for developing practitioner skills and qualifications in FE, work-based learning and adult and community learning, and finally, the Common Inspection Framework [3].

2.5 The Common Inspection Framework (CIF) will guide the independentinspectorate OFSTED and the new Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) in their review of all LSC/Employment Service (ES) funded provision, including non-accredited programmes. As might be anticipated, it also accords centrality to learners. We are told that "Inspections will focus primarily on the experiences and expectations of individual learners" and will set out to answer the fundamental question, "How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners, and why?" [4].

2.6 The Framework is built around seven broad questions, each of which is defined by a series of evaluation statements. Among these, inspectors are required to address the following:

- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential
- the development of personal and learning skills
- how well teaching and training meet individuals' needs and how well learners learn and make progress
- the uses of assessment in planning learning and monitoring learners' progress
- the extent to which courses or programmes match learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience
- the diagnosis of, and provision for, individual learning needs
- how effectively, through quality assurance and self-assessment, performance is monitored and evaluated and steps taken to secure improvement

- how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential

2.7 The italics and emboldening have been added to emphasise the significance within the Framework of the careful assessment and recording of the progress of individual learners against specified (and challenging) learning objectives taking account of their earlier attainment, potential and aspirations.

2.8 It is clear that learners' views will be a key source of evidence in this context. This raises questions however about the extent to which their comments will require verification, the ways in which 'distance travelled' will be gauged, and the impact of the whole process upon the learning experience.

2.9 For example, initial assessment could provide some of the necessary data for identifying 'distance travelled'. However, while it is an important element of good practice for some areas of learning, such as basic skills, initial assessment would be inappropriate for some types of provision and some groups of learners. This could include many of the characteristically shorter courses in non-accredited programmes, and without skilful deployment, more hesitant learners.

2.10 Inevitably, the monitoring and assessment process comes under close scrutiny. Inspectors will be expected to consider the suitability and rigour of assessment and recording methods, whether these are fair, accurate and carried out regularly, and the accuracy of the information produced for programme planning. Assessment is seen as both formative – an integral part of the learning process – and summative. The views of learners on these processes will be crucial, particularly in relation to the issues of suitability, fairness and accuracy

2.11 While inspection against the CIF is expected to take place on a four year cycle the responsibility for ongoing monitoring and quality assurance, including for non-accredited programmes, sits with either the local arms of the Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) or the ES. Their work is intended to complement that of the inspectorate and to operate within the same frame of reference.

2.12 Providers, the LLSCs ands the ES are charged with working together to ensure continuous improvement. Provider self-assessment reports, which will be one of the key instruments, are expected to address the quality statements in the CIF and to refer to the list of evaluative statements when grading the quality of their provision. This will apply to all provision regardless of the number of learners, and to all learners irrespective of, for example, their age, ability, gender, ethnicity, learning difficulty or disability.

3. NIACE Research – The Voice of the Learner

3.1 Designing and articulating systems privileging the needs, aspirations and achievements of learners is one thing. Creating opportunities for learners to reflect on those systems and to influence them, is another. This study aims to give learners a voice in the discourse and to reflect the overall intention of the Government's policy.

3.2 It seeks to address the philosophical as well as practical challenges involved in working with learners to obtain assessment processes which reflect their requirements and aspirations and which offer robust evidence of achievement and quality improvement for the purposes of external scrutiny and funding.

3.3 This is underpinned by the belief that making spaces for learners to be heard in any evaluation of the systems created to assess their achievement is vital, not just to the effective implementation of those systems (or to the design of better ones), but also to the empowerment of learners.

3.4 This is the key to the creation of a learning society. The final report of the Policy Action Team on Skills argued that one of the reasons for the failure of current arrangements to meet the needs of many people, particularly those in socially disadvantaged areas, is the absence of their involvement in and ownership of the learning process [5]. This reflects McGivney's view that,

Research has shown that disadvantaged groups in the community do not embark on learning pathways as a result of exercising choice over what is already on offer but as a result of organisations responding to identified interests, negotiating options and customising provision [6]

3.5 Taking account of learners' views is a tenet of good practice in the identification of the objectives of the learning process. It applies equally to the ways in which that process is interrogated in order to identify and validate its outcomes.

3.6 The NIACE research has the following objectives:

1. To identify learners' perceptions of the value and effectiveness of different approaches to validating the gains from non-accredited learning

2. To identify learners' requirements of and judgements about current approaches to validating the gains from non-accredited learning

3. To make an evidence-based contribution to the ALI and LSC understanding of quality assurance in relation to non-accredited learning

4. To contribute a paper on possible criteria and measures of learning gain in non-accredited learning contexts for consideration by the Department for Education and Employment and LSC officers in developing funding and quality assurance models [7]

4. Scope

4.1 The primary focus of the activity is on action research involving learners and those responsible for planning and managing the learning opportunities they enjoy. This addresses the following questions:

- What do learners think and feel about being involved in learning outcome and assessment systems? What are the perceived benefits and disincentives?
- Are their requirements of such systems the same as other stake holders e.g. teachers, managers, inspectors, funders, policy makers and implementers?
- What are learners' opinions of the effectiveness of the learning outcomes and assessment systems they are involved with? Or of alternative systems?
- What do learners think and feel is the impact of their involvement in such systems on their relationships with
  - other learners
  - teachers
  - the curriculum
  - teaching and learning methods/approaches

- How and what can learners' perceptions about such systems contribute to the development and implementation of quality assurance arrangements and frameworks; to staff development; and to the provision of support for learners?

4.2 The action research is supported by desk research that seeks to ascertain the following:

- What approaches to learning outcome and achievement systems are currently experienced by adult learners?
- How are they similar or different? What common features do the various systems have, as perceived by learners and those who work with them?
- What issues for learners and those who work with them are associated with implementing the various approaches?
- What types of judgements and what range of judgements are learners being asked to make about their learning progress/gain? How are they being asked to do this?

