



Subject benchmark statement

Youth work, community education and community development

Draft for consultation June 2008

Contents

Preface

Introduction 3

Defining principles 4

**Nature and extent of youth work, community education and
community development** 7

Subject knowledge and understanding 8

Subject-specific and generic skills 14

Teaching, learning and assessment 16

Benchmark standards 18

**Appendix A: Membership of the benchmarking group for youth work,
community education and community development** 19

Preface

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should have demonstrated.

This subject benchmark statement, together with others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelor's degree with honours**¹. In addition, some subject benchmark statements provide guidance on integrated master's awards.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards. Subject benchmark statements allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design and can stimulate academic discussion and debate upon the content of new and existing programmes within an agreed overall framework. Their use in supporting programme design, delivery and review within HEIs is supportive of moves towards an emphasis on institutional responsibility for standards and quality.

Subject benchmark statements may also be of interest to prospective students and employers seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area.

The relationship between the standards set out in this document and those produced by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for individual disciplines will be a matter for individual HEIs to consider in detail.

This subject benchmark statement was produced by a group of subject specialists drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the subject community. The final draft subject benchmark statement went through a full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups. The process was overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). This subject benchmark statement will be revised no later than five years from its publication date, to reflect developments in the subject area and the experiences of HEIs and others who have been working with it. The review process will be overseen by QAA in collaboration with the subject community.

QAA publishes and distributes this subject benchmark statement and other subject benchmark statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

¹ This is equivalent to the honours degree in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (level 10) and in the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (level 6).

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 4 December 2006². The DED requires public authorities, including HEIs, to act proactively on disability equality issues. The Duty complements the individual rights focus of the *Disability Discrimination Act* and is aimed at improving public services and outcomes for disabled people as a whole. Responsibility for making sure that such duty is met lies with HEIs.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission³ has published guidance⁴ to help HEIs prepare for the implementation of the Duty and provided illustrative examples on how to take the Duty forward. HEIs are encouraged to read this guidance when considering their approach to engaging with components of the Academic Infrastructure⁵, of which subject benchmark statements are a part.

Additional information that may assist HEIs when engaging with subject benchmark statements can be found in the revised *Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services*⁶, and also through the Equality Challenge Unit⁷ which is established to promote equality and diversity in higher education.

² In England, Scotland and Wales.

³ On 1 October 2007, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission merged into the new Equality and Human Rights Commission

⁴ Copies of the guidance *Further and higher education institutions and the Disability Equality Duty, Guidance for Principals, Vice-Chancellors, governing boards and senior managers working in further and higher education institutions in England, Scotland and Wales*, may be obtained from www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/forbusinessesandorganisation/publicauthorities/disabilityequalityd/pages/disabilitye.aspx

⁵ An explanation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the roles of subject benchmark statements within it, is available at www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/

⁶ Copies of the *Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services*, published by the Disability Rights Commission, may be obtained from www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Disability/Pages/Education.aspx

⁷ Equality Challenge Unit: www.ecu.ac.uk

1 Introduction

1.1 From 2010, all higher education programmes in youth work, community education and community development that seek professional validation will be required to offer awards at honours degree level. Currently, professional recognition can be achieved at intermediate level, with a Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE) or a Foundation Degree. Professional recognition is achieved by the successful completion of programmes which have been validated by the Education and Training Standards Committee of the National Youth Agency in England, by Community Education Validation and Endorsement in Scotland, or by the 'Four Nations' Education and Training Standards Committee (ETS). Some programmes may offer awards in routes which do not offer professional recognition, and all programmes may have alternative awards for students who have failed to meet professional requirements but have otherwise achieved the standard required for the level of the award. Awarding institutions are required to clearly indicate on their award certificates the difference between qualifications awarded with or without professional recognition.

1.2 This subject benchmark statement describes the nature of honours degrees in youth work and the standards expected of graduates. In many cases this will be combined with a professional qualification which supports graduates' employment as youth workers and/or community educators or community development professionals in a range of community-based education settings. Youth work, community education and community development involve working with adults, young people and communities in informal contexts and, by extension, the use of such approaches within more formal institutional contexts such as schools, guidance services and youth offending teams.

