

Quality Assurance and Staff Development

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Foreword

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THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL



The Basic Skills Quality Initiative Team

The *Basic Skills Quality Initiative* is a major programme of staff and organisational development that forms part of the Council's overall response to raising standards. The initiative includes three specific elements. First, a package of materials designed for use by managers and lead practitioners. Four units of material include: *Teaching, Learning and Students' Achievements; Guidance and Support: Curriculum Organisation and Management; and Quality Assurance and Staff Development*. Second, funding for providers to employ trained facilitators to help providers make effective use of the materials and support them in addressing key issues. Third, the opportunity for one thousand members of staff to attend a training event designed to focus on the strategic and operational management of basic skills. The three elements of the *Basic Skills Quality Initiative* comprise a comprehensive and innovative package of support.

While the materials are intended primarily for those concerned with basic skills, they are relevant to everyone working in further education. Whether we teach or manage provision in workshops, learning centres or classrooms, the materials provide an opportunity to remind ourselves of the vital processes of teaching and learning, and of the importance of effective structures and procedures to support them.

All learners are entitled to high-quality basic skills provision. Making sure learners can read, write and use numbers confidently is part of the core business of further education. These skills give learners the opportunity to take part in education and training, to complete programmes of learning successfully and to progress to employment or further study.

The initiative was steered by four consultants: Teresa Bergin, Pat Hood, Liz Lawson and Sheila LeEVERS. Thanks are due also to the Council's inspectors who guided and contributed to the work: Stuart McCoy, Carol Tennyson and William Lewis. Colleagues from the Council's Quality Improvement Unit – Emer Clarke, Mary Kelly, Kathryn O'Regan, Andrew Lambe, Gillian Blake and Claire Wood – provided support and expertise throughout. Jillian Peach designed the materials and Ray Oram provided technical advice.



The main purpose of quality assurance is to promote continuous quality improvement. At the heart of effective quality assurance systems is agreement amongst staff and managers about the criteria by which the quality of the provision will be judged. The main standards are those relating to teaching and learning and students' achievements. Once the criteria and standards are set, policies and procedures are needed to explain how the establishment intends to monitor the quality of its provision. These policies and procedures will be part of a quality assurance framework which will cover all aspects of an establishment's provision, but some adjustments will be needed to meet the specific needs of particular programmes.

In basic skills, as in all programme areas, it is essential to have rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of the provision. Managers need to have a clear understanding of what constitutes good practice in basic skills provision and to have sound knowledge of appropriate criteria against which to judge its quality. Involving staff in the setting of standards and performance indicators, against which the quality of the provision is to be judged, helps them to develop an understanding of good quality. Rigorous and supportive procedures for monitoring the performance of staff enable managers to identify poor performance and to take appropriate action to address the difficulties. Effective arrangements for the internal verification and moderation of the quality of provision also play an important role in assuring its quality.

The process of self-assessment is now well established as an essential element of quality assurance procedures. The development of self-critical attitudes by staff and an open and

positive approach to assessing the quality of their work is of major significance in promoting continuous quality improvement. Where self-assessment is most effective, staff have developed rigorous procedures for assessing the quality of their work and for developing action plans to address the issues identified through the process. The objectives they set to improve the quality of the provision are specific and measurable, and responsibilities for implementing them are clearly identified alongside realistic timescales.

The success of basic skills provision depends significantly on the ability of its competent, confident and committed staff to contribute to the success of the learners. Staff development is one way of enabling staff to make their maximum contribution, and it does so by building their competence to deliver and their confidence in what they do. However, it is also a factor in building commitment: comprehensive and effective staff development provision signals that the organisation values staff and the work they do, and that it is happy to invest in their continuing development.

This commitment to staff development becomes particularly important as the pace of change continues to increase, and organisations and individuals are expected to respond positively and creatively to meet the changing and growing demands. It is also increasingly important given the national priorities of lifelong learning. Providers are making little distinction between the training and development opportunities and processes they offer full-time and part-time tutors: all are equally valued, all are encouraged to participate. This is matched by a shift in the underlying aims of training and development, which are increasingly seen as essential parts of



the quality assurance processes and as a means to continuous improvement. The emphasis is less on remedying shortcomings in individuals or provision, and more on extending strengths and identifying new areas for growth. The starting point for effective staff development is the same as for any good learning: a thorough analysis to establish the starting point and to clarify what is required. Once that is established, it is then important to provide staff development to meet the needs which have been identified.



A quality assurance framework for basic skills should:

- be integrated into the overall quality framework of the institution
- be clear and accessible to all members of staff including full- and part-time teachers, managers, support staff and specialists
- apply to all areas of provision
- be rigorous and flexible
- have a clear purpose and measure only important areas of activity
- include the requirement for both quantitative and qualitative information, performance indicators and standards
- clearly identify responsibilities for gathering and presenting data
- give clear guidelines about the documentation and data required
- be efficient in terms of time and cost
- include processes for appraisal, review and the observation of teaching and learning
- include mechanisms for recording the views of students and external agencies such as local community groups, employers, external verifiers
- identify the need for action plans, including targets, responsibilities, timescales and reporting mechanisms within the quality assurance cycle.

Improvement strategies should include the use of:

- clearly defined planning, reviewing and reporting mechanisms
- institutional data to monitor year on year student participation, retention and achievements
- feedback from students
- national data to benchmark against other organisations
- local data to devise relevant targets and performance indicators
- national and college devised standards
- value-added systems to compare base-line assessments with end of programme achievements
- training for observers, appraisers and appraisees
- information from the performance review process.

Staff development in basic skills should:

- be seen as an essential part of continuous improvement and an entitlement for all staff
- ensure that the identification of training needs is seen as positive and developmental rather than focusing on deficiencies and shortcomings
- be planned and structured so that it is an integral part of roles and responsibilities rather than a bolt-on extra
- focus on strategic and organisational needs as well as individual ones
- be delivered by skilled and qualified basic skills trainers and practitioners
- be flexible enough to cope with the differing abilities, learning styles and needs of staff
- embrace formal and informal approaches, and lead to nationally recognised accreditation, where relevant
- represent value for money and effectiveness in terms of its impact on the student learning experience.

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Element I: Structures and Procedures



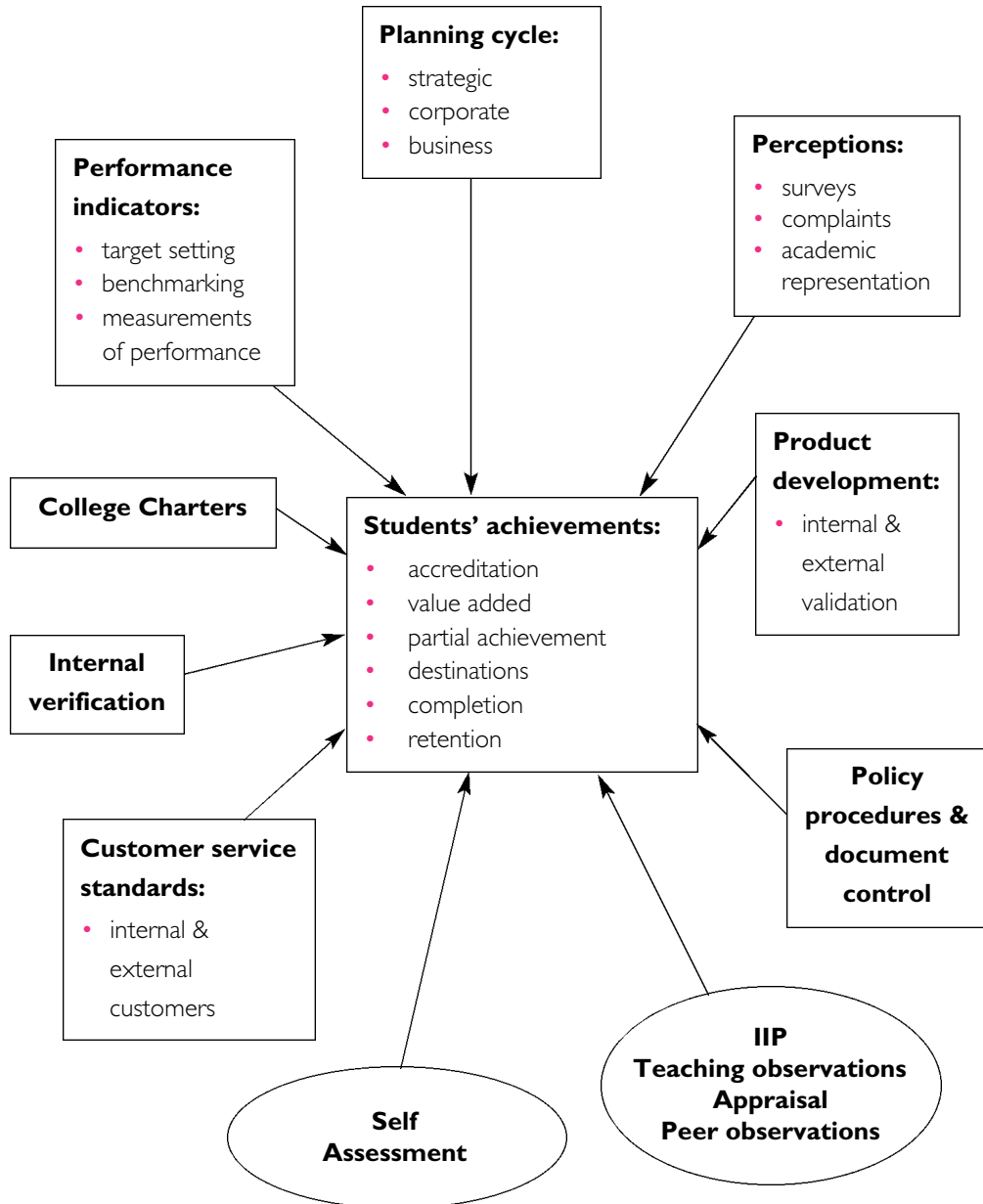
Basic Skills Quality Initiative

To ensure a consistent approach to quality assurance most providers have developed a quality framework which includes policies and procedures to guide staff as to the action they should take to assure the quality of the provision. A timetable of what needs to be done and when is often given to staff to help them understand how the separate elements of the system are part of an overall quality assurance process or cycle. Although quality assurance frameworks will have similar elements, there is not one 'ideal' model which can be implemented in every establishment. Providers need to develop their own quality assurance framework to suit their particular circumstances. The following section provides examples of quality assurance frameworks and processes devised by different providers.