4.3 The underpinning intention is to link the outcomes of this enquiry to the application of the CIF and the LSC's understanding of appropriate and effective ways of assessing learning gain. More particularly, it is hoped

to inform their interpretation of how learners' views can contribute to both the discussion and development of practice at local and national levels.

4.4 The outcomes could also contribute to the development of support measures for quality assurance in the adult and community learning sector. This includes staff development and training, mentoring, quality improvement networks and subsequent good practice guides.

5. Timescale

5.1 The secondary and primary action research phases are now underway and the research activity will continue into the early summer with a view to completion in July. The findings will be included in an Autumn 2001 publication from NIACE.

6. Methodology

6.1 A key requirement for this initiative has been to devise a methodology that is appropriate and non-threatening to learners. This includes learners "who have had few positive experiences of education in the past and/or have minimal language and literacy skills"[8] At the same time the methodology has to be sufficiently rigorous to give credence to the outcomes of the research process. The approach has to be 'fit for purpose' and relevant to local situations.

6.2 Inevitably, some of the research has been carried out within or around the learning situation as most learners on non-accredited programmes study part-time. This affects the pace and method of enquiry as learning opportunities are precious and not to be interrupted lightly or beyond the tolerance of the individuals involved.

6.3 In practice, learners' views and perceptions are being captured and recorded in a variety of situations. The determining factors are: the availability of physical space adjacent to the learning activity; the willingness of individuals or groups of learners to accommodate an interviewer within their learning time; the opportunities for meeting with learners individually or in groups at times outside their learning time; and above all, the readiness of learners to participate in the research activity. Learners are consulted prior to arrangements being made.

6.4 The principal methods are semi-structured interviews and focus groups, depending on the practical considerations indicated. A series of open questions prompts learners to reflect on:

- their expectations about learning at the outset
- their experiences of working with their tutors to identify and record appropriate learning outcomes
- how their learning progress has been assessed through self-assessment and/or formative assessment by the tutor

- their recognition of learning gain on completion of the programme through review or some form of summative assessment.
- the totality of gains from their learning experience which may extend beyond the planned learning outcomes
- how the particular system of evaluating learning gain impacts upon their learning
- any benefits and disadvantages
- suggestions for improvements.

6.5 Two instruments have been developed to facilitate discussion with learners. In order to explore the way in which learners and tutors can work together to identify learning outcomes and evaluate learning gain, a diagram has been prepared which suggests how this might happen, looking at the role and responsibilities of the learner and the tutor, and the nature of the process in practice.

6.6 Second, a typography of potential ways of demonstrating and assessing learning gain has been developed. This includes individual and group activities which could provide ways of generating evidence of skills acquired or extended, knowledge 'owned' and used in context, understanding of concepts or the application of theory, all as a by-product of purposeful and hopefully enjoyable learning experiences integrated within a learning programme. Learners are being asked to comment on the relevance of these activities to their programme and to their recognition of learning gain.

7. Sample

7.1 The main target group comprises learners who are or have been accessing programmes with a structured approach to the identification of learning outcomes and the assessment of learning gain. The case studies presented in the rest of this publication are an important source, along with a range of other providers from the adult and community learning sector. A range of other providers from the Further Education and Local Authority sectors offers further sources.

7.2 This research is founded on an understanding that learners do not present a homogeneous set of needs, aspirations or intentions. Their very diversity, and the challenge this poses to assumptions behind current systems and planning, is part of the rationale. Therefore the aim is to consult as broad a range of learners as possible taking account of age, ability, gender, ethnicity, learning and support need, and programme range.

7.3 This involves accessing a variety of non-accredited courses and programmes, including (but not limited) to the liberal and performing arts, humanities, languages, skills-based programmes of various kinds and those concerned with personal development. Enquires are also underway to include FEFC Non-Schedule 2 pilot projects and

community-based initiatives funded through the Adult and Community Learning Fund.

8.   Links with quality assurance

8.1 At a later stage, the action research will include semi-structured interviews with tutors and managers who operate learning outcomes and assessment systems. The intention is to identify the relationship between the application of these systems in terms of their value to learners, and the outcomes of their application in terms of quality assurance.

8.2 This will include exploring the way in which the development of such approaches has informed the growth of wider quality assurance systems. Most importantly the research will look at how the involvement of learners in identifying learning outcomes and learning gain has informed curriculum and staff development, thus contributing to a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement.

9.   Links with other initiatives

9.1 The design of the NIACE research project and the scope of the activity have been informed by a number of other initiatives. These include the lessons emerging from the evaluation of the work supported by the FEFC Non-Schedule 2 projects and the Adult and Community Learning Fund projects. It will also take account of a parallel LSDA project focusing on learning outcomes and assessment approaches in the context of ESOL and Basic Skills [9]

10. Emerging issues

10.1 The action research will be completed by early May and its findings presented in a report available in early summer and a publication in late autumn. Although it is too early at this stage to discuss the outcomes it is possible to comment upon a number of themes identified within the 'Introduction' and 'Overview'.

10.2 It is important to begin by welcoming the strong consensus on the centrality of learners to the processes described in the publication, and the acknowledgement that this remains one of the major lacunae in what is already a very substantial body of knowledge about effective practice.

10.3 Clearly the weight of argument in this publication, as elsewhere, requires that our judgements of whether assessment systems are 'fit for purpose' should be informed by learners' perceptions of what that means. There is tension, however, in the fact that learners' purposes are likely to be many and various and may differ within a learning group. Furthermore, they may not accord with those of the tutor or managers concerned with

101

quality assurance – or indeed external views as to the purpose of learning and its evaluation.

10.4 As was stated in the 'Introduction', clarity about the purpose of assessment is essential. This will inform discussion about both the role and status of learners self-assessment in any record of achievement and about the necessity for validation of their views. As part of this, we need to ask what learners think about validation of their learning and about its relevance to their purposes.