1.3 This subject benchmark statement is intended to support the academic community that designs and delivers programmes of study leading to honours degrees. It is deliberately broad in design in order to provide a framework able to reflect the diversity and changing nature of practice and policy contexts within which this academic community operates. Relevant programme areas include: youth work (in Northern Ireland); community education and community learning (in Scotland); children and young people's services (in England and Wales); community development, community engagement and community cohesion across the UK.

1.4 A variety of different types of higher education qualifications in youth and community work have existed within the UK since the 1950s. In Scotland, the bachelor's degree has been recognised as the basis of professional qualification since the Alexander Report of 1975⁸.

1.5 Professional qualifications in youth work are validated by the National Youth Agency (NYA) which has a well developed, periodically reviewed set of validation criteria, which is accepted by ETS. Community Education Validation and Endorsement (CeVe) in Scotland also validates youth work, community education and development qualifications. The move to honours level professional qualifications across the UK, following the precedent set in Scotland, has been developed and led by the ETS. This move should enable graduates to enter into professional recognition processes across the four nations of the UK and in Europe. The English Standards Board (ESB) for Community Development Work also offers

⁸ HMSO (1975) *Adult Education: The Challenge of Change*, (The Alexander Report), Edinburgh.

endorsement of some higher education programmes, but ESB endorsement does not provide professional recognition for youth and community workers.

1.6 Higher Education awards that are professionally validated by the NYA are currently offered by around 40 HEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, three HEIs offer equivalent awards, and two community-based training agencies are validated through a fourth university. Honours degree programmes in working with young people, youth studies or working with communities which are not combined with a route to professional qualification may also draw on this subject benchmark statement as a reference point.

1.7 The education of the professional practitioner of informal community-based education to honours degree level means that they will have achieved the same threshold standard of education as teachers and social workers. Degrees in youth work, community education and community development have a long history of connection with degrees in both social work and education. In making clear the nature and extent of youth work, community education and development, the practice of cross-professional and cross-disciplinary working should be strengthened, as interprofessional working becomes deeply embedded in professional practice in work with children and young people. Different degree titles should reflect different emphases within the programme. Commonly found titles include: youth and community work; community and youth work; community education; community and youth studies; informal education; community youth work and community development. Joint awards are also possible: current examples include youth work and sports science; youth work and applied theology; childhood and youth studies. Awards are offered as both BA (Hons) and BSc (Hons).

1.8 Graduates may progress to a range of careers in the areas of work with young people; community development and education; capacity building; community and youth engagement and inclusion; community cohesion; or to postgraduate study.

2 Defining principles

2.1 Youth and community work is a practice of informal and/or community education that involves the development of democratic and associational practices, which promote learning and development in communities or individuals who choose to take part in the programmes which youth and community workers facilitate and support. It is focused on work with adolescents and adults; with groups as well as individuals, and with personal development in the context of the development of wider social networks. Its pedagogic practice is based on the identification of and responses to needs and aspirations through dialogue and mutual aid.

2.2 The National Youth Agency offers the following definition of youth work:

Youth work promotes young people's personal and social development, helping them learn about themselves, others and society, through non-formal educational activities which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning. It is characterized by its voluntary nature, where the young person chooses to engage in an activity undertaken in their free time. It starts with young people's view of the world, helping them to develop stronger relationships and collective identities, respect and value differences, take control of their lives and develop a voice. It is delivered via a complex network of providers: community groups, voluntary organisations and local authorities, in youth

clubs and community centres, in parks, on the streets, in mobiles, in schools and further education colleges and many other settings.⁹

2.3 Community learning and development is defined by CeVe as follows:

Community learning and development (CLD) is learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. A common defining feature is that programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants...[CLD's] main aim is to help individuals and communities tackle real issues in their lives through community action and community-based learning.¹⁰

2.4 Youth work, community education and community development are distinct from social care and social work in that they do not share statutory duties of care with social workers. They use different methods of voluntary engagement, with a greater focus on groups and social networks as a context for developmental practice.