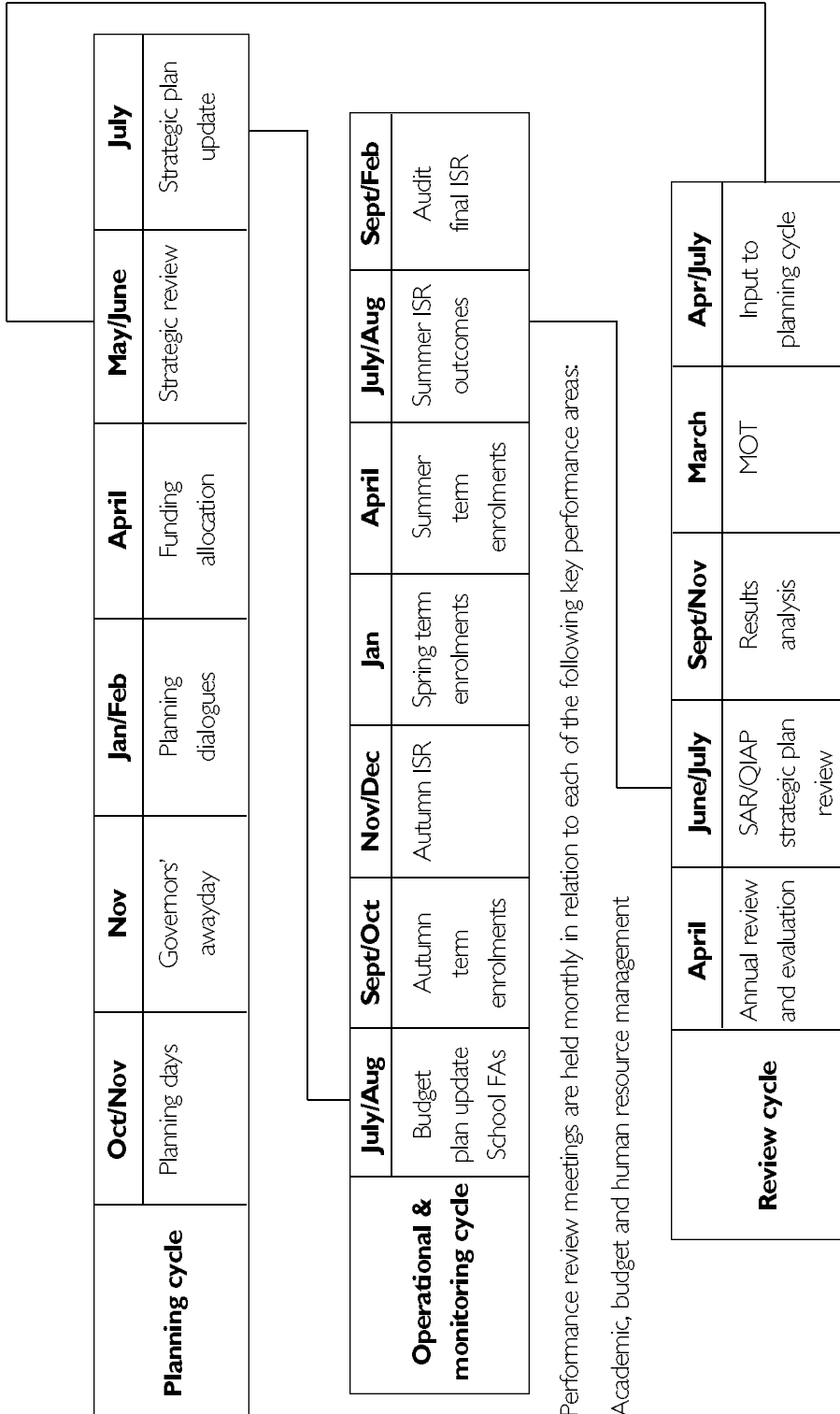


Example I

Quality Assurance Framework



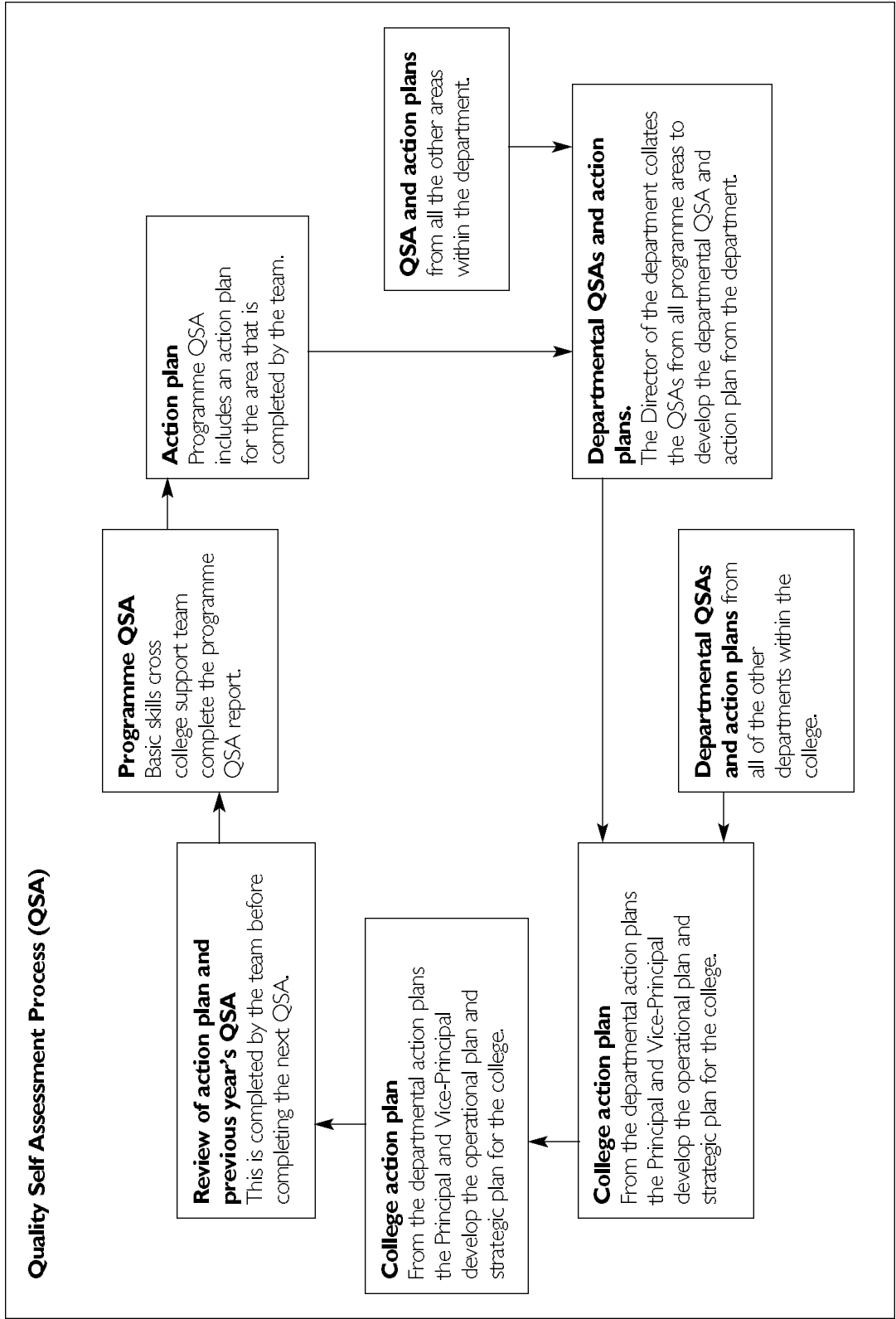
Quality Cycle



Length of cycle: 29 – 31 months



Example 3



Importance of Co-ordinated Management

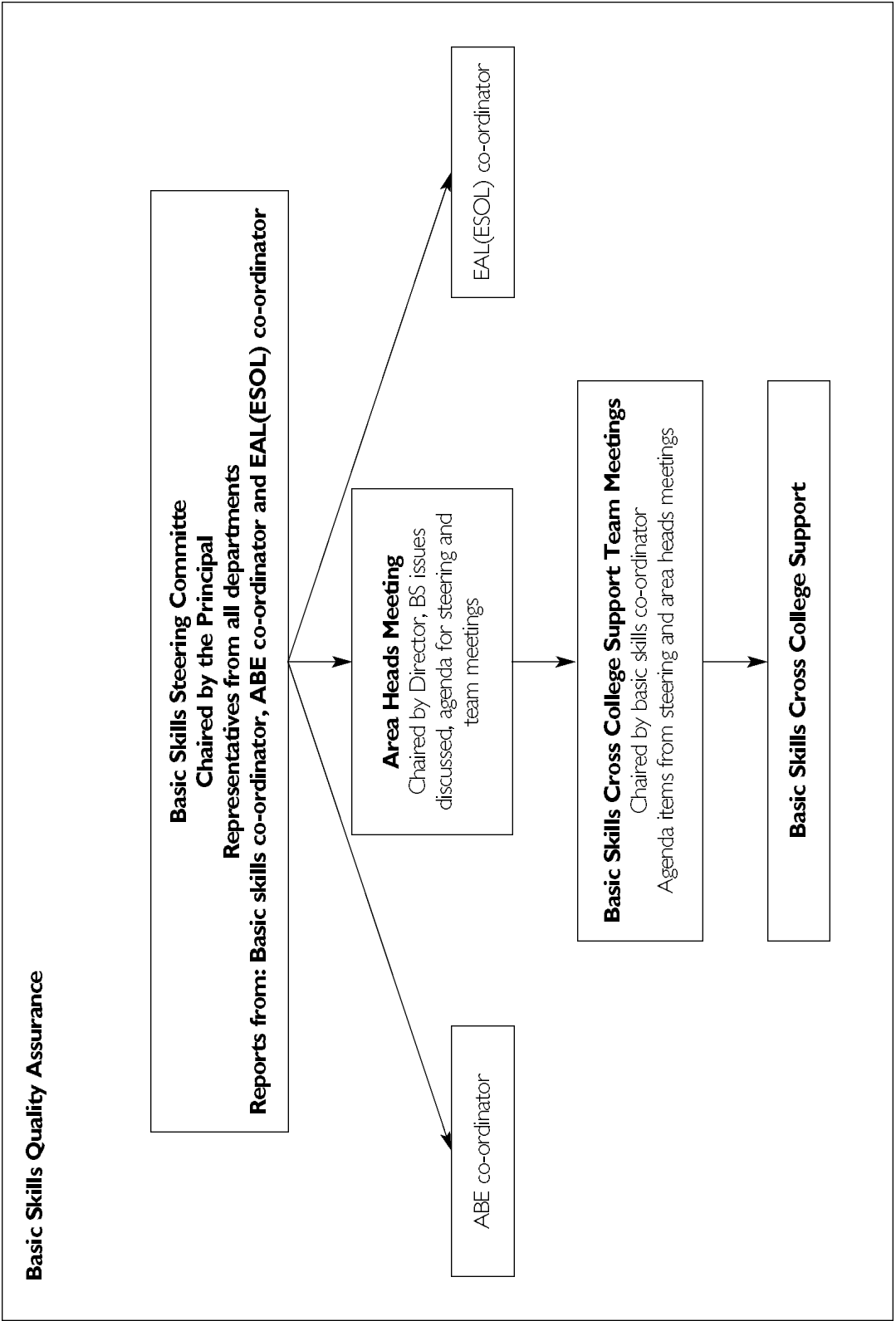


Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Within basic skills an important aspect of quality is the effectiveness of the co-ordination of the provision. The following two diagrams show how in one college a basic skills steering committee oversees the quality assurance process and the way in which the college management team maintains an overview of the quality of the provision.



Example



Although an effective quality assurance policy will cover all aspects of an establishment's work, it is sometimes necessary to develop different procedures for different aspects of the work. The following example outlines the main elements of one college's quality assurance system and describes the adaptations that have been made to ensure that the system is effective in monitoring the quality of the basic skills provision.