Appropriate levels of involvement

10.5 We also require a better understanding of the extent to which learners seek involvement in or information about other aspects of the process. It might be ethically or methodologically desirable to ensure that they are aware of all aspects of the assessment process, but do learners want or require detailed knowledge of the way in which they contribute to the providers' quality assurance systems?

10.6 For example, learners are unlikely to know about, or perhaps be interested in, efforts to find an appropriate way of deriving internal benchmarks from aggregated information even though the genesis of this is their individual self-assessment. Of greater immediate relevance will be their own, individual perception of how they are getting on, what they feel about what they are doing, and what they have learned.

Identifying and demonstrating 'soft' and group outcomes

10.7 Perhaps of equal importance to this sense of individual achievement will be a recognition, via assessment, of the social and interactive aspects of learning that many learners prize. This moves us into the more problematic realms of interpreting collective gain and 'soft outcomes' such as self-esteem and greater confidence. As is noted in the 'Overview', while such outcomes are of immense importance, and perhaps of greatest value to many learners, they are hard to define and their acquisition is hard to verify.

10.8 Qualitative rather than quantitative material would be used to demonstrate this type of achievement and gain from learning. These sources offer the most direct and unfiltered evidence of learners' perceptions and therefore, while they are particularly revealing, they are also the most subjective. Again, as is noted in the 'Overview', the place of qualitative evidence in the record of assessment remains an important outstanding question. Learners' views are crucial to any resolution.

Obtaining a common language

10.9 All these questions are affected by the overarching issue of knowledge and what learners need to know about the interpretation of learning gain in order to reflect their views fully and accurately. For example,

the 'Overview' contends that we need to know more about the nature and value of unanticipated outcomes and the wider benefits of learning[10] .While endorsing this, it is arguable that we need to move our thinking back a stage to enquire into the meaning of such concepts for learners. In other words, are current systems and instruments predicated on an understanding of the learning process that most learners, and particularly newer ones, are unlikely to share?

10.10 Furthermore, we should consider whether or not those concepts are communicated in ways that are congenial and understandable to learners and therefore likely to facilitate more reflexive responses. Consultation with learners is an essential part of constructing and sharing a common body of concepts and terms that can be used to analyse the learning process and which will produce more revealing information about what it achieves. This is crucial to the development of the kind of evidence-based planning processes that the Government wants to see informing the work of the LSC.

Interpreting 'distance travelled'

10.11 Once we step outside the qualifications and credit framework, many of us become unsure of the ways in which learning gain can or should be measured and verified in order to create an estimation of 'distance travelled' or 'value added'. This publication, along with others,[11] makes reference in this context to the role of initial assessment, appropriate benchmarks, and the interpretation of 'soft outcomes', amongst other issues.

10.12 This is of crucial importance to the development of systems and practices that will impact directly upon the quality of learners' experiences. Again, proper consultation with learners in these areas depends not just upon commitment to the principle but also upon the creation of a common language and frame of reference. This requires a shared sense of the application of certain widely used terms - such as 'learning outcome', 'validate' and 'measure' - in order to avoid a Humpty Dumptyish confusion arising from particular preferences for the meaning of words.

Working with diversity

10.13 Finally, it is worth emphasising that the sheer diversity of learners and learning programmes presents a major challenge to the development of systems intended to meet learners' needs and to reflect their responses. It cannot be assumed that men and women with unique life-experiences and from differing cultural backgrounds will respond in the same way or with equal confidence to self-assessment processes and questions. Neither can it be assumed that learners with differing purposes and who access learning opportunities which belong within different academic or vocational traditions, or indeed break with

'tradition' and seek to innovate, will respond to such processes and questions uniformly.

10.14 Learners in the creative arts are notoriously unlikely ever to claim that they "can do" something really well; it is the journey towards accomplishment that is often what really matters. Similarly, what kind of scientist will claim ever to fully know or understand phenomena? Many of the learners now participating in learning experience difficulty in claiming that they are learning and making progress, and would hesitate to describe themselves as 'competent' in any context.

10.15 The case studies in this publication offer eloquent testimony to the need to ensure that the introduction of any systems for recognising and validating non-accredited achievement is inclusive of the views of learners. The main task for this study is to build on that principle and the insights offered in this and other sources, to create a body of information about learners' perceptions that will inform both policy and practice in this area.

NOTES

1. *The Learning and Skills Council Remit Letter from The Secretary of State for Education and Employment*, DfEE, November 2000, pt 62.

2. *Raising Standards in Post 16 Learning: Self-Assessment and Development Plans*, DfEE, March 2001, p.10, pt 33

3. *Raising Standards in Post 16 Learning: Responses to the Consultation*, ES and DfEE, May - July 2001; *Consultation Paper on Compulsory Teaching Qualifications for Teachers in Further Education*, DfEE; *The Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training*, ALI and OFSTED, February 2001.

4. *Common Inspection Framework*, p.6

5. *Skills for Neighbourhood Renewal: Local Solutions*, DfEE, 1999

6 McGivney, V., *Informal Learning in the community: a trigger for change and development*, NIACE, 1999, p.85

7 Turner, C. ' Measurement of achievement and eligibility criteria for funding non-accredited learning under the Learning and Skills Council', unpublished paper; publication by NIACE due in May 2001.

8 'Introduction', p.5, section 1.4

9 Grief S. 'Recognising and validating learning outcomes and achievement in non-accredited basic skills and ESOL': LSDA forthcoming

10 'Overview', p.116 section 4.8

11. Turner, C. op.cit: Hayes, A., Lavender, P., Reisenberger, A. and Vorhaus, J., *Outcomes of adult learning: taking the debate forward*, FEDA/NIACE, 1999.

5. RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING NON-ACCREDITED ACHIEVEMENT:

AN OVERVIEW[1]

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 It is time to take stock: to draw out the lessons from the case studies, and provide an overview of what we know, what we don't know, and what remains to be done.