2.5 Youth work, community development and community education may work in the same areas as playworkers and may support the development of play as part of a community development process but will have a different specialist focus. Playwork and early childhood studies are characterised by a central engagement with a younger age group, with a clear focus on childhood as distinct from adolescence and adulthood. There are links between this discipline and European-wide definitions of the disciplines of social pedagogy and of 'animation' for all the areas of childhood studies, play, youth and community work. However, the specific focus on the developmental learning of adolescence and adulthood, the community base of practice and the critical learning involved in citizenship and political education makes the discipline of youth and community work distinct. The Children's Workforce Development Council is currently developing an Integrated Qualifications Framework. Within this, programmes offered by higher education institutions will continue to include specific professional awards in which some elements of the training of an integrated children's workforce will be shared.¹¹ Therefore, some degree programmes may offer joint degrees with playwork or with childhood studies.

2.6 The QAA subject benchmark statement for education studies offers a broad framework for youth and community work, but does not make explicit the professional and academic focus of this discipline. There is little focus on the development of professional practice within education studies, or the emphasis on community and organisation, which are central strands of youth work, community education and community development.

2.7 Programmes of study should aim to draw on and extend current thinking and practice in relation to the development of knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and personal values and commitment, both in graduate professionals and in other graduates who achieve non-professional awards.

⁹ NYA guide to Youth Work in England, December 2007.

nya2.live.poptech.coop/information/100591/100592/108737/nyaguidetoyouthworkandyouthservices/

¹⁰ Scottish Government Guidance for Community Learning and Development.

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/education/Life-long-learning/LearningConnections

¹¹ Children's Workforce Development Council, *Clear Progression towards an Integrated Qualifications Framework 2006*. www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/IQF

2.8 Programmes of study should encourage students to engage with fundamental questions about the meanings of education, community and development. Students should be able to question their own experience and conduct reasoned argument in the context of wider debates.

2.9 The range of contexts within which learning and development in this discipline takes place is broad. All programmes should draw on a wide range of intellectual resources and academic disciplines to familiarise students with the characteristic debates and forms of engagement of the discipline. Subjects which may inform youth and community work include history; cultural studies; philosophy and theology; sociology and social policy; the law; politics and economics; psychology; education; health and social welfare.

2.10 All programmes of study in this area should recognise the following:

- that the practice of community-based informal education, including youth work, community education and development, is a value-rich activity
- that the development of interpersonal relationships, which is central to professional practice, requires a high degree of autonomy, responsibility and ethical conduct
- the welfare of individuals and groups requires the understanding both of the intra-personal/intra-group dynamics and the environmental conditions in which that individual/group is placed
- professional practice in this subject area often seeks to mediate 'citizenship aspirations' within a context of unequal power with its dangers of marginalisation, exclusion and oppression
- collaborative learning, democratic participation and association are central practices in the professions linked to this subject area
- work-based learning is a significant element of learning.

2.11 Programmes in this discipline should be characterised by their engagement with debates about ethical issues, professional practice and political realities. Programmes should encourage students to develop inclusive practice in their own settings as well as in the wider social context of education. Programmes should also aid students to develop a strong sense of their own professional identity and enable them to critically engage with policy contexts.

2.13 Programmes should equip students with the ability to deal with complex ethical issues through sound moral reasoning, including an understanding of how values are explored and expressed in informal contexts. Students should have confidence in their ability to explore complex professional dilemmas in this discipline from an ethical basis. They should have a clear understanding of the relationship between their own inherited and developing value system and professional codes of ethics, based on statements of rights and responsibilities and commitments to social justice and equality. They should recognise the contested terrain in which such practice occurs.

2.14 Programmes in this discipline should be characterised by their democratic ethos with regard to student voice and to the encouragement of collaborative enquiry.

2.15 Programme development should characteristically occur as a result of dialogue with a range of stakeholders working in partnership with academic staff. Stakeholders may include practitioners, policy makers, other professionals working with children, young people and communities - as well as young people and community members themselves.

2.16 Programmes leading to professional qualifications should be characterised by a rigorous attention to the development of reflexive practitioners who are able to develop practice out of theorisation, and to theorise their practice, in a reflective practice cycle.¹² Professional development occurs through attention to all points of the triangle of knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, and personal values and commitment.



Figure 1 The design of each programme leading to a professional qualification should offer a distinctive and clear approach to the practitioner's balanced development in all three aspects of the triangle (based on a model outlined in the framework for social work education in Scotland¹³).