Example

Overview of the college's quality assurance process

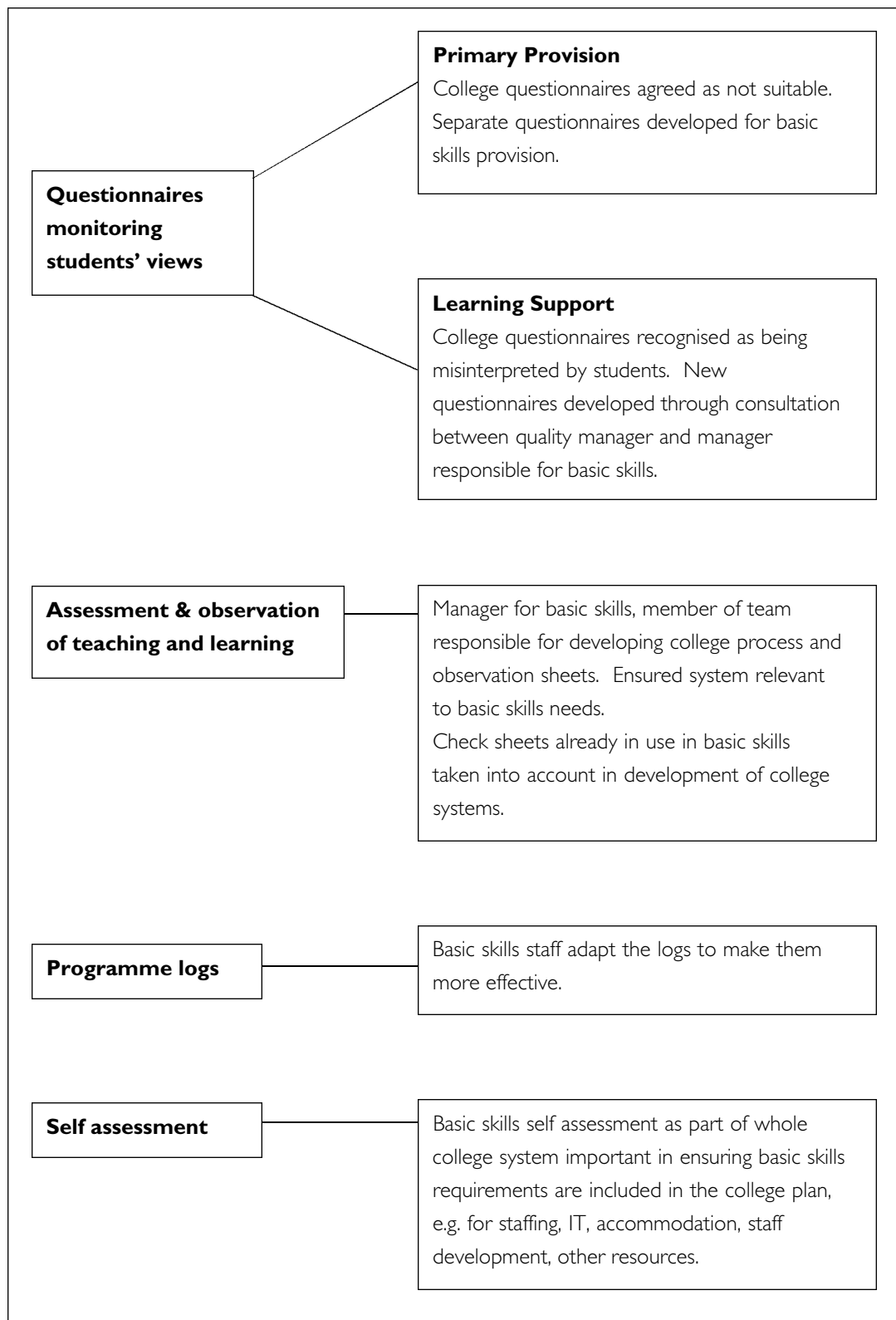
All aspects of the college's quality assurance process apply to basic skills.

This covers:

- self assessment
- service standards
- programme logs
- board of studies
- assessment of teaching and learning through observation
- collection of all data, e.g. performance indicators, student survey data.

Development and monitoring of the college's quality framework and the link to basic skills

- the college has a quality group with delegates from each of the college's curriculum areas
- this group meets regularly with the quality manager
- a basic skills delegate is a member of the quality group
- the quality manager also works separately with the basic skills section to ensure the process is meaningful to basic skills.



Role of Basic Skills Staff in the Quality Assurance Process



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

In many establishments a wide range of staff are involved in teaching basic skills. The following example shows how one college has developed quality circles to enable as many staff as possible to play a positive role in monitoring the quality of basic skills provision, much of which is based in many different locations in the community.



Example 1

The role of the quality circle is to

- discuss current curriculum issues
- discuss other or alternative forms of accreditation
- make recommendations to area co-ordinators re future developments
- share and disseminate good practice, knowledge and experience
- create and share materials to meet specific needs
- maintain a database of colleagues currently teaching in this curriculum area to inform them of developments via the minutes
- encourage participation from all members of the group
- establish support opportunities
- identify and request common training
- prevent tutor isolation
- create standard course information sheets for the department
- provide a forum for internal verification.

Organisation

- quality circles usually meet twice a term. They are convened by the link tutor and held in a community location on a rotational basis
- each circle has a chair person/link tutor and minutes are taken and circulated to the team and area co-ordinators. Area co-ordinators disseminate information to relevant programme managers
- link tutors induct new tutors into the relevant awards.

Departmental quality circles

All staff are contractually obliged to attend at least two a year.

Cross college quality circles

One representative from each area attends. In the case of subjects with a large offer, e.g. GCSE maths and English, the link tutor of the departmental quality circle attends the cross college working groups and reports to both.

Example 2



Managers in another college have produced the following information to describe how different staff are expected to contribute to the quality assurance process.

Voluntary tutors

- the initial information pack given to prospective volunteers at their first meeting includes a statement of Basic Skills Agency standards. The implications for these are discussed in some detail
- all volunteers are required to follow the college system of goal setting for each half term, recording achievement and feeding back information to the course organisers
- all volunteers are required to provide attendance data
- all volunteers are attached to a paid support tutor who is responsible for ensuring that volunteers understand and follow the systems
- all volunteers have to agree to a job description before attending the initial certificate training course
- all volunteers take part in an annual performance review with their support tutors
- all paid support tutors attend course team meetings at which they provide information relating to volunteers. These are recorded in the course log which links to action planning, self-assessment and monitoring of standards and performance indicators.

Involvement of volunteers in the QA system

- new volunteers are initially surprised at being taken through quality standards and a job description at the information session. A few potential tutors have objected and left. The value of introducing the standards at the first session is that no time is wasted either by volunteers dropping out of the course because they find it too rigorous or by volunteers refusing to comply with the systems. At one stage, volunteers were required to sign a contract agreeing to the standards and the job description. This has been discontinued as it was found unnecessary and was felt by some to be over-legalistic
- the job description was introduced on the advice of the personnel manager following a formal complaint from a potential volunteer who, having objected to all the college systems at the training course, was advised that he would not be placed as a volunteer
- the introduction of the formal performance review met with objections from only one volunteer. It has been in place now for 3 years and has been welcomed by volunteers as an opportunity to improve the quality of their teaching.



Example 2 (continued)

Involvement of part-time paid tutors in the quality assurance system

- all part-time paid tutors for both primary basic skills provision and learning support are required to follow the procedures necessary to fulfil the requirements for quality assurance
- these procedures are explained to each tutor on appointment and are reviewed at a September team meeting. In particular, they include the maintenance of records for measuring achievements, retention and attendance
- all attend course team meetings, which provide information for the programme log
- all are asked to contribute to the review for self-assessment
- all have a designated line manager who carries out an annual performance review
- all have their teaching observed on a minimum of 2 occasions a year (permanent staff are observed on 3 occasions but lack of time has meant that at present, part-time tutors are only observed twice)
- all are required to provide the course organisers for their area with attendance, achievement, retention and destination data
- all are required to follow the college record keeping systems that underpin the QA systems.

Permanent tutors

- all permanent tutors, whether fractional or permanent, are required to follow the systems outlined above
- all are appraised and observed by a college manager on 3 occasions in the year.

Good communication is an essential element of a quality assurance framework. One college has introduced quality bulletins which are distributed to all members of staff. The bulletins, an example of which follows, are used to communicate key information to staff on a monthly basis and more frequently if necessary. Basic skills staff feel that the bulletins keep them in touch with developments in the rest of the college and provide them with useful discussion points for team meetings.

Example

QUALITY BULLETIN No. 7	
INTERNAL INSPECTION 11 – 22 MAY 1998	
From: Vice Principal Academic Development	
The internal inspection team have identified what constitutes a 'strength' and a 'weakness'.	
Strengths should demonstrate the following:	Weaknesses would include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help to improve the students' experience • evidence to support the judgements • triangulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – staff know it – students know it – 'external' individuals know it • "sufficiency" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – say it is and it is • "validity" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – it is what it appears to be • general awareness and enthusiasm for this 'thing' • stand out above the norm in association with a defined benchmark • consistency and reliability – occurs more than just once and across a number of areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an absence of evidence that demonstrates that it helps to improve the student's experience • lack of process, systems • inconsistency • barriers to improvement/ constraints to improvement • not making the most of what you've got • intransigence • lack of understanding – no targets set • reluctance to recognise the impact of one thing on another • lack of rigour • lack of sharing and enthusiasm about objectives • an over-reliance on reactive approaches • inadequate, insufficient or no evidence.



Prompt Questions for Element I



How has your establishment ensured that its quality assurance procedures are appropriate for basic skills?



How do staff know what action they should take and when?



How do you negotiate adaptations to quality assurance arrangements if they are required within basic skills provision?



What arrangements are made to help staff understand their roles in the quality assurance process?



How do you ensure there are effective communication channels, particularly with part-time members of staff?





Effective teaching and learning are at the heart of good basic skills provision. Most providers now realise that arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning are of crucial importance in a quality assurance framework. However, careful planning and preparation are needed to ensure that the judgements made as a result of observations will be accurate and useful. In establishments where lesson observation procedures are effective, senior managers have developed standards for teaching and learning and have established criteria against which the quality of lessons can be judged. It is essential that these criteria and standards are set, wherever possible, with reference to national norms. The chief inspector's annual report provides useful information about the quality of teaching and learning in each programme area. Care is also needed to ensure that observers have appropriate subject knowledge and experience for their role. This is as necessary in basic skills provision as it is in other programme areas.

This section provides examples of the ways in which providers monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

Setting standards for teaching and learning

One college has produced the following information that has been gathered through lesson observations. The information is disseminated to staff and used to help them understand what constitutes good and poor practice.