1.2 The chapter is arranged as follows:

- A Framework for Good Practice
- Areas for Development
- What We Don't Know
- Conclusions and Emerging Issues

1.3 We begin by setting out what we can now regard as common knowledge, and we describe the nine stages that make up a framework for good practice. We then move on to discuss the implications for staff development, managing change and quality assurance, before itemising lacunae in our knowledge, the importance of which is not to be under-estimated. Finally, we identify emerging issues that await further research. At regular intervals we refer to the **Common Inspection Framework**[2] pointing up connections between the work described here and the requirements set out in this inspection document.

1.4 There is general agreement about some of the most important ingredients of good practice – indeed, they have been known about for many years. What these latest case studies bear out is that a significant part of the process of recording and validating learning is now crystal clear and beyond dispute. The point of greatest importance, and on which there is consensus, is **the centrality of learners** to the process they are a part of. The success of all attempts to validate learning depends on our efforts to listen to learners, to understand and appreciate what they want and need, and then to devise a system that is congenial to their needs and supportive of their aspirations.

1.5 We must emphasise that much of what follows is not new.[3] Amongst others, NIACE[4], the WEA[5] and FEDA[6] (now the Agency) have all produced materials which in many particulars correspond closely to what follows. It is this common ground - the basic ingredients of good practice, areas for development and the remaining gaps in our knowledge - that we endeavour to set out in what follows.

2. A FRAMEWORK FOR GOOD PRACTICE

The Bottom Line

2.1 If we look at what the case studies are telling us, and if we look also at evidence from other providers, we can safely say that what recording and validating adult achievement boils down to is this:

An assessment of learner's progress as judged against their learning objectives

Nine Stages

2.2 If we break down this bottom line, we uncover a process that includes nine stages:

Stage 1:	initial identification of learning objectives
Stage 2:	initial assessment of learners
Stage 3:	negotiation of learning objectives with learners
Stage 4:	learner self assessment
Stage 5:	on-going formative assessment
Stage 6:	progression advice and guidance
Stage 7:	record of achievement
Stage 8:	moderation of assessment
Stage 9:	celebration of achievement

2.3 What you see above is the basic framework for recording and validating adult learning, and the case studies collected here, in common with the recorded experiences of other providers, exemplify to a greater or lesser degree the nine-staged process.

About The Framework

2.4 These nine stages constitute the basic framework which institutions can adapt or make use of in ways that best suit their own circumstances. They are *not* intended as a rigid blue-print which makes no allowance for individual circumstances.

2.5 As you will be aware from reading the case studies, not all steps apply to all courses and all learners in the same way. In some cases involving students with learning difficulties or disabilities, steps 3 and 4 may not be appropriate at all, whilst step 2 will be necessary in many such cases, but undesirable in many others.

2.6 In all cases without exception tutors are required both to identify learning objectives and to assess learners against these objectives. Assessment is integral to the entire process. If the tutor does not understand this, and if it is not a central feature of teaching and learning, the process will fail to benefit anyone. This lesson is underlined again and again in the experience reported here.

2.7 However an institution chooses to make use of the framework, and whichever stages it chooses to focus on, the resulting method must find support amongst learners, and prove beneficial to their learning. But in order to acquire the necessary support in the first place, it is vital to listen to what learners have to say *before* reaching decisions about a preferred method for validating learning.

2.8 What follows is *not* intended as a comprehensive guide to good practice; for this there are plenty of admirable publications already in circulation. It includes only a sketch of each of the seven stages, together with a few words about matters to watch out for, as highlighted in the case studies in this volume.

Stage 1: Initial Identification of Learning Objectives

2.9 Tutors should clearly and accurately identify the primary learning aims and objectives for learners in advance of the course. The aims are understood as the general or overarching aspirations for all learners; the objectives are those more particular goals that the tutor will seek to confirm (and amend if necessary) with the learners.

2.10 With respect to all the agreed objectives, it should be possible to estimate the amount of progress learners have made.

2.11 Inspection will consider the extent to which teachers and trainers *'plan effectively with clear objectives that all learners understand'*.[7] Step 1 is the first (but not the only) opportunity for the tutor to identify what he or she thinks these should be.

Stage 2: Initial Assessment

2.12 Initial assessment is necessary for some groups of learners, for example some students with learning difficulties and disabilities. It may be unnecessary and even positively undesirable for other groups of learners, for example some marginalised and hesitant learners for whom the prospect of formal assessment will act as a deterrent. (Assessment

may also be informal and carried out in a manner that is non-threatening.)

2.13 Initial assessment serves several purposes, aiming amongst other things to provide an opportunity for:

- gathering information about learners' knowledge, experience, and preferred learning styles
- assessing additional learning support needs
- discussing and negotiating the learning programme
- adapting the programme to meet learners' needs

2.14 Inspection will look at the extent to which '*initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work*'[8]

Stage 3: Negotiation of Learning Objectives with Learners

2.15 At the start of the course the tutor should be able to share with learners the aims and objectives as these appear in the scheme of work.

2.16 The aims and objectives should be discussed so as to identify both those suited to the class as a whole, and those suited to the needs and goals of individual learners.

2.17 Not all learning objectives need apply to all students. Some learners may have learning objectives of their own, and indeed should have, if these are conducive to their own learning, and are compatible with the overall aims of the course. It is quite possible to be responsive to *differential learning needs* and *preferred learning styles* without abandoning the central aims and objectives of the course.[9]

2.18 Any new objectives should be discussed and agreed with students. A written record of the revised list of objectives should then be prepared, to which both tutor and learners are able to refer.

2.19 Inspection will evaluate the extent to which tutors '*with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly*'[10]

Stage 4: Learner Self Assessment

2.20 Learners should be encouraged to become aware of what they are doing, how they are doing it, and what is going well or badly. On-going dialogue amongst learners, and between tutor and learner, can be structured so as to enable learners critically to reflect on their learning and their progress.

2.21 It is now recognised that 'learning to learn' is an important feature of the learning process, in which the recognition and evaluation of one's own progress plays an important part. Facilitating self assessment contributes to the process of taking learner perspectives seriously, encouraging learners to develop their knowledge of what they are doing, and the learning styles that work best for them.