3 Nature and extent of youth work, community education and development

3.1 The subject area of community and youth work was first defined, in relation to the practice of youth and community work by academics, in the foundation documents of the Community and Youth Work Training Agencies Group (TAG)¹⁴:

Situations are created so that young people and adults can learn by interacting with peers and others in a variety of groupings, by a range of new experiences which extend, challenge and excite the individual and by opportunities for development of a way of seeing the world.

The youth and community worker's task, therefore, is to plan and provide appropriate experiences, to take advantage of those which arise spontaneously, and to foster learning by employing a range of interpersonal skills. Such skills may include

¹² National Youth Agency, Requirements for Professional Validation of HE programmes. nya2.live.poptech.coop/information/100591/108741/professionalvalidation/

¹³ www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16202/17019

¹⁴ TAG is a membership group of HEIs delivering professionally qualifying programmes in youth work and community development, with representation from the four nations. Meetings are attended by staff employed by member HEIs, who elect a Secretariat to take forward agenda determined by those staff in attendance.

counselling, advocacy, group work and teaching on relevant themes like health, welfare and politics.

3.2 Programmes in youth and community work involve working with both young people and adults through informal education and learning, community education and learning and community development, and the study of the organisational and policy contexts in which they operate. Programmes are characteristically concerned with features that are distinctive to this subject, such as voluntary engagement and association; negotiated, collaborative programmes of work or study with empowerment and participation; community-based enquiry, learning and development; and democratic engagement of both clients and professionals.

3.3 Programmes in this subject area are distinct from those in formal education and social care/social work in their focus on informal and negotiated approaches and work environments. They are distinct from childhood studies and playwork in their emphasis on the education and development of those over 11 years old. Programmes in youth work are also distinct from programmes which offer education and training for specialist, targeted services such as guidance and counselling. However, the dialogue with academics and practitioners in these other subject areas remains very important to the definition of the scope of youth work, community education and development. It enables understanding of the specific knowledge, skills, practices and responsibilities which professional youth workers, community educators and community development workers can bring to the context of integrated teams and to the development of multi-professional practice.

4 Subject knowledge and understanding

4.1 Subject knowledge and understanding is grouped here into five areas:

- working in and with communities
- working with young people and adults
- approaches to learning and development
- developing community-based organisations
- critical and reflective practice.

4.2 All subject knowledge and understanding is grounded in the application of, and reflection on, knowledge gained through work-based learning (in practice settings). It is underpinned by a range of theoretical debates and by statements of professional ethics agreed by the ETS in the context of professional validation.

4.3 Subject knowledge will develop and change over time, partially in response to the changing professional context and partially as a result of the development of the theoretical frameworks which underpin practice. In addition, different programmes will focus on different parts of the curriculum, reflecting the particular interests or expertise of those responsible for its delivery. All programmes drawing on this subject benchmark statement as a key reference point should seek to include some coverage of the five broad areas above. A description of the five areas of subject knowledge and understanding is provided in the following sections. These are indicative and as such are offered as a guide to those engaged in the design of programmes.

Working in and with communities

4.4 The community-based context for learning:

- the scope of professional practice which is community-based and is outside of formal learning and national programmes of assessment in schools and colleges (though linked to them) and outside clinical or statutory practice in health and social care (though linked to them)
- studies of public services such as the youth services, adult and community education centres, Connexions, and voluntary and third sector organisations
- theorisations of the local society, civil society and of social capital
- the relationship of young people to communities, and of people in different stages of their lives to one another in communities
- the history of the development of community-based practice as distinct from state or market-based practice.

4.5 Investigation of the meaning and practice of community:

- the contested meanings of community
- a variety of conceptualisations of community from sociology, political theory, social geography, and ethics
- investigations of communities of place: the meanings of space, locality and neighbourhood
- the concept of communities of interest
- the debate between communitarians and liberals
- the concept of virtual communities
- faith communities and common belief
- the links between community-based organisation and engagement with issues of social justice.

4.6 Communities, networks and coalitions: power and empowerment:

- practices of community building that enable people who have experienced degrees of powerlessness to extend their power
- the analysis of practices which challenge existing power relations such as those rooted in sexism, racism and/or practices rooted in class privilege; 'medical models' of social issues such as disability discrimination or sexuality-based oppression
- the connection and the difference between concepts of engagement and empowerment; the significance of discourses of inclusion and exclusion; and the links and tensions between concepts of community and identity
- networking as a significant aspect of practice; the study of coalitions and broad-based organising, conflict and community-based practices; and the role of alliances
- collective action and social change, including enterprise and self-help strategies for addressing shared needs/aspirations, campaigning and the links to social movements.