Example 1

Comment	Suggestions from team
<p>Planning – related to schemes of work, schedules of work, competencies and lesson plans.</p> <p>Insufficient detail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schemes and schedules should be planned in teams and not just be a copy of the syllabus • schemes, schedules and lesson plans should be stored centrally with the programme's leader to allow opportunity for random checking • all schemes and schedules should include session objectives which are then transferred to lesson plans • recommended college layout to be used for schemes, schedules and lesson plans (currently on Intranet) • steering group members prepared to deliver team sessions on schedules of work and lesson plans.
<p>Pace and speed of delivery not appropriate for target group of students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this comes back to insufficient planning and inappropriate resources • all students should be able to succeed with opportunities provided at different levels • observers need to check very carefully the timing of the lesson plan against what actually happens in class • pace does not mean speed! The intention is not to 'get through the lesson' • measure and monitor who is learning.
<p>Inclusion of all students in the room. Some students not taking part and no evidence of them learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesson plan should be structured to include all students – every one must be given opportunity to succeed at something • differentiation needs to be addressed in teams – otherwise why bother? • measure and monitor who is learning and who is not • relate new learning to the students' experience • make sure the quiet students are also learning.
<p>Classroom management – discipline and control issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be a result of poor planning – using the incorrect method of teaching and inappropriate learning materials • investigate and use the variety of teaching methods available • work in teams to investigate more imaginative teaching methods and materials • bored students are more difficult to control than involved students.
<p>Starting and finishing lessons recap and consolidation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic teaching principles. Moving from the 'known' to the 'unknown' • always begin with a recap of previous knowledge (q/a, quiz, OHT, handout) • introduce students' objectives for the session at the start • always finish with a summary (board, OHT, handout questions) – check that students have achieved their objectives • this must be included on the lesson plan.

<p>Provision for students who arrive late – opportunity for catch up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instil class rules and regulations on what is not acceptable – STICK TO THEM! • any catch up sessions should be provided out of class hours – handouts and exercises on Intranet or provided later as packs.
<p>Room layout to suit type of lesson</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • although not always the fault of the teacher, some alteration of layout is often possible • time should be built into lesson plan for reorganising at beginning and end of lesson • make sure everyone can see OHT, TV.
<p>Appropriate use of board, handouts, OHTs – when to take notes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability of guide on use of resources to be available on Intranet • board and OHTs used to introduce, emphasise and summarise • use to give instructions to students rather than merely tell them • note taking in lessons is usually not appropriate and a waste of time.
<p>Demonstrate rather than tell</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate and give examples • ask students to think of examples and adopt the model • demonstration leaves the student with a visual image which lasts longer than a verbal instruction.
<p>Ensuring all students are on task all session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor learning taking place and achievement regularly • plan for differentiation and expect students to learn at a different pace.
<p>Appropriate position of lecturer in classroom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • position so that lecturer can view all students • if not possible then room may need to be rearranged • walk round constantly to help students on task • know when to back off to leave students time to learn.
<p>Setting tasks in classroom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students need to be given a timescale when task is set • leaving time open means that students may not use time wisely and lesson plan will not run according to schedule.
<p>Variety of activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesson plan should clearly indicate 'teacher activity' and 'student activity' • changing activity encourages differentiation and discourages boredom • encourage teams to devise imaginative methods and to share a range of activities which have worked for their curriculum area.



Example 1 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

<p>Quality of handouts, OHTs need to be improved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lecturers should provide self-produced worksheets photocopies from textbooks can be a fall back position but must not be relied on OHTs should be produced using Powerpoint all handout materials should be word processed copies of handouts on disc should be centrally stored with the team so that amendments can be made easily when a lecturer is no longer with the team or college.
<p>Too much teacher led with too much initial exposition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 to 10 minutes maximum students should be set on task early in the lesson.
<p>More variety needed in visual aids and other supporting materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make use of LRC manuals on Powerpoint and DTP avoid gimmicks and respond to student response ensure that materials are always up to date and relevant visual aids help to reinforce learning and improve internalisation.
<p>Use individual learning plans and targets to monitor student progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essential if differentiation is to be effective should be undertaken with each student at different stages of course: following learning styles assessment; after first assessed piece of work; following student review process; at regular intervals students must be encouraged to see action planning and target setting as vital to their success.
<p>Questioning techniques</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more use to be made of open and directed questions – use students' names rather than directing to whole class link question and answer techniques to differentiated learning strategies have questions (and answers) ready prepared on paper ensure that everyone in class has a chance to answer at least one question (differentiation and inclusion again).
<p>Encourage student participation in general discussion work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use pairs, groups (have identified criteria to constitute groups rather than student selection) sometimes has to be teacher led good discussion work needs very careful preparation beforehand by teacher – it cannot be left to chance summarise findings for everyone.
<p>Assessment methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use as wide a range of assessment opportunities as possible to include all learning styles assessment should be continuous throughout the lesson using formal and informal methods don't be restricted by final assessment method only include assessment methods and opportunities on lesson plan.

Example 2



Another college uses the following good practice guide to help teachers understand what constitutes good practice. It also provides useful prompts for those who are observing lessons. Three sections of the guide are shown.

This note constitutes an initial guide and checklist for all teachers providing sessions. It can be supplemented by tutors' own practice and will need to be revised in the light of experience.

1. Course organisation and planning

- 1.1 Have all tutors involved in the course been briefed about the nature of the student group, their needs, and expectations?
- 1.2 Have tutors and, where appropriate, students been briefed about the needs of, and resources available for students with basic skills needs or students with learning difficulties or disabilities?
- 1.3 Have students been consulted regarding the design of their course, their expectations and needs?
- 1.4 Have students been adequately briefed regarding the nature and location of the college, and its facilities?
- 1.5 Are students aware of any accreditation arrangements pertaining to their course, and of any requirements connected to accreditation?
- 1.6 Are students aware of outside sources of funding?

2. The curriculum statement

- 2.1 Is there a brief, clear statement of the curriculum (i.e. module or course), of which the session is a part? The statement should embrace aims, methods, expected learning outcomes, resources, assessment and the tutors' names.
- 2.2 Are the students aware of and in possession of the curriculum statement? How is it shared with them?
- 2.3 Does the curriculum statement need to be produced in another format, to meet equal opportunities criteria or the needs of students with any learning difficulties or disabilities?
- 2.4 Does the programme explicitly address and embed basic skills or key skills within teaching and learning, as appropriate?
- 2.5 Do the aims and learning outcomes of the course link in with the other activities of the group outside the college?



Example 2 (continued)

- 2.6 Is it clear how this element of the curriculum fits in with the overall curriculum being followed by the students concerned (i.e. diploma programme, part-time course, Higher Education programme, etc.)?
- 2.7 Are copies of the curriculum statement lodged with Registrations and Records, the library and learning resource centre, the college document bank and other (relevant) tutors?
- 2.8 Does the tutor have spare copies of the curriculum statement with her/him or are they easily and quickly available?

3. The plan of the sessions

- 3.1 Is it clear, to both tutor and students, how the session generally fits in with the curriculum being followed by the students? Has there been any briefing on this?
- 3.2 Does the plan indicate how sessions are to be prepared and presented for students with basic skills needs or learning difficulties and disabilities?
- 3.3 Is it clear to both tutors and students, how the session fits into the sequence of sessions, and relates both to previous and subsequent sessions, where appropriate?
- 3.4 Is there a clear plan for the session(s) you will be teaching, including where necessary or relevant:
 - subject matter, focus or topic to be covered
 - aims, expected learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods, resources and assessment
 - resources, materials, handouts, exercises and tasks, reading, etc.
 - structure and organisation of the session
 - time available for different elements of the session (where relevant), including any breaks?
 - provision (re any of the above items) for students with specific needs
- 3.5 Does the plan of the session start from where the students are, including drawing on their own experience, previous learning, etc?
- 3.6 How is the plan of the session shared with the students?
- 3.7 Is there space in the plan for some flexibility and responsiveness, which will still allow the aims of the session to be met?
- 3.8 How is it intended to review the session plan?

One college has produced the following information to explain their approach to classroom observation. Examples of the documentation used to support the process are also included.

Example 1

Classroom observation

Rationale

A systematic and rolling programme of observation and evaluation of teaching and learning will develop a more robust and self-critical culture within a learning environment.

This classroom observation process is intended to be comprehensive and rigorous, withstanding close scrutiny. It is applicable to all lecturing and facilitating roles. For the purposes of this pack, documentation has been selected for lecturing roles only.

The feedback from classroom observations will inform assessment of performance within the educational establishment and will contribute towards future self-assessment and quality reports.

Policy

- classroom observation focuses on aspects of teaching and learning and identifies good practice which can be disseminated throughout curriculum areas
- classroom observation is used to support staff in the identification of individual and team training and development needs. Identified needs are monitored and incorporated into the training needs analysis during the staff review.

Observers are agreed by the member of staff to be observed.

- sessions to be observed are selected by the observer and focus on the main curriculum specialism of the lecturer
- all observations are graded
- participation is obligatory.



Example 1 (continued)

Process

- at least one week before observation the observer will notify the observee of the week in which the observation will take place. This will be confirmed by a 'confirmation of observation' form generated and sent by the observer with a copy to the relevant middle manager
- at the beginning of the session the member of staff to be observed should give the observer all necessary documentation
- registers should be available to establish attendance patterns together with records of students' work to gauge progress (where appropriate)
- observations should be at least an hour in duration
- observers must be non-participative and non-directive during the observation
- feedback lasting approximately 15 minutes should take place immediately after the lesson, if this is not possible then with 48 hours
- observations will be graded using the agreed criteria
- relevant documentation should be completed by the observer and signed by the observee
- copies of the completed documentation will be distributed as follows:
 - one copy to the member of staff responsible for the session
 - one copy to the relevant middle manager
 - one copy to the staff development manager
 - one copy to remain with the observer
- in the case of an overall grade of 4 or 5 a member of staff may wish to negotiate a further observation. If this cannot be resolved the member of staff may wish to appeal against the grade. Appeals must be made to the senior manager curriculum and quality within 10 working days, who will respond within 10 days of receipt
- training needs identified by the observer will be collated by the staff development manager and implemented through the staff development process. Observees will be requested to participate in specified training and development events and activities
- all staff, including part-time staff will be observed a minimum of once every two years
- this procedure covers all lecturers and facilitators.

Example I (continued)

Classroom observation – feedback sheet



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

This sheet is to be used by the observer on conclusion of the observation to promote discussion and record issues related to learning and teaching.

Name of observer:.....Observee/s:.....

Date:.....Programme:.....

Measure	Comment
Awareness and understanding of learning styles within the group. Use of Learning Styles Inventory – PPP tasks undertaken, reflected in differentiated lesson plans. Recognition of individual needs and different strategies to meet these needs.	
Awareness, understanding and use of learning support systems, monitoring progress.	
Learning goals agreed and reviewed with students, individual action plans in place.	
Methods used to sustain students' interest and lead to effective learning. Appropriate use of resources/equipment including specialist equipment where appropriate.	
Involvement of students in assessing, reviewing and recording their own progress at regular intervals during the course.	
Prompt and specific feedback to students using appropriate methods to encourage progress. Positive feedback to identify achievement and what is needed to extend, improve, develop learning.	