2.22 Inspection will examine the extent to which learners *'develop the skills of critical evaluation'*,[11] and *'understand . . . how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve'*.[12]

Stage 5: On-going Formative Assessment

2.23 Formative assessment is integral to the process of recording achievement, and requires of tutors that they constantly attend to the work of the learners, noticing any progress or lack of it, encouraging and listening to their reflections, and providing appropriate feedback in response. This is essential to the entire process of validating learning, and is in any case simply good teaching practice.

2.24 Many tutors conceive 'assessment' as formal, written and summative. But it need be none of these things. On the contrary it will often be informal, oral and formative, and should always be designed to be encouraging and supportive. 'Assessment' in this context implies no more (and no less) than a discerning judgement about learner's progress; it is 'on-going' in the sense that it goes on all the time; and it is formative in so far as its purpose is forward-looking, aiming to improve future learning (as distinct from the retrospective nature of summative assessment).

2.25 We should not conclude from the fact that students have opted not to pursue accreditation that they therefore want nothing to do with assessment. This doesn't follow and it isn't true. Learners do not want to be either ignored or dismissed, but nor do they want to receive endless uncritical compliments. What they do tend to want is insightful, sensitive and detailed feedback from a tutor who is both supportive and continually aware of what is going well and not going well.

2.26 Inspection will look at the extent to which *'assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further'*[13]

Stage 6: Progression Advice and Guidance

2.27 What was previously referred to as 'non-accredited provision' or 'non qualification bearing provision' is now to be referred to as 'progression provision'.

2.28 It is a recognised feature of good practice to provide advice and guidance to students about further courses, learning programmes, employment and other opportunities that are related to the course they have completed.

2.29 Inspection will look at the extent to which *'careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards the opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training'*.[14]

Step 7: Record of Achievement

2.30 To repeat: a record of achievement is in essence an assessment of learners' progress as judged against their learning aims and objectives.

2.31 The record should refer to clearly identified learning objectives. This may seem obvious, but some records fail to mention the objectives and instead are taken up with only general, ill-focused remarks bearing little relation to learning.

2.32 The record should take account of classroom observation, learner self assessment and tutor assessment.

2.33 The record will always include *quantitative* evidence, which is to say statistical information about each learner, and will refer to attendance, retention, and - wherever possible - what is known about progression beyond the course.

2.34 It is almost always desirable to supplement quantitative evidence with *qualitative* evidence; this may include a portfolio of work, a performance, a piece of writing, and so on.

2.35 The following is an example of what a record of achievement might include, though the record required will depend on the nature and length of the programme (with lesser demands made of very short programmes):
- syllabus (outlining rationale, content, aims, and delivery methods);
- learning objectives for each learner;
- recorded outcomes along with programme evaluations;
- note of progression opportunities and any learner progression;
- record of assessment and summary of the programme.[15]

2.36 There is a great deal more to be said about what a record of assessment should consist of, but since much is less than certain we reserve further remarks for section 4.3 below.

2.37 Inspection will look at the extent to which *'achievements towards learning goals are recorded'*[16] and also at the extent to which *'assessment information is used to guide course and programme development'*[17].

Stage 8: Moderation of Assessment

2.38 Internal moderation enables validation of tutor assessments. Tutors make presentations of samples of assessed work to colleagues together with a Head of Department or Curriculum Manager. The moderating process will include close scrutiny of presentations and recommendations for amendments.

2.39 The purpose of internal moderation is:

- to share and disseminate good practice
- resolve issues in difficult cases
- identify common standards and criteria for assessment

2.40 Once a tutor's assessment is judged as reliable, it may be possible to take some of their future judgements on trust, in the sense of requiring less (*not* 'no') evidential support than previously. This both takes account of the need to validate assessor and assessment, whilst also recognising the need to limit demands for evidence to whatever is proportionate to the institution's resources[18]

Stage 9: Celebration of Achievement

2.41 It is widely agreed that the learner should be at the heart of the learning outcomes process, and this is indeed the first principle of the Learning Outcomes Group.[19] Nothing is more important for the endorsement of their learning than an event at which their success is celebrated.

2.42 It is not a sentimental but a plain truth, for which experience provides adequate evidence, that an event to celebrate the achievement of learners for whom success in learning may be a 'first', or the product of struggle, is often a moving, affirming and uplifting occasion for all present. Learners need encouragement, and it doesn't get better than this.

3. AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Staff Development

3.10 Whilst we know what the framework for good practice is, many of the case studies in this volume highlight the fact that some tutors remain daunted by the prospect of assessment, and do not know how to work though all the stages listed in section 2.

3.11 Many tutors are part-time and do not have a formal teacher-training qualification. For these tutors (and others), the emphasis on learning objectives and on-going assessment is new, and may represent a formidable challenge.

3.12 Examples of areas for staff development:

- thinking of teaching and learning in terms of individuated objectives
- clearly identifying specific learning objectives
- recognising not only individual but also group learning objectives
- distinguishing learning and learning progress, on the one hand, and teaching, and course evaluation on the other
- ability both to retain a clear structure for a course or learning programme whilst also allowing for differentiated learning and different learning styles
- recognising the importance of learner self-assessment, and encouraging the learner critically to reflect upon their progress
- providing supportive and discerning critical feedback

3.13 The new FE Teaching Qualifications Framework comes into force from September 2001. This will apply to many, if not all tutors, who are delivering non-accredited provision, including: teachers of basic skills; new unqualified staff; part-time, fractional and full-time staff. Staff development for tutors will therefore take account of the FENTO and PAULO lecturer standards, and the differing levels of demand they make upon tutors (depending upon status).[20]

3.14 Priorities for staff development include:

- identifying aims and objectives
- negotiating learning objectives
- facilitating learner self-assessment
- providing detailed and discerning formative assessment
- describing learning outcomes

Managing Change

3.15 The implementation of change cannot be achieved either unilaterally or in a hurry.

3.16 In several of the case studies, development of a learning outcomes strategy evolved over an extended period, building on successive models. It is not useful to think of a single blue-print that will fit effortlessly the circumstances of any one organisation.