4.7. Community, citizenship and democratic learning:

- theories of citizenship which underpin practice; liberal and communitarian approaches; feminist approaches to citizenship; the problem of citizenship for refugees and asylum seekers

- the citizenship curriculum in schools and further education institutions
- models of democracy and participation in civil society which can underpin practice
- rights and responsibilities; representative and participatory democracy.

4.8 Social policy as a framework for interventions:

- analysis of the impact of social policy discourses on the development of professional practice in youth and community work
- the construction of threatening and threatened, troubled and troublesome youth as an object of intervention by social policy
- the significance of the presence or absence of analysis of power relations of gender, racism or class in social policy
- comparative European and international social policy
- debates about governance and regulation.

4.9 Critical enquiry and social research as a tool for building social capital:

- the development of understanding of models of research; the essential role of uncovering new knowledge and new questions in community development
- the variety of approaches to research which emphasise 'working with' rather than 'experimenting on' participants.
- discussion of tools and methods for 'making the familiar strange' and exploration of what it means to be critical.

Working with young people and adults

4.10 Models and meanings of development through the life course:

- the links between education and development and between education and growth
- holistic approaches: the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual
- critique of normative and deficit models of development
- a particular focus on adolescence and the nature of adult life, including studies engaging with the academic disciplines of psychological, sociological and cultural theory.

4.11 Engaging young people:

- models of engagement with young people and communities
- models of learning and whether particular educational methods are more or less suitable for different stages or age groups
- outreach work and detached work
- project-based work
- cultural work and sport
- participatory practice
- accreditation of practice

4.12 Children's, young people's and adults' health, safety and well-being:

- the safety and safeguarding of children and young people, inside and outside the home
- the young person's right to participate in decisions which affect them

- factors which contribute to health, including sexual health and well-being, and mental health and well-being
- the significance of anti-bullying initiatives and supporting transitions, especially for particularly vulnerable young people (eg looked-after young people)
- the same themes in relation to the continuing well-being of adults in the context of community support, promoting equality and valuing diversity.

4.13 Informal support with individuals:

- the relationship between work with individuals and work with groups in adolescence
- the importance of and nature of personal and professional boundaries
- the work of guidance and accompaniment (including an introduction to the role of community-based personal advisors and other guidance, advice, information and support services)
- the debate about identity, gender, culture, sexuality and 'matching' of key workers assessment frameworks; information sharing and confidentiality; counselling skills: listening, reflecting and asking questions.

Approaches to learning and development

4.14 Informal education, conversation, critical dialogue and experiential learning

- definitions and theorisations of informal education
- informal education as listening, conversation and dialogue; engagement and starting conversations; the relationship of silence and voice; the role of learning in changing consciousness
- the place of power and identity in learning; the voluntary relationship as the basis of negotiated learning; the place of activity in learning; the place of 'being' in relation to 'doing' in learning
- the concept of curriculum and the development of programmes of work and their accreditation in relation to informal education
- the difference and connection between informal and non-formal education and learning
- planning and implementing learning activities in informal education.

4.15 Situated learning: local, global and metaphysical:

- starting where young people are, but not leaving them there; knowing where young people are coming from
- the idea of roots (historical and geographical) as sources of informal education
- global learning, environmental learning and theological or faith-sensitive learning, using characteristic methods of informal education, which require practitioners to locate their practice within a matrix of power dynamics across local, global and faith divides
- citizenship learning, collaborative and open enquiry and political education.

4.16 Developmental groupwork:

- the place and significance of small groups as a site of learning and development

- the differences and connections between friendship groups, self-help and support groups
- critical exploration of the role of peer groups and peer education
- links to both community development and one-to-one work
- boundaries and safe space; open and closed groups; time-frames for groupwork sameness and diversity in group work; gender-specific and gender-sensitive groupwork; culturally specific and culturally sensitive groupwork; group leadership; stages of group development; beginnings, middles and ends; common problems in groupwork; groupwork and well-being.

4.17 Creativity in learning:

- the nature of creativity as a source of learning
- the links between informal education, adventure education and play
- transitional space and place as the sphere of creativity is explored
- the contribution of physical education, and arts-based initiatives to informal education
- holistic approaches to learning.