Example 1 (continued)

Name of observer:.....Observee/s:.....	
Date:.....Programme:.....	
Measure	Comment
Awareness and understanding of learning styles within the group. Use of Learning Styles Inventory – PPP tasks undertaken, reflected in differentiated lesson plans. Recognition of individual needs and different strategies to meet these needs.	Each student had a copy of their learning plan. Tutor produced a lesson plan for each student attending the workshop related to learning plan. Students' progress record identified a variety of strategies used each week to facilitate learning.
Awareness, understanding and use of learning support systems, monitoring progress.	Progress records identified future action to assist planning of future lessons. Volunteers and support assistant working to plans for students.
Learning goals agreed and reviewed with students, individual action plans in place.	Evidence of updating of learning plans. Copies of reviews on file. Student input on learning plans and review identified.
Methods used to sustain students' interest and lead to effective learning. Appropriate use of resources/equipment including specialist equipment where appropriate.	Use of textbooks, worksheet, CD-ROM, enlarged text on hard copies and on screen. Students encouraged to word process some assignment work. Discussion in small groups to develop verbal skills.
Involvement of students in assessing, reviewing and recording their own progress at regular intervals during the course.	Assessment takes place against personal goals and accreditation criteria.

Action/good practice

The learning taking place was clearly focused on the students' individual action plans. There was a wide range of activity within the session with the effective use of ILT, paper-based resources and tutor input. Support staff and volunteers had a clear understanding of each student's aims and objectives and assisted in the planning of lessons for students they were supporting.

There was a relaxed, working atmosphere within the workshop. The tutor involved each student in the ongoing assessment process and achievement was recorded where appropriate.

Example 2



The following example illustrates how another college has linked the observation of basic skills lessons to the general college system for the observation of teaching and learning in adult basic education (ABE).

How the observation of teaching and learning in ABE fits into the whole college process	
Whole college process	ABE process
Development of form for observations. Developed by representatives from all areas of the college including the basic skills manager.	ABE had developed a form in advance of the whole college scheme. The college form must now be used but it has been found that knowledge of the original ABE form has led to effective use of the college form.
<p>Who should be observed by whom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. All part-time teaching staff observed and assessed 3 times a year by their line manager unless other arrangements need to be made. ii. Part-time teaching staff and agency staff also to be observed and assessed, the number of observations being on a sliding scale from 1 –3 sessions related to hours of teaching and identified need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. All permanent ABE staff observed by manager responsible for basic skills (total of 11 staff including full-time and fractional staff on permanent contracts) ii. All part-time and agency staff observed once a year by the local area organisers (main scale lecturers) iii. All volunteers observed at least once – either by the area organiser or by their support tutor – reviewed but not always observed annually.
<p>Assessment and feedback</p> <p>Feedback takes place ideally immediately. If not immediately it should be within 2 days of the observation. The observee is asked to provide self-assessment. An assessment grade is agreed and recorded and is linked to the college appraisal system. The final decision on grade lies with the observer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. For permanent staff the college system is followed for grading. This matches the FEFC grading schedule. ii. For part-time and agency staff, as observation is not carried out by a member of the management team, grading is not included in the feedback. However, the area organisers provide a profile of estimated grades to the manager responsible for basic skills.



Example 2 (continued)

	<p>Any areas of concern about standards are fed back to this manager who may carry out another observation.</p> <p>iii. Volunteers Observation will only be for part of a session to ensure the volunteer treats the learner appropriately. The main focus of the session will be on reviewing the volunteer's plans, records and materials in detail.</p> <p>The focus is aimed at offering constructive suggestions for improving the student's learning experience.</p>
<p>Use made of the observations</p> <p>i. Feeds into the programme area and college self-assessment.</p> <p>ii. Informs the college staff development programme.</p> <p>iii. Generates action points for individuals to improve the learning experience of their students.</p> <p>iv. Generates action points regarding college resources.</p>	<p>i. Feeds into programme area IO's self-assessment.</p> <p>ii. Informs the planning of the ABE staff development programme (minimum 1 course a term).</p> <p>iii. Generates individual action points.</p> <p>iv. Generates action points regarding resources available to ABE and requests for college resources.</p> <p>v. Improves communication between tutors at all levels.</p> <p>vi. Maintains high standards in the learning experience offered to students.</p>

<p>Training of observers</p> <p>All college observers were trained by an external trainer.</p>	<p>The basic skills manager and area organisers all attended this training.</p> <p>The support tutors who observe the volunteers all attended a training session. All feedback their experiences and comments at termly support group tutor meetings.</p>
<p>Training of observees</p> <p>Observees were not formally trained but managers were given the role of cascading the information and processes through team meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. All tutors were trained in the process. ii. Training process included identifying what observers would be looking for in a good session. iii. All volunteers are informed of the process during the initial training programme.



Example 3

The following documentation gives guidance to staff on the observation of teaching and learning.

The observation of teaching and learning

Introduction

Why observe?

- two reasons – appraisal and self assessment (refer to FEFC 97/12)
- one purpose – improving quality.

The observers will be:

- experienced teachers
- trained
- moderated
- drawn from all areas of the college
- supported and advised by quality assurance
- qualified or working towards an appropriate qualification.

Stages in the observation process

Before the observation

- pre-observation meeting
- lesson plan and copy of any handout, etc.
- agree time for verbal feedback.

At the start

- arrive before the students
- have your presence explained
- disappear into the background; don't take part.

Recording the observation

- take notes as fully as possible and keep them
- observation report form and observers' checklist
- try to 'look through the eyes of the learners'
- stay until you can grade, usually about 45 minutes.

Grading

- be definite; no borderline grades
- may require reflection; not essential in verbal feedback.

Giving feedback

- brief verbal feedback, same day. What would you say?
- written report within three working days (specified in guidelines)
- copy of report to HoD and DoQ
- second observation?

Observers' checklist

1 Lecturer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately

- has clear aims and objectives
- produces a lesson plan
- shows evidence of effective preparation
- uses materials at the appropriate level
- manages the group activities effectively.

2 Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately

- involves learners actively for at least part of the session
- uses variety of techniques
- techniques used enable objectives to be achieved.

3 Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance

- checks understanding and learning
- if formal assessment, explains purpose of assessment and implications of results
- provides supportive feedback.

4 Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs

- responds to questions effectively
- revisits difficult material effectively
- shows awareness of relevant equal opportunities issues
- demonstrates good health and safety practice at all times.

5 Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners

- has comfortable, two-way communication with learners
- displays encouraging, supportive interpersonal skills
- motivates, stimulates, involves all.

6 Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning

- uses appropriate resources effectively
- written/visual resources are clear and unambiguous
- resources aid the understanding/learning process
- adapts environment, where appropriate, to help facilitate students' learning.



Example 4

Completed lesson observation reports for lessons which have been graded 1, 2, 3 and 4

Example of a teaching and learning observation report for a grade 1 lesson	
School	Date & time of observation
Lecturer A	Class/course
Observer	Venue
Criteria	Comments
1. Lecturer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear, detailed lesson plan • time was well managed throughout lesson, as was pace and rigour. Some students did begin to drift a little towards the end • group-work also well planned and well managed • generally, teacher managed rather than dictated the learning process
2. Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good question & answer techniques which involved all students • students were engaged and challenged • good use of OHP • all students involved during group work • individual student contributed well to the group presentations
3. Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher displayed good listening skills during question/answer sessions and responded carefully to each student's comments • each group received feedback on their contribution to the whole task • allowed time at each stage for any additional questions.
4. Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher showed an awareness of individual student's ability to question and answer orally and handled the process sympathetically • some students stayed at the end of the lesson and were given further explanation/clarification of the work.
5. Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher maintained an excellent learning environment throughout the lesson; obviously well-respected by students • excellent style of individual student questioning; sympathetic, yet challenging • good use of individual praise/affirmation.
6. Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher used the room well, including the limited space for group work.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5 1 = Many strengths and very few weaknesses 2 = Strengths outweigh weaknesses 3 = A balance of strengths and weaknesses 4 = Weaknesses outweigh strengths 5 = Many weaknesses and very few strengths
Signed by observer	
Lecturer's comments on this report	
Signed	Date

Example 4 (continued)

Example of a teaching and learning observation report for a grade 2 lesson



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

School	Date & time of observation
Lecturer B	Class/course
Observer	Venue
Criteria	Comments
1. Lecturer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good clear lesson plan which showed thought had gone into topic preparation and development • plan lacked consideration of student activity • perhaps some planning needed to allow for possibility of <i>disappearing board markers!</i>
2. Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very good use of question & answer techniques; however, more questions needed to be directed at individuals in order to check that learning was taking place • good practical demonstration which was effective at maintaining interest.
3. Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individuals given plenty of time to work on assignments with teacher circulating in order to assist and advise • more individual feedback during question and answer would help individuals to confirm their own understanding (or perhaps lack of it).
4. Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher made good use of individual student work circumstances throughout the lesson • good references made to the future demands/needs of the industry • health and safety issues addressed when appropriate • some students were not involved at all throughout the lesson, neither during the whole class session nor in the individual assignment part.
5. Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relaxed yet productive atmosphere throughout the lesson with students showing an obvious respect for the knowledge and ability of the teacher • good two-way conversation with an individual student; teacher displaying knowledge of specific student circumstances and advising appropriately • consideration could have been given to providing opportunities for students to share experiences with one another.
6. Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good use of apparatus for demonstration.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5 1 = Many strengths and very few weaknesses 2 = Strengths outweigh weaknesses 3 = A balance of strengths and weaknesses 4 = Weaknesses outweigh strengths 5 = Many weaknesses and very few strengths
Signed by observer	
Lecturer's comments on this report	
Signed	Date



Example 4 (continued)

Example of a teaching and learning observation report for a grade 3 lesson

School	Date & time of observation
Lecturer C	Class/course
Observer	Venue
Criteria	Comments
1. Lecturer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear lesson plan which showed thought had gone into both evaluation and resources required. However, too much time was allowed at each stage and plan lacked consideration of student activity lesson managed with the authority of the teacher's knowledge and expertise. Generally however, too teacher dominated with students often passive.
2. Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a good practical demonstration which allowed students to contribute questions and answers were mainly to the whole group, allowing some to dominate whilst others stood or sat back students rarely challenged. Generally too little activity to make students think
3. Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> good discussion/questioning at the end of the lesson to check learning had taken place. More needed however during the lesson in order to maintain pace and rigour.
4. Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> little use of individual student names and opportunities were missed which could have developed individual student knowledge or prior experience.
5. Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally a good, relaxed but respectful rapport between teacher and students, and also between the students themselves occasionally however, the teacher allowed his impatience with students' level of ability to show, with some comments to students sounding somewhat patronising.
6. Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher used difficult and noisy workshop environment well, but such a small group in such a large classroom could have been brought more together in order to promote greater discussion and sharing of ideas.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5 1 = Many strengths and very few weaknesses 2 = Strengths outweigh weaknesses 3 = A balance of strengths and weaknesses 4 = Weaknesses outweigh strengths 5 = Many weaknesses and very few strengths
Signed by observer	
Lecturer's comments on this report	
Signed	Date

Example 4 (continued)

Example of a teaching and learning observation report for a grade 4 lesson



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

School	Date & time of observation
Lecturer D	Class/course
Observer	Venue

Criteria	Comments
1. Lecturer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lesson plan needed some indication of lesson aim, time scale and most importantly, student activity teacher generally 'doing all the work'. Expectation of student mainly limited to listening rather than thinking.
2. Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> too much reading from handout. Ask/challenge students rather than simply tell them particularly with such a small group some opportunities missed for group work and/or brainstorming which could have drawn from students' own prior knowledge or experience, e.g. where to look for job opportunities, what motivates people at work?
3. Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learners' performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> more directed questions needed in order to check that individual learning is taking place when commenting on potentially over-due assignments check if there are any difficulties/problems.
4. Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teacher showed good awareness of individuals when they volunteered contributions on occasions the rest of the members of the class were not engaged when one individual was answering/commenting at length.
5. Has productive rapport with learners, and promotes successful interaction between all learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> good atmosphere generally in class and good rapport between teacher and individual students individuals not given opportunities to share experiences with one another, e.g. job interviews.
6. Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> despite large room and small group, students grouped nicely together and near the front the OHP used at the start of the lesson was difficult to read and dismissed quickly.
OVERALL ASSESSMENT	1 2 3 4 5 1 = Many strengths and very few weaknesses 2 = Strengths outweigh weaknesses 3 = A balance of strengths and weaknesses 4 = Weaknesses outweigh strengths 5 = Many weaknesses and very few strengths
Signed by observer	
Lecturer's comments on this report	
Signed	Date



Example 5

The following is an example of how an observation sheet for Adult Basic Education primary provision might be completed.