3.17 Many if not all the success stories have in common the element of involving people at many levels in the organisation, including, in particular, learners and tutors.

3.18 NIACE is already embarked on research into learner's perceptions[21] Efforts made to find out what learners themselves think of efforts to validate their learning are revealing (see section 4 below). One point deserves mention here: we ought not to anticipate in advance of asking them what learners themselves want; nor should we generalise across all learners and all cohorts. Different learners, unsurprisingly, want different things, and any system of validating learning that rides roughshod over such differences is liable to run into trouble.

3.19 For many tutors the framework for good practice recommended will cause a culture shock; it is not a minor adjustment but a radical departure from past practice.

3.20 Training and development has proved most successful when tutors are able to explore their own best methods for validating learning. Not only can this produce imaginative and valuable results, but tutors welcome the opportunity for participation that is more than merely nominal.

3.21 One opportunity for staff development is presented at the internal moderation process. Tutors have opportunities to reflect on their own methods of assessment, and to learn from the good (and bad) practice of others.

3.22 In summary, a process for introducing a system for validating learning should seek to be:

- participatory (not a unilateral external imposition)
- evolutionary (not introduced all at once)
- inclusive of the views of learners
- inclusive of the views of tutors

Quality Assurance

3.23 For many organisations, the validation of learning outcomes is above all a means of assuring quality in teaching and learning.

3.24 Assuring quality in respect of learning may take the form of verifying: (i) learning outcomes; (ii) distance travelled; (iii) added value. (i) requires that the tutor verify that the learner has achieved their learning objectives. (ii) requires that the tutor has identified the learner's starting and end points, and the dimension along which the learner moves

113

between the two; (iii) requires knowledge of the learner's starting and end points, and a comparison between this learner and the norm for learners of this type in a relevantly similar area of the curriculum. Each of these three tasks raises difficulties which are noted in section 4.

3.25 A priority for quality assurance is to establish a common understanding of such key terms as mentioned in 3.24 above. Opportunities for assuring quality arise at several stages:

- course review by head of department/curriculum manager
- programme review of, e.g., retention, achievement and progression
- intra-college comparison of year-on-year achievement rates of learners[22]
- internal (and external) moderation

3.26 Quality assurance can take place with reference to external or national standards, including such documents as:

- The Common Inspection Framework[23]
- FENTO Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning[24]
- Raising Standards in Post-16 Learning[25]

4. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Itemising the Unknowns

4.1 Reading through the case studies, and listening to the concerns expressed by practitioners up and down the country, the questions above all which remain without adequate answers are these:

1. How do learners benefit from the process of recording and validating achievement?

2. What body of evidence will satisfy inspection requirements?

3. How do we measure learning (especially 'soft' outcomes)?

4. How do we compare achievement rates across providers whose standards may differ?

Preliminary Points

4.2 The four questions focus on, respectively: *learners*; *evidence*; *measurement*; and *benchmarks*.

4.3 The questions have generated much anxiety, and for one or more of three quite distinct reasons:

- In some cases *no one* yet has the knowledge the questions ask for
- In some cases practitioners remain unaware of what *is* already known.
- In many cases what is of concern are problems of *administration* and *implementation*.

4.4 Sections 2 and 3 of this chapter, in common with the rest of this publication, represent an attempt to make headway with the second and third of these points; what follows is an attempt to explain what lies behind the first.

4.5 We are making more headway with some questions than with others. For example, we already possess some information about students' perceptions (see below). But on the fourth bulleted question, for example, there is, to say the least, some way to go before we can identify reliable benchmarks so as to enable valid comparisons of achievement across different providers and curriculum areas.

How do learners benefit from the process of recording and validating achievement?

4.6 We do not know anything like as much as we should about what learners themselves think of procedures for recognising and validating their learning.

4.7 NIACE is currently pursuing extensive research into learners' perceptions, and their conclusions will provide an important piece of evidence regarding the nature and desirability of the process as it is now conceived.

4.8 The Mary Ward Centre has held a series of focus groups to research students' perceptions of their learning in uncertificated courses[26]. This research, confirms conclusions reached by others; that, for example, we need to know more about:

- (a) the nature and value of unanticipated outcomes and the wider benefits of learning;[27]
- (b) the perceptions of learners in response to formative and summative methods of recording learning;
- (c) what learners themselves think about attempts to validate (i.e. not merely record) their learning.

4.9 Work also remains to be done to determine the role for learners' perceptions in a record of assessment. The problem is nicely captured by a manager quoted in the City Lit case study, who emphasises the importance of:

separating the value of evaluation to students and the necessity for monitoring effort by the City Lit. It is difficult to accomplish both tasks without destructive conflict and losing sight of the ultimate aim of the City Lit – student learning. If the evaluation process is basically student-centred, assessment is too subjective. If evaluation is basically tutor-centred, the City Lit drifts towards grading students which can be counter productive. On the other hand, a self-assessment needs to be validated by the tutor to get the full picture of progress. All this emphasises the importance of thorough training for tutors in implementing the system[28].

What body of evidence will satisfy inspection requirements?

4.10 What evidence exactly, and how much of it is required? No one yet has all the answers, and the stipulation in the consultation document for the Common Inspection Framework that 'evidence gathered is sufficient',[29] hardly tells us all we need to know. There are important gaps in this area, but also pockets of knowledge. I indicate the extent of both in what follows.

4.11 Evidence of assessment is either quantitative or qualitative. It is quantitative whenever it takes the form of statistical information; otherwise it is qualitative, and might include exhibitions, displays and demonstrations of learners work.