Developing community-based organisations

4.18 Understanding organisations:

- studies of the agencies and workplaces in which community and youth workers are employed
- investigations of bureaucratic and postmodern organisational forms
- the distinctive cultures of voluntary/third sector organisations including churches and faith communities
- communication and culture in organisations; authority and hierarchy in organisations; partnership working
- the role of community organisations in contributing to cohesion and integration
- the nature of governance and regulation
- strategies for anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice at organisational level.

4.19 Management and leadership in community-based projects:

- the study of inter-professional and inter-disciplinary working, including the leadership and management of teams and individuals
- exploring opportunities for funding practice; measuring and stating outcomes and evaluation; auditing and accountability; evidence-based practice
- performance indicators and their development and use, and shared assessment frameworks.

4.20 Supervision, staff development and training:

- models of supervision appropriate to youth and community work
- educational and therapeutic models of supervision; team-building and staff development; working with volunteers and part-time workers; staff appraisal
- the role and development of youth support workers

- portfolio and other methods of training and assessment of pre-degree or 'level-free' work-based learning, including youth support worker training and volunteer training.

4.21 Equality, diversity and interdependence in the workplace and beyond:

- human rights-based equality duties and non-discrimination legislation.
- race and gender equality; disability discrimination; fair treatment of people in same-sex relationships; fair treatment in respect of freedom to worship
- Exploration of conflicts of rights and methods of exploring and working with difference
- the contribution of diverse staff teams to youth work, community education and development
- forms of support and supervision for diverse staff
- practice of positive action and use of positive images.

4.22 Multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working:

- exploration of the nature of inter-professional and inter-disciplinary approaches: the possibility of transprofessional approaches
- integrated services and their objectives
- shared practice in assessment and monitoring
- organisational cultures and linkages
- authority and accountability in partnership working.

Critical and reflective practice

4.23 Critical and reflective practice involves:

- the model of the informal education professional as a reflective and reflexive practitioner
- investigating the meanings associated with being a critical practitioner
- accountability in practice and methods of mutual support
- in youth ministry programmes, the ability to think theologically and reflect theologically
- practice learning: developing understanding of practice and/or professionalism in youth work
- community education and community development.

4.24 Locating professionalism in practice settings:

- the investigation of professional practice through placements of substantial duration, agency visits and presentations, attendance at and participation in conferences
- the ethical and legal framework for professional youth and community work practice
- the variety of settings in which youth and community work occurs, including secular and faith-based settings, statutory and voluntary contexts, third sector and private sector agencies.

4.25 Locating professionalism in practice interventions

- becoming aware of the range and methods of professional interventions with young people and communities: directive and non-directive approaches
- working with individuals, groups, organisations and communities
- purposes, remits, models and critiques
- legal/statutory frameworks
- practical skills and strategies: organising; fundraising; project management; programme planning; evaluation schemes; and setting and meeting targets
- partnerships and networks: inter-disciplinary and multi-agency working
- User involvement/community empowerment; working with volunteers
- strategies for anti-oppressive, non-discriminatory practice which promote well-being.

4.26 Exploring the contested terrain of ethics and power as a reflective practitioner:

- repeated engagement throughout the course of the programme to engage in the investigation of ethical dilemmas in practice from a personal and professional standpoint;
- explore contradictions in and between personal and professional values
- develop a language for ethical discussion and moral reasoning.

4.27 In summary, graduates should:

- have developed a sound understanding of the value-base of youth work, community education and development
- be able to take professional responsibility and be able to identify their own learning needs
- display creativity and work as critical, reflective and reflexive practitioners
- be equipped to read and critically evaluate research in the field of study and to undertake small scale participatory research studies with young people and community groups

4.28 Graduates who gain a professional qualification should have their professionalism informed by:

- their knowledge base in the study of youth and community work
- the study of informal education with young people and adults
- the study of community-based organisations and management.

5 Subject specific and generic skills

Subject-specific and generic skills for youth work, community education and development are constructed on a strong base of knowledge of theory and practice.