Preparation	Comments
1. Has the group tutor arrived in advance of the class and prepared the room for the class?	Yes – all folders complete and ready for students to pick up as they come in.
2. Does each student have a learning plan with clear, measurable goals for the half-term?	Learning plan in place. Goals not easily measurable.
3. Do the student's learning goals relate to the student's current aims in coming to college?	Yes – clearly linked.
Content of the work	
4. Does each piece of work offered to the student have a clear purpose linked to the student's learning goal?	Not always – some general "English" goals not tightly enough linked.
5. Does the student understand this purpose?	Not always – some work straight through what they are doing.
6. Is each piece of work relevant to the student in terms of content and link to the student/s needs?	Work is all adult and relevant – all link to needs but as above not always tightly enough linked to goals.
7. Is each piece of work clearly presented or photocopied?	Yes
8. Does the tutor give clear explanations of teaching points?	Yes
External accreditation	
9. Is each student working for an appropriate externally accredited certificate?	Yes – some are working very slowly for Wordpower.
10. If not, are the reasons for not aiming for a certificate consistent with the student's personal aims?	Yes – e.g. student needing specific writing tasks for work.
11. Is each student clear about how the certificates will be assessed?	Yes
Progress	
12. Are students achieving their personal targets?	Spelling goals not always being achieved.
13. If not, why not?	Regular system not always being used.
Record keeping	
14. Are the blue weekly record sheets informative about the student's progress?	Insufficient comment
15. Are the blue sheets completed by the student and tutor together?	Students do write on the sheets but tend to write "done" with no comment.

Example 5 (continued)



16. Are the end of year reviews completed appropriately	Yes
17. Is all relevant college documentation completed?	Yes
18. Are the reasons for non-attendance kept in the register?	Yes
Relationship within the group	
19. Does the tutor relate comfortably to all students?	Yes – good atmosphere in the room. Students anxious to praise tutor’s helpfulness.
20. Does the tutor listen to the student and attempt to analyse reasons for difficulties?	Yes – very good listening leading to explanations – need to use analysis to link to materials.
21. Do students in the group relate comfortably to each other?	All work separately but buzzes of conversation
22. Does the tutor end the session appropriately with time to take leave of each student and discuss any outstanding point with the student?	Bit rushed at the end. Queue of students. Worth encouraging students to begin to finish a bit earlier.
Volunteers	
23. Does the tutor manage the volunteer’s time well?	Volunteer is new and not yet clear about role.
24. Is the volunteer clear what he/she has to do?	Tutor did explain but needs time.
25. Is there any discussion with the volunteer before or after the session?	Discussion before the session. Afterwards no time because locking up.
Advice and guidance	
26. Are students aware of facilities available to them in college?	Yes - but class is outreach so not easy to access facilities.
Equal opportunities	
27. Does the tutor make sure that equal opportunities are respected through the resources used, the treatment of each individual and classroom management?	All individuals treated well. Materials adult and appropriate. Atmosphere of mutual respect throughout.

Observer’s signature

Tutor’s signature.....

Date.....

Cc: Observer, Tutor, Manager



Example 6

An action plan completed following observation of teaching and learning

Action plan completed by teacher following an observation

Following observation of my group by the ABE Organiser, I plan to:

1. Ensure that each piece of work is tightly linked to the student's learning goals.
2. Make learning goals more measurable.
3. Reduce number and simplify learning goals on learning plans.
4. Encourage more students to do regular spelling practice, using the yellow sheets and encourage volunteers to use them too.
5. Remind/refresh volunteers of what needs to be put on the record sheets. Need to comment on achievement and on further work needed.

Following observation of this group, the ABE Organiser plans to:

1. Talk to the basic skills manager about "new" computer for the resource room used by the group.

Signed

Tutor.....Organiser.....

Date.....

Characteristics of Good Practice



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Although generic principles of good practice are relevant to basic skills provision, there are additional characteristics of good practice which are specific to the provision. The following chart shows how the criteria used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in one college have been 'amplified' for the purposes of monitoring the quality of basic skills provision.



Example

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Teaching observation – criteria for basic skills

College criteria	Amplification – what this section means in basic skills	Evidence – what we will be looking for
<p>Lecturer structures, plans and manages the learning experience appropriately.</p> <p>This relates to what you do in advance of, during and after the session to ensure your time with the learner is effective. It will include both the process of identifying needs that you went through with the learner at the start of their programme, as well as what you will be planning for this specific session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initial assessment and identification - of skills, of needs, of learning styles, of fears and hopes - planning a programme to meet those needs - preparing an adult learning environment - time management - records and register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - checklists, goal sheets, notes of discussions, FEFC forms, assessment exercises - learning programme/support plan, scheme of work, syllabus, equipment, activities or materials identified in advance, lesson/session plans or notes, individual plans or notes - materials/equipment ready, appropriate seating/positioning, control of noise/light as appropriate, liaison with other staff as appropriate - balance between sticking to the plan and responding to the learning process, i.e. coping with or even using the unpredicted. - completed fully and accurately
<p>Uses variety of teaching/learning approaches that involve learners appropriately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - variety of teaching styles – explaining, demonstrating or modelling, discussing, questioning, eliciting, ILT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a range of approaches being used within each observed session
<p>Provides appropriate assessment and feedback on learner's performance</p> <p>For all of the sessions observed, this will relate to formative assessment. Sometimes it will also cover summative assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - checking progress - checking satisfaction - setting assessment tasks - marking and feedback - verification/moderation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - progress reviews - discussion of learning with each learner - seeking feedback from student - student evaluation - assessment exercises in students' folders - marking and written feedback - records of internal verification

College criteria	Amplification – what this section means in basic skills	Evidence – what we will be looking for
<p>Responds appropriately to individual learners' needs.</p> <p>Not a special category for us as most of what we do is individual but will relate to needs arising from a disability or a learning difficulty.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - referral to and liaison with learning support - adapting teaching practice to suit needs - working with support workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - records discussion with learning support workers about student needs - handouts, positioning, voice, language used, boardwork etc. - joint planning, liaison, keeping support worker informed, role explained to rest of group
<p>Has productive rapport with learners and promotes successful interaction between all learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student participation - student autonomy - attendance patterns - peer support amongst students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - students joining in, answering questions, asking questions, concentrating, not waiting to be told - students working unaided, choosing materials freely, keeping their own records - regular attendance where appropriate staying long enough for it to have an 'effect' - mutual help, attitudes to newcomers
<p>Uses resources and environment to contribute to learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - range of resources used - high quality presentation of materials - smooth handling of equipment - materials at right level and in relevant context for students needs - taking responsibility for the learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not only paper-based – includes IT, video, audio, graphic, adult, real - quality of layout, photocopying, collating, etc. - equipment ready, that works, that you know how to use! - level and contextualisation of ideas, language, amount of text, images - trying to keep the space tidy, light enough, quiet enough etc.



Using Information from Lesson Observations to Improve Quality

In order to ensure that procedures for observing teaching and learning result in improvements in the quality of lessons, providers need to make sure that the information gathered from lesson observations is used effectively by different staff within the establishment.

The following example outlines the different ways one college uses the information gathered from lesson observations.

Information from lesson observations is used:

1. To improve teaching and learning through feedback to individual tutors

- According to the college protocol for the observation process, feedback should take place within 2 days and should be for a minimum of 15-20 minutes.
- ABE feedback is usually within this time span (exceptions can be off campus evening provision when an hourly paid tutor has other commitments preventing this). Up to an hour is usually allowed for ABE feedback to allow for more detailed discussion.

Feedback must include **evidence** for comments made. For example, if it is stated that students' work does not link sufficiently tightly to their learning goals or the students' assessed needs, examples must be shown to illustrate this.

e.g. In one observation a student who had difficulty writing her address and completing the stock sheets she needed to complete at work was observed doing a worksheet on 'their' and 'there'. Although she was unable to distinguish correctly between these two words, this was of low priority and low relevance to her assessed needs and level.

- Each tutor will have an individual action plan agreed at the end of the feedback session and monitored through appraisal.

e.g. Action points from the above example:

- identify spellings relevant to each student's personal writing needs
- prioritise spellings needed for each student
- outline a spelling programme on each student's learning plan that covers strategies and identified needs.

2. To improve teaching and learning through group discussion with all ABE tutors.

The following are extracts from minutes of a meeting of tutors teaching ABE students on individualised programmes.

General feedback from classroom observations

- there is a need to tighten the goals on some half-termly learning plans; they must be measurable

don't write	Improve spelling
do write	e.g. learn 20 spellings in 6 weeks
- targets on spelling programmes should relate to the students' actual needs and the tasks they need to perform; ensure all words are relevant
- on accredited courses there is a need to be strict about meeting the performance criteria and not providing any help on assessed tasks.



- accreditation should be offered to as many students as possible; however care should be taken that the 'syllabus' does not become the plan
- worksheets must have a clear purpose; a worksheet may be topical but make sure it has a clear teaching aim linked to the student's learning goals
- there were a few examples of poor quality worksheets being used
- in the comments section of the record sheets tutors need to be specific. "More practice needed next week". "Revise in 6 weeks". "Completely understood", etc. The actual point reached if working through a section or chapter should also be recorded
- make sure students are stimulated and encouraged to 'stretch themselves'. Their aim should be to achieve and move on.

3. To improve teaching and learning through the identification of resource needs

Environmental aspects outside the control of the teacher are noted on the form.

These can be identified by the observer or the tutor being observed.

e.g. Tutor comments

"Since more students have joined the class from January, the class is starting to become cramped."

"Several students would like to word process their work but this room (hired in a local school) has no word processors."

Action points stated on the observation form also include action from the observer:

e.g. in relation to the above example

- request new room at timetablers' meeting
- enquire from IT resources manager if any word processors could be placed in the room – e.g. old ones being replaced – or if there is any funding available for laptops.

4. To feed into the self-assessment report

- the profile of grades from observations is fed into the self-assessment report
- strengths and weaknesses in the provision are identified through the observations and recorded in the self-assessment report

e.g. strength – all students have an individual learning plan linked to their personal learning goals

weakness – insufficient use of IT as an alternative medium for teaching and learning.

5. To feed into the self-assessment action plan

e.g. linked to the above;

- request more IT resources for basic skills provision
- provide staff development for tutors in IT.