4.12 Quantitative evidence is an ineliminable part of the process of validating learning. All providers will be required to provide statistical information about each student on each course, and this will require the supply of evidence relating to attendance, retention and progression.

4.13 In addition inspection will look at the extent to which '*trends in performance over time show continuous improvement or the maintenance of very high standards*'.[30] Evidence might take the form of information about the achievement of learners at any one institution pursuing a specified programme, or programmes, as compared with similar cohorts in previous years.

4.14 One potential source of statistical information lies in determining the percentage of learning outcomes achieved by, eg. an individual learner, a class, learners in a curriculum area, and so on.

4.15 An important unresolved question is the place of qualitative evidence in the record of assessment. Qualitative evidence is thought by some to provide a more meaningful record - for both tutors and learners - than that supplied by quantitative evidence alone.

4.16 Qualitative evidence may be drawn from audio, video or photographic evidence of learners applying new knowledge and skills outside a designated learning environment, including, for example, the home, the community or the work-place.

4.17 One option worth exploring would require the production of qualitative evidence from a sample of students only, whilst the quantitative data continues to be drawn from evidence relating to all learners.

4.18 A recurrent message from the case studies is that the procedure for collecting and recording evidence should be *as simple as possible*. We know that complication and repetition turns tutors and learners off, and once this happens, the quality of returns becomes poor.

4.19 A key question not explored here is how institutions, and their MIS systems, will collect, store and extrapolate from evidence of learning, and learners' progression.

How do we measure learning (especially 'soft' outcomes)?

4.20 It is mistake to suppose that *nothing* is known about the measurement of learning. Measurement requires that we know (i) the starting point; (ii) the end point; (iii) the dimension along which the learner is progressing. (i) requires information gleaned from initial assessment, or from a discussion about learning objectives; (ii) requires information gleaned from either formative or summative assessment (or both); (iii) requires clarity as to the course aims and objectives. In some cases it is both possible and desirable to acquire information of all these kinds.

4.21 It is not always desirable or possible to measure learning in the sense of 4.19 above. Initial assessment is not always desirable, as in the case of short courses designed for hesitant or marginalised learners for whom the prospect of assessment may act as a deterrent. And it isn't always possible, as when we consider the case of soft outcomes.

4.22 *Soft outcomes* are 'soft' in virtue of being difficult to quantify. 'Soft' is an unfortunate epithet, implying as it does something which is not only other than but also somehow inferior to 'hard'. But soft outcomes – building self-confidence for example - are of the first importance to many learners pursuing progression provision.

4.23 Whether or not measurement of soft learning progress is possible *in principle*, it is often very difficult *in practice*. We can identify the promotion of self-confidence as a goal, and go some way towards forming judgements about learners' self-confidence at the end of a course. But there is nevertheless plenty of hard work to be done on specifying exactly what it is that we are assessing, and exactly how we

117

are in a position to verify that a learner's self-confidence is as she or her tutor says it is.

4.24 *Measurement and verification:* 'measurement' requires the specification of the distance travelled between the beginning and end of the course. 'Verification' requires that we determine whether a learner has achieved the agreed learning objectives. With this distinction in mind, we might ask: is the measurement of learning always a desirable objective? There is a case for saying that what is important is that we should know what learners can do or understand at the end of their course, something which requires the verification of learning outcomes but not the measurement of distance travelled. If, on the other hand, measurement remains a sought after goal, there is already a great deal of work on this subject to be consulted, both in the area of *basic skills*, and in the area of *ESF-funded projects*, which DfEE commissioned studies are now exploring for evidence relating to measurement of non-accredited distance travelled.

4.25 What follows from the draft report on performance indicators is decidedly vague, but it nevertheless gives a clear idea of the direction we are moving in:

- 'In the interim [April 2001-August 2002], it will only be possible for LSC to operate with a crude indicator of achievement rates across all post-16 provision, *based upon the achievement of a 'positive outcome' however such a concept is defined across the sub-sectors of provision.*'[31]

- 'The second stage of development [ie. after August 2002] will be to *develop ways of measuring distance-travelled and value-added to contribute to the achievement of a level playing field* between different types of provision/client group. ACE recording of learning outcomes may provide a starting point.'[32]

- 'ES is looking at distance-travelled in connection with New Deal. Likewise DfEE is exploring the issue in relation to the Connexions Learning Gateway and schools, has recently completed research on current practice within ESF-funded projects, and is seeking to develop a Post-16 measure of value-added.'[33]

- 'It will be for LSC to consider how to take this initial development work forward *to achieve a robust performance measure of distance travelled and value added in the long term.*'[34]

Question 4: How do we compare achievement rates across providers?

4.26 We know quite a lot about how to identify and verify learning, and we know something about its measurement. But we do not know very much at all about what is perhaps the most important question of all: how are we to compare the standards of assessment applied by one provider with those employed by another?

4.27 If college A sets high standards which 50% of learners meet, whilst college B sets low standards which 95% of learners meet, the figures by themselves not only tell us very little, they are positively misleading. This

118

126

would occur, for example, if college A defined achievement for an individual learner as 'meeting at least 65% of the agreed learning objectives', whilst college B required only a success rate of 50% or above. The figures would be equally misleading if, notwithstanding that both A and B define success as meeting at least 65% of the agreed objectives, the standard for reaching any one objective is much higher in the case of A than in the case of B.

4.28 How we identify reliable benchmarks is one of the most important and unresolved questions that we face in the area of progression provision. We can provide the evidence, but, without the means of providing reliable benchmarks, the evidence by itself will reveal little in the way of meaningful comparative information about cross provider performance and standards.

4.29 From the Draft Final Report on Interim Provider Performance Indicators:

- 'Because of the variation in types of outcome, *achievement levels* will not be directly comparable across Post-16 provision. However, as now, LSC will be able to compare providers within the same area of provision producing like for like outcomes.'[35]

5. CONCLUSIONS AND EMERGING ISSUES

5.1 We now know a great deal about the recognition and validation of adult learning. The framework for good practice is clear, and there is agreement as to what the key elements in this framework are. Above all, there is a need for clarity in respect of learning objectives, and a recognition that assessment, which is at the heart of the entire process, should make reference to the objectives agreed with learners.