Subject-specific skills

5.1 Graduates should be able to demonstrate:

- an understanding of and the capacity to apply and integrate theoretical frameworks and key concepts relevant to practice in youth work, community education and community development

- an informed and critical understanding of their professional role in relation to other professional interventions in the lives of young people and communities
- substantial autonomy in using conventional and innovative, original and creative methods in the planning, delivery and evaluation of educational programmes across a range of practice settings
- systematic analysis of relevant concepts, theories and issues of policy, and their use in informing practice
- the ability to maintain professional boundaries in voluntary relationships and in informal contexts
- the ability to foster participation and support for young people and adults in playing an active role in their communities, increasing their voice and influence in contexts and on issues that affect them
- the ability to create inclusive environments and to identify and counter oppressive attitudes, behaviours and situations
- the capacity to build practice on an understanding of issues of power, empowerment and the complexity of voluntary relationships
- skill in safeguarding the health and welfare of individuals and communities through the understanding and implementation of legal and regulatory frameworks
- capacity to manage others in the workplace (volunteers, staff, accountability, equality and diversity in the workplace)
- context-appropriate leadership of individuals and groups
- project management skills (monitoring, evaluation, financial management, management of resources, policy development)
- the capacity to engage with young people and community groups and facilitate young people and adults' individual and collective learning and development
- the ability to select, plan and evaluate appropriate approaches from a range of intervention methods and techniques
- the ability to support and promote the development of productive and sustainable responses and structures, including the support and management of community-based and young people's organisations
- the ability to operate as a reflective practitioner, demonstrating appropriate professional actions and behaviours
- the ability to analyse policies and practices in the light of a range of theoretical perspectives and to devise written and practical responses
- informed judgments on complex ethical and professional issues in a disputed field and the ability to act appropriately in the light of relevant professional and ethical codes of practice
- the ability to use their knowledge and understanding critically to locate and justify a personal position in relation to the subject
- skill in reflection on their own and others' value systems and the ability to explore such values in informal contexts
- effective communication using written, electronic and oral means with individuals and groups
- the ability to design and implement initiatives, projects and programmes using appropriate professional frameworks and methods
- skill in evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of their work and the work of community-based projects
- critical reflection upon, and commitment to, their continuing personal and professional development.

Generic skills

5.2 Graduates should be able to demonstrate:

- understanding and critical evaluation of research in the field and the ability to undertake small-scale participatory research projects
- the ability to use information and communication technology
- organisation and articulation of opinions and arguments in speech and writing, using relevant specialist vocabulary
- self management, including the organisation of an efficient and effective work pattern, and working to deadlines
- the ability to collect and apply numerical data, as appropriate
- the ability to collect, analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative data
- the ability to present data in different formats, including graphical and tabular
- commitment to the improvement of their own learning and performance
- an understanding of their own approaches to learning
- an ability to work on their own initiative and in cooperation with others.

6 Teaching, learning and assessment

6.1 Teaching, learning and assessment enables students to be inducted into the traditions of youth work, community education and community development. In keeping with this, particular attention should be given to the processes of learning and teaching. These processes should value the personal and professional experiences of students; place value on a range of sources of theoretical and practical knowledge; and encourage the development of both theoretical ideas and practical endeavours. As such, they draw on the practices of all aspects of the formal/informal education continuum, providing opportunities for learning through reflection, dialogue, debate and peer learning. They recognise the ambiguity of, contradictions within, and the contested nature of, concepts and interventions.

6.2 The promotion of reflection and of reflexivity is central to all teaching, learning and assessment in this subject area, whether in the context of the HE provider or in work-based learning. Programmes should facilitate critical thinking and reflection by questioning and critically discussing beliefs, discourses and attitudes. Teaching should be flexible, adaptable, participative, interactive, inter-subjective and collaborative in ways that are consistent with the subject area and congruent with informal and non-formal learning.

6.3 HEIs should work in partnership with professional and community-based agencies to provide a variety of approaches to learning and teaching so that students have an opportunity to experience of a wide range of strategies and approaches to learning. Programmes should include individualised study as well as active participation in group activities, working with other professionals and working as part of a team. Attention should be given to the effective use of ICT to facilitate learning and teaching. Learning approaches that students may engage in include:

- lectures
- workshops
- tutorials
- seminars
- self-directed group work and projects

- visits and exchanges
- peer-to-peer learning and discussion
- collective problem-solving and participative enquiry-action learning
- placement learning.