6. To feed into the staff development action plan

e.g. the following is the ABE staff development programme set up following one round of classroom observation.

Term 1 Setting achievable goals

Term 1 Reviewing Wordpower
(Held regularly to keep consistency on standards).

Term 2 Teaching spelling

Term 3 Working with beginner level students
(Need arose during discussion following observations particularly from volunteers).

7. To feed into the business plan

Requests for resources, if not immediately available, are included in the business plan for basic skills so that they will be considered in the next annual allocation of resources.

This covers requests for staffing, accommodation, IT and paper-based resources.



Prompt Questions for Element 2



How effective are your procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning?



How appropriate are the criteria you use for judging the quality of basic skills lessons?



What information do you use to help you set standards for teaching and learning?



How might you improve the guidance you give to staff about observing lessons?



How do you ensure the information gained from lesson observations is used effectively?



How effective is the training you provide for staff on lesson observation?



Element 3: Collecting and Using Feedback from Students



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Most providers now use questionnaires to seek students' views about the quality of their courses and the facilities provided within the establishment. The information gained from these helps the provider to identify the changes needed to improve the quality of programmes and the services provided for students. The following section includes examples of questionnaires which have been developed in some colleges specifically for use with basic skills students. Some information is also provided about the ways in which the feedback has been used to improve the provision.



Example 1

In one college it was agreed with the college's quality assurance manager that ABE students should not be asked to complete the college's questionnaires, because:

- the reading level of the college questionnaire is too high for many students
- the time taken to complete the questionnaire is not justified for part-time programmes.

A separate questionnaire was therefore devised for completion by ABE students in June. If students need help with reading the questionnaire is completed with the aid of voluntary tutors.

The responses were analysed and a report included in the curriculum review.

ABE quality questionnaire 1999-2000

Please shade in the boxes which apply to you.

Group

Spelling/writing

Numeracy

1:1

Short Course

Campus

.....

.....

.....

.....

Time

Daytime

Evening

Other details

Male

Female

How long have you been in this group

Less than 1 year

1-3 years

More than 3 years

Example I (continued)

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. It was easy to find out about the classes before I came to college. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I was given an interview in reasonable time after my enquiry at a convenient campus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. The interview before I began the course was useful. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I was given clear information about the course before I joined. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I had to go on a waiting list. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I was able to join a course at a time and place which suited me. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. When I joined I was given enough information to find my way about the college. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Enrolment was quite straightforward. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I have been given help on how to learn and study. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. The room I am taught in is good enough. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I use the learning resources (library) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. There is a good relationship between tutors and students. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. I can see that I am making progress. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. The handouts and materials are good. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. I am learning what I want to learn. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. The course has done what I wanted/expected. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. I understand the way my work is marked. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. I can work for a certificate if I want to. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. I am working towards a certificate. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. I understand what I have to do to get a certificate. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. I use the refectory. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. I would recommend this course to someone else. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. I know where I can progress from this course. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. I know where to find information on other courses. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please use this space below to write any other comments you might like to make.



Example 1 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Action taken from the results

The following were identified as action points following one analysis.

1. Marketing and publicity

15% of students said they had difficulty finding out about the classes before coming to college.

- Action
- meet with Helpline to improve information available
 - meet with marketing staff to improve publicity.

- Outcome
- changes made to the way information leaflets were displayed
 - Helpline staff briefed regularly on all campuses
 - separate basic skills advertisement run in local press
 - survey following year found 8% of students had difficulties finding out about classes.

2. Progression

11% of students did not know where they could progress from the course and 1% did not know where to find out information on other courses.

- Action
- run staff development courses for tutors on progression routes
 - the leaflet on progression routes to be updated and redistributed.

- Outcome
- staff development courses run
 - leaflets updated
 - 10% still did not know where to progress – reason may be student's own uncertainty.

3. Use of refectory and learning resources

The questionnaire identified limited use of the refectory and learning resources.

- Action
- make sure all students are fully informed at induction of the facilities available
 - make sure all tutors keep students informed of the facilities available.

- Outcome
- monitoring system set up to ensure all students given induction information
 - discussion with students indicated lack of desire to use refectory and learning resources. Lack of use of learning resources to be addressed further.

Example 2



This example shows how students' views on a family literacy programme were collected and used by one provider.

At the start of each family literacy programme goals are developed for each individualised learner and decisions are made as to how these can be incorporated into goals shared by the group.

The collection of students' views has been through:

- completing a questionnaire with parents at the end of the first half term to make sure the course stays on target for meeting the parent's need
- ongoing record keeping through a diary kept by the parents throughout the course
- a personal interview with each parent at the end of the course.

The goals for this family literacy programme were agreed with the parents as follows:

- know about how children are being taught to read, write, learn numeracy
- know about different learning styles to be able to see how my child learns best and offer appropriate activities
- know how to approach the teacher/head teacher to discuss anything I feel is important
- learn activities that I can do with my children that will help them to learn
- learn how to choose books with my children and read with them
- become confident with what I am doing with my children
- think about things I might like to learn myself and find out where and how I can learn them.

An example of one page of a completed questionnaire and one record of an interview follows.



Example 2 (continued)

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Part of a questionnaire completed at the end of the first half term

Name:

Have you enjoyed taking part in the course so far?

Yes

What parts of the course have you found most interesting?

Looking at the writing (sic) book and seeing the good and bad, opened my eyes a great deal.

Was there anything not very interesting?

No

What have you found most useful?

Learning all the things you and your child can do with a book and not just read for 5 minutes. How to make reading and writing so much fun. I am now more interested.

How have you personally benefited from the course so far?

I read a lot more and give my child more time when talking, etc.

Since the start of the course have you changed anything about reading/writing/drawing/playing materials that you keep at home (please give details)?

Yes. Reading books – spending more time looking, reading letters, etc. I let M help me with cooking.

Since the start of the course has there been any change in the reading/writing/drawing/playing that your children do at home (please give details)?

Yes, now when we are reading, drawing or puzzle playing, TV is turned off and we sit and take our time.

Have you learnt anything from other parents in the group?

Yes, listening to how other parents do things.

Has the course benefited your other children's reading/writing/drawing/talking skills (please give details)?

Yes, in a way. She is much younger but I will let her join in and I play with her more now using puzzles.

Is there anything you would like included in the course that we have not already discussed?

No

Example 2 (continued)

Interview at end of course



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

K School

Family literacy scheme

Parent interview – final interview

Name: MH

1. Why did you decide to take part in the scheme?

Make sure that what she is doing at home is in line with school and finding out other things.

2. Have you enjoyed it?

Yes

3. What have you found most useful?

The adults' only session, how to read a book with them, which is the basis of everything and opens doors for them. Different ways of reading and ways of getting involved. Anything that is not relevant to will be relevant to(2 year old) in the future.

4. Do you think you have personally benefited from the programme?

In what way?

Yes, I am reading much more for myself, which I have never done before.

5. Could you give an example of something you have learnt?

See above

6. Since you started the programme have you changed anything about the reading materials you keep at home?

I have been given lots of books to read. I was never read to as a child (her father cannot read) and always struggled with reading at school. Reading with has helped.

7. Since you started the programme have you changed anything about the reading and writing your children see you do at home?

No, already doing it. has always done a lot herself.

8. Have you learnt anything from other parents in the group?

Yes, sharing opinions, seeing how other parents behave with their children is instructive; like a 'mirror image'.



Example 2 (continued)

9. Have you learnt things that have helped you help your child with reading, writing or talking?

Yes, picking out key words, realising you need to use lower case, discussing books, I listen to more and she talks to me more (we discussed in general the importance of keeping open channels for communication with your children as they get older).

10. Have you found any aspects of the programme difficult? e.g. timing and organisation, content of teaching, style of teaching.

Only the computing was difficult because was not very interested. The rest was easy to understand.

11. What do you plan to do as a result of the programme?

'How long have you got?'

Full of ideas about going back to college. She had thought of doing a hairdressing course, or something to do with children, or maybe a sign language course (she had been interested in seeing the signing for our deaf lady). She will not do anytime until is at school, but I encouraged her to go along to the college when she is ready and talk to someone.

The local education authority had originally wanted all the participants on the family literacy programme to work for Wordpower, Numberpower accreditation. Agreement had been reached that this, and a few other courses, would work to alternative goals. The students' views contributed to a wider perception of student achievements on family literacy courses and also provided evidence of the success of particular aspects of the course.

Example 2 (continued)



How the responses to the questionnaire and the interview have been used to improve provision.

i. Impact on family literacy programme in this school

Questionnaire

The questionnaires did not produce any further suggestions for what adaptations should be made to the course. However, they did indicate that the course was on the right track to keep parents interested, involved and learning. Discussion built into the early session gave each parent the opportunity to contribute ideas on a regular basis and therefore they may not have felt the need to make additional suggestions.

End of course interviews

This course was funded by the local education authority. There had been strong pressure at the start of the course that all parents should work for Wordpower and Numberpower. Discussion with the head teacher led to the conclusion, backed up by previous experience of other family literacy courses, that recruitment which suggested a deficiency model in the parent was likely to be less successful than one which focused on the children's achievements.

The interview gave a clear indication that parents were in all but two cases using the information from the course in their interaction with their children at home. One of these parents was hearing impaired and the evaluation led to pressure being put on other services to help the mother to communicate more effectively with her child. In the second instance the mother had attended regularly but did not appear to have transferred the knowledge gained to her home life. As the overall evaluation of the course led to agreement that the course should be funded again it was decided that this mother should be offered a place when her second child reached the target age.

The one aspect of the course that the interview showed had not worked well was the IT. It was decided that the way in which IT was included in the course would be reviewed.

ii. Impact on other locally organised family literacy programmes

This course was part of an extensive range of family literacy programmes funded by the local education authority.

As stated above, the local education authority had originally wanted all the course participants to work for Wordpower, Numberpower accreditation. Agreement had been reached that this, and a few other courses, would work to alternative goals.

The students' views contributed to a wider perception of student achievements on family literacy courses and also provided evidence of the success of particular aspects of the course.



Example 3

Basic Skills Quality Initiative

This example shows a revised questionnaire for the collection of students' views on the basic skills learning support service because one college's initial questionnaires had not produced sufficiently detailed information to be of practical use in improving basic skills learning support in the college. This was because:

- the limited space on the questionnaires and the number of areas to be covered meant that only a few questions could be included on the learning support service
- the information on the questionnaire was read through an optical mark reader. Although this was essential for the rapid collation of the data it meant that questions had to be phrased in terms of 'yes' or 'no'. It did not allow for the inclusion of open-ended questions inviting student comment.

Example 3 (continued)



Drafting a questionnaire specifically on the basic skills learning support service.

Aim: To collect more detailed information on the accessibility of the learning support service and on the delivery of learning support than could be collected through the college questionnaires.

Proposed basic skills learning support questionnaire

The questions proposed for this questionnaire were as follows:

Section 1 Code to identify student's course

Section 2 Awareness of the basic skills learning support service

	Yes	No
1. Do you know that the college has a basic skills learning support service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. You may tick more than one space. Have you seen information about the basic skills learning support service:		
• on a leaflet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• on a college notice board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• another place – please say where.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I had an interview for my course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If 'Yes', were you told about the basic skills learning support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. During induction (at the start of your course) my tutor:		
a. explained about basic skills learning support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. showed me a leaflet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have contacted the basic skills learning support service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please continue		
If no, thank you very much for your help so far.		
Please go to Section 4.		