5.2 We know what the framework is, but four fundamental questions remain unsolved:

Questions for Research

- how we measure (as distinct from verify) non-accredited learning

- how we take account of soft outcomes

- how we devise benchmarks to allow for reliable comparisons between providers

- how learners perceive attempts to record and validate what they are doing

119

5.3 These questions are now the subject of ongoing research,[36] and it will be important also to take account of research effort in such closely related areas as:

- Basic Skills[37]
- Widening Participation[38]
- Non-schedule 2 pilot projects[39]

and also to take account of research into such topics as:

- Distance Travelled[40]
- Added Value[41]
- Soft Outcomes[42]

5.4 Meanwhile there remains the important task of consolidating what we *do* know, for there are many who are as yet unfamiliar with, even daunted by talk of assessment and learning outcomes. There are, in addition, many difficulties that arise only when we seek to *apply* the framework in the particular circumstances that providers face. Our first task, then, is to share with practitioners the body of knowledge and good practice we already possess in abundance. At the same time, we should not forget one of the most valuable lessons of our case studies: that the introduction of a system for validating achievement should be both participatory and evolutionary, and should, above all, aim to be inclusive of the views of learners themselves.

APPENDIX 1

COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK: KEY QUESTIONS

Inspection will aim to answer the following overarching question:

> **How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training in meeting the needs of learners, and why?**

The following key questions will guide inspection:

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

1. How well do learners achieve?

THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2. How effective are teaching, training and learning?

3. How are achievement and learning affected by resources?

4. How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learning?

5. How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

6. How well are learners guided and supported?

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

NOTES

1   Thanks are due to members of the Learning Outcomes Group, who, together with Anna Reisenberger, made insightful remarks about an earlier draft.

2   *The Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training*, Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Office for Standards in Education, February 2001. See Appendix 1 .

3   Re-reading material from the early nineties one is repeatedly struck by the similarity between what was then regarded as good practice and the messages emerging from case studies in this volume.

4   See for example, Donley, J., and Napper, R., *Assessment Matters in Adult Learning*, Oxfordshire County Council and NIACE, 1999.

5   See, for example, Daines, J., 'Learning Outcomes in the WEA', in *Adults Learning* September 1994.

6   See, for example, Hayes, A., et. al., *Outcomes of Adult Learning*, FEDA, 2000.

7   CIF, p. 8.

8   CIF, p. 10.

9   The Inclusive Learning Initiative provides guidance on these matters.

10   CIF, p. 8.

11   CIF, p. 7.

12   CIF, p. 8.

13   CIF, p. 10.

14   CIF, p. 12.

15   Turner, C., *Measure of achievement and eligibility criteria for funding non-accredited learning under the Learning and Skills Council*, unpublished, NIACE, October 2000. This was intended merely to indicate what the evidential requirement might look like in some cases; it was not intended as either definitive or comprehensive.

16   CIF, p. 10.

17   ibid.

18   See the sixth of the LOG key principles ('Bureacracy'): The bureaucratic underpinning of any system of recording learning and collecting evidence is proportionate to the institution's resources and not unduly intrusive of the learning process. See also the Mary Ward case study in relation to the moderation process.

19   The first of the six key principles, under the name of 'The Learner', states that: the instrument developed to measure learning is appropriate to the learner's needs and reflects good equal opportunities and inclusive learning practice. See p.11 this volume.

20   See for example: *Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning*, FENTO, January 1999.

21   See the chapter in this volume and their forthcoming publication.

22   Comparisons across curricula and providers raise special difficulties which I discuss in section 4 below.

23   The Common Inspection Framework, ALI and OFSTED, 2001.

24 FENTO Standards for Teaching and Supporting Learning, FENTO, 1999.

25 Raising Standards in Post-16 Learning, DfEE, 2000.

26 Janssen, O., *Students' Perceptions of Learning in Uncertificated Courses*, unpublished, February 2000. For a summary see Janssen, O., 'The Students' Voice' in *Adults Learning*, October 2000.

27 The good news is that there is now a research centre at the Institute of Education dedicated to pursuing research into this area.

28 p.16 in this volume.

29 *Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training – Informal Consultation on the Common Inspection Framework*, DfEE, April 2000.

30 CIF, p. 7.

31 Wilson, B., and Turner, B., (for the LSC), *Draft Final Report From the 'Interim Provider Performance Indicators For Use By The LSC' Project*, November 2000. ('Interim': April 2000 – August 2002). Emphasis added.

32 ibid. Emphasis added. (ACE: Adult and Community Education)

33 ibid. (ES: Employment Service)

34 ibid. Emphasis added.

35 Wilson, B., and Turner, P., op. cit.

36 A publication from NIACE and the Agency is due in October.

37 See, for example, Grief, S., *Recognising and Validating Learning Outcomes and Achievement in Non-Accredited Basic Skills and ESOL*, The Learning and Skills Development Agency, forthcoming.

38 See, for example, Taylor, S., *Back on Track: Successful Learning Provision for Disaffected Young People*, Research Report, Learning and Skills Development Agency, December 2000.

39 See, for example, Greenwood, M., and Merton, A., *An Evaluation of Non-Schedule 2 Pilot Projects*, Learning and Skills Development Agency and NIACE.

40 See, for example Dewson, S., et. al., *Measuring Soft Outcomes and Distance Travelled*, Research Report 219, DfEE, 2000.

41 See, for example, Clark, R., *Developing Added Value Measures*, AoC, 2000.

42 See, for example, Dewson, S. et. al., op. cit.

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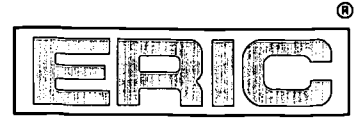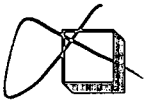
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