6.4 Students should have significant involvement in community and youth projects as well as in other more formal settings. Learning through working with experienced practitioners of youth work, community education and/or community development as well as other professional staff is a central feature of programmes in this subject area. Normally, each HE provider will have, and continue to develop, a scheme to facilitate partnership with local authorities and voluntary/third sector agencies.

6.5 Assessment of students should be undertaken using an appropriate range of methods of gathering evidence about their achievement and progress. It should include the use of data from both HEIs and from practice agencies in which the student is undertaking her/his professional education. Schemes of assessment should be developed as part of the programme of study and should be informed by this benchmark statement. Assessment should draw upon a diversity of methods which reflect the range of practical and academic skills required by practitioners in the field. These might include:

- essays
- reports
- presentations
- work-based portfolios
- research projects
- development of practice resources
- peer learning tasks
- examinations/multiple-choice tests.

6.6 For practice-based learning the role of the practice-based supervisor is critical. Assessment of practice should be rigorous and undertaken in partnership between the HE provider and the practice area. Practice-based learning should be based on clear contracts with employers. Supervisors and mentors who undertake roles in assessment should be fully briefed by the HEI, who should establish clear systems for the moderation of their assessed practice. Practice supervisors on programmes leading to professional qualification must be appropriately professionally qualified. Opportunities for the training and development of practice-based supervisors should be provided by the HEI.

6.7 Practice-based assessment methods should include criteria which build on practice requirements, as set out in the national occupational standards for youth work and community development work. Graduates should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the range of interventions that are used with young people and communities and their competence as newly qualified practitioners (where they have undertaken a degree leading to professional qualification).

6.8 Specific assessment methods related to practice-based learning may include:

- reflective journals to reflect on performance and learning
- recording of critical incidents (capturing observations and insights)
- problem-based assignments, which test integration and application of subject knowledge to 'real' situations.

6.9 Systems to address issues of 'fitness to practice' (based on an assessment of the student's criminal record, attendance record, or being subject to disciplinary action as students on grounds which undermine their professionalism) should be in place in all programmes leading to professional qualification and should be implemented in partnership between HEIs and practice areas. All programmes leading to a professional qualification are required by the NYA to appoint a practice-based external examiner and a professional reference group to facilitate such processes.

7 Benchmark standards

7.1 A graduate of an honours degree programme covered by this benchmark statement should typically be able to:

- articulate theories of change and rationale for practice interventions
- show awareness of debates at the forefront of the discipline
- contextualise the practice of youth work, community education and community development in society and policy
- locate the inter-professional context and references for their professional practice
- question and be prepared to deconstruct taken for granted and common-sense professional understandings
- recognise and compare multiple, competing perspectives and challenge the status quo and dominant ideas
- be aware of current debates on key concepts and contested issues
- display critical engagement with primary sources and secondary materials.

7.2 Graduates who have received a professional qualification should, in addition, typically be able to:

- create and apply theories about practice
- manage complex accountabilities, including being able to compromise and negotiate without losing integrity and professional principles
- recognise and analyse powerful discourses shaping practice in order to work in the interests of young people and community group members
- facilitate informal learning and community development, using groupwork and a range of interpersonal skills
- record and evaluate impact of interventions in the context of up-to-date knowledge
- operate as critical and reflective practitioners
- identify discrimination and unjustified oppression and be strategic in developing interventions to tackle these in different situations
- promote experiential learning and reflection in self and others
- exhibit insight and confidence in managing themselves and draw on conscious use of self in working with others and in leading or participating in teams
- engage in continuous professional development.

Appendix A: Membership of the benchmarking group for youth work, community education and community development

Dr John Bamber	University of Edinburgh
Ms Janet Batsleer (Chair)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Ms Marian Charlton	Leeds Metropolitan University
Dr Keith Cranwell	University of Greenwich
Dr Sheila Curran	Open University
Dr Richard Davies	De Montfort University
Mr Steve Drowley	National Youth Agency/University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Dr Alison Gilchrist	Community Development Foundation
Dr H M F Jones	University of Huddersfield
Mr Sam McCready	University of Ulster
Ms Peggy McNab	Community education validation and endorsement, Scotland
Mr Geraint Owen	Sheffield Hallam University
Ms Paula Pope	Liverpool John Moores University
Dr Wayne Richards	University of Birmingham