Example 3 (continued)

Section 3 Response to interest in the basic skills learning support service

You may tick more than one box for each statement

Yes No

6. I discussed my interest in basic skills learning support
- when I first contacted the college Yes No
 - on my application form Yes No
 - at my interview Yes No
 - with a course tutor. Yes No
7. I contacted basic skills learning support
- myself Yes No
 - through my careers officer Yes No
 - through my parents/friend/family Yes No
 - through my course tutor Yes No
 - as a result of my initial assessment Yes No
 - by completing a gold leaflet. Yes No
8. If you wanted one, did you have a confidential meeting with a basic skills learning support tutor to discuss your needs? Yes No
9. If Yes, how long did it take to arrange from the time you requested the meeting?
- | Number of weeks | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | longer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
10. Did you find the discussion useful? Yes No
11. Did you agree/decide to attend basic skills learning support? Yes No
12. Which type of support are you receiving
- workshop or small group work Yes No
 - 1:1 tutorial Yes No
 - in-class support Yes No
 - a specialist assessment e.g. dyslexia Yes No
 - special help in exams (e.g. special paper/extra time, etc.) Yes No
 - loan of equipment Yes No
 - other Yes No
- please state:

You may tick more than one box for each statement

Yes No

13. Which of these statements apply to you?

- basic skills learning support has helped me stay on the course Yes No
- basic skills learning support has made me more confident in my work Yes No
- basic skills learning support has helped me improve my written work Yes No
- basic skills learning support has fitted into my timetable Yes No
- basic skills learning support has helped me understand my assignments Yes No
- I have a good relationship with my basic skills learning support tutor Yes No

14. If you have answered No to any of the questions can you say why you feel this way?

Yes No

Yes No N/A

15. Attendance at basic skills learning support (tick one answer only)

I attended:

- every session Yes No N/A
- sometimes Yes No N/A
- gave up Yes No N/A
- never attended Yes No N/A

Section 4 Improvement of the service

Please tell us how we can improve the learning support service we offer to students.



Prompt Questions for Element 3



How do you ensure basic skills students are able to comment on the services provided by the establishment and the quality of their programmes?



How effective are the adaptations you have made to questionnaires for basic skills students?



What other methods do you use to obtain feedback from students?



How do you ensure that effective use is made of the feedback provided by students?



Effective arrangements for reviewing and evaluating provision are essential elements in continuous quality improvement. It is only by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of programmes that improvements can be made. In many colleges, procedures for reviewing and evaluating basic skills programmes are not as well developed as they are for other programmes. External moderators' reports have often been the only evidence which has been used to make judgements about the quality of the provision. However, in colleges where provision is good, staff have developed rigorous procedures and established clear criteria for reviewing and evaluating programmes.

The following section describes the procedures developed by different colleges for reviewing and evaluating their programmes. It outlines the different elements of these procedures and describes how they contribute to the process of self-assessment.

Programme logs

Programme logs are an essential element of programme reviews in one large, multi-campus college. The logs and the ways in which they are used within the college's quality assurance framework are shown in the following example.

Example

The use of the programme log in curriculum review

What is the programme log?

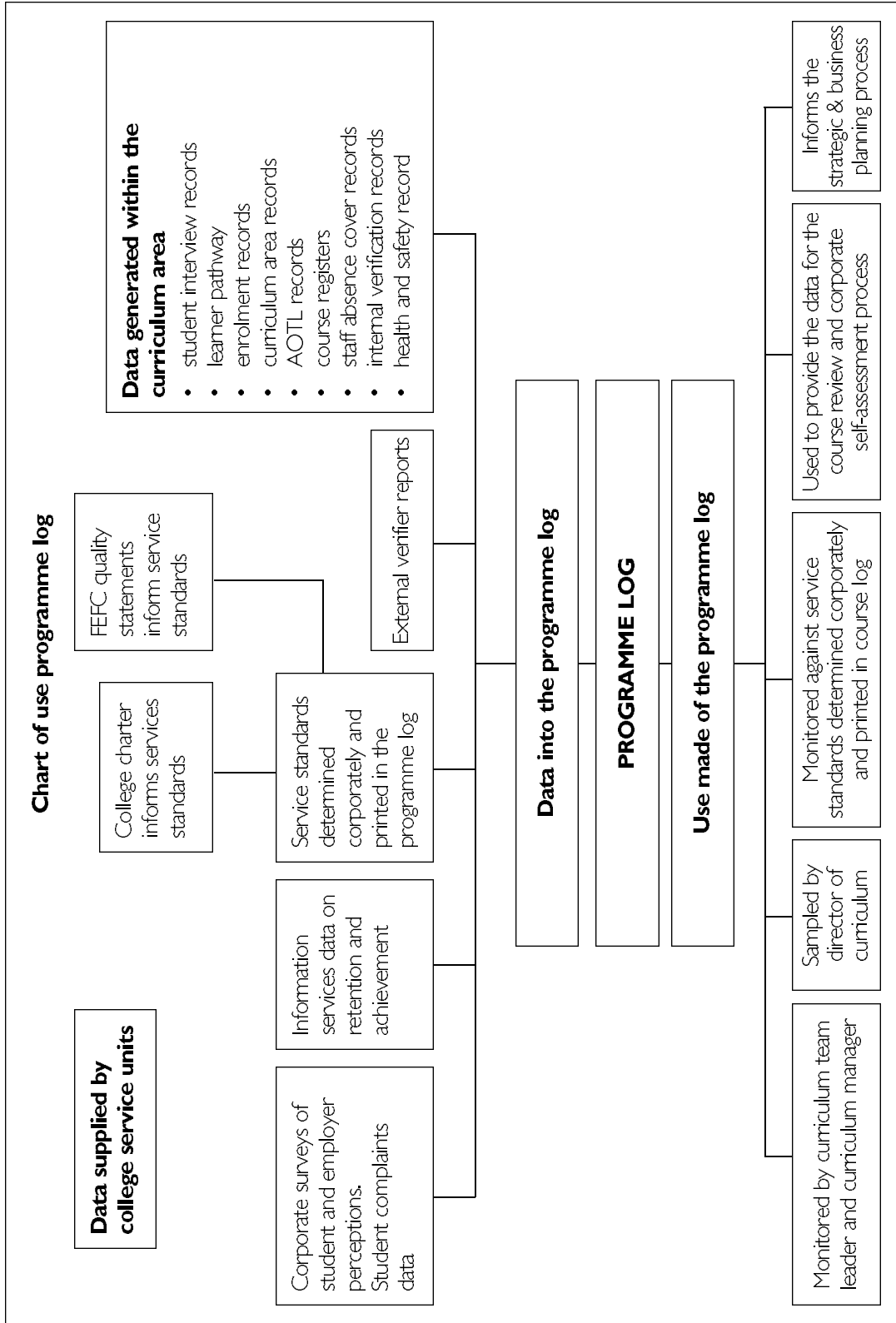
It is the primary source document for data collection, analysis and action planning. It is central to the college's quality assurance framework.

How the programme log fits into the data collection process

Programme logs form part of a course file which holds all relevant documents relating to the management of a course.

Course files include:

- the programme log
- student perception survey results
- course team minutes
- assessment plan/calendar
- internal verification plan – action points for internal verification meeting and record and results of sampling
- external moderator/verifier reports and action plans
- syllabuses and schemes of work
- other, e.g. timetable, course handbooks, work experience details, etc.





The log is divided into 5 sections

Section 1

Details key outcomes from the previous 2 academic years and the targets for the current academic year under the following headings:

Performance

- enrolments
- % student number target met
- % retention (in-year)
- % attendance at 1 November
- % attendance at 1 February
- % attendance at 15 May
- % achievement of main qualification aim (completers)
- % of completers progressing with the college
- % of completers progressing into higher education
- % of completers progressing to employment
- % of completers progressing where destination unknown.

Section 1 must be completed by the course team prior to the start of each course.

Section 2

Provides planning prompts for the course team to consider prior to and at the start of the course.

Areas covered include:

- a description of the student target group
- promotion strategy
- intended course outcomes
- staffing needs
- learning materials
- schedule of course team meetings.

This data is recorded as it becomes available and is monitored at the end of the entry and induction phase against the service standards.

An action plan is completed at the end of this process.

Section 3

This contains course reviews for the end of each trimester. Issues and action points are recorded and signed off by the curriculum team leader (manager responsible for this area of work) on a trimester basis.

Section 4

This lists the corporate standards and, if in existence, course/curriculum area standards which form the basis of the evaluation (self-assessment).

Section 5

This provides pro-forma for self-assessment and action planning.

Application of the programme log to basic skills provision

A separate programme log is kept for:

- adult basic skills primary provision
- learning support – covering:
 - basic skills learning support
 - ESOL
 - disability learning support.

The provision of basic skills as part of integrated provision is also addressed in the programme logs kept by vocational and academic course teams.

Example (continued)

Effects of the process on the quality of provision.



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Issues identified	Action planned	Outcomes
Accommodation – lack of base room on all campuses in which resources could be kept readily available for adult basic skills students.	Issue taken to Board of Studies and recorded in self-assessment report.	Allocation of resource base for adult basic skills on all main campuses.
Achievement against primary learning goals which are not externally accredited is not recorded on the college's management information system.	Meeting with college registrar to develop means of recording achievement on the system.	Forms and systems agreed – still being piloted.
Difficulties experienced by many students with the enrolment process due to limited times at which the enrolment points were open.	Issue taken to Board of Studies. Request made to college administrative services to increase opening hours, in particular for evening part-time students.	A range of procedures agreed to make it easier for part-time evening students to enrol.
Remark made from course team meeting of need for tighter follow-up of all students who do not attend for 2 consecutive weeks without explanation.	Action required from all tutors, part time and permanent, to follow up absence. Choice of action by telephone or letter. Results of contact to be recorded in register.	Routine letter made available to all tutors to send out. Students' attendance was improved.
Hourly paid tutors unhappy about attending course team meetings in their own time.	Request payment for hourly paid tutors for attendance at meetings.	Agreed payment for 2 hours a term at meetings.



Position Papers

In another large college all programme areas are required to produce a position paper each October. The paper describes the quality of the provision which has been reviewed and is used to inform planning.

The following guidelines have been produced to help staff produce position papers.

Example

Purpose

The purpose of the position paper is to:

- review the past year and make comments on the performance and achievements of the section
- outline the planned developments for the current year
- provide an action plan to be used by the section to achieve quality improvements in service and delivery
- to be used as a working document throughout the year.

Position papers form part of the college planning and quality cycle. They will be used as follows:

- as the basis for ensuring that the college is continually improving the quality of service and delivery
- by line managers as the basis for their annual business plans
- to set college-wide targets for retention and achievement. These have to be submitted to the Board of Governors and the FEFC on an annual basis
- to update the college self-assessment report
- by the Academic Board in their annual review of retention and achievement
- to update the college's strategic plan and financial forecast
- as the basis for the college-wide staff development plan

Before you start

Make sure that you involve all members of the team and your line manager in the preparation of the position paper.

Have available:

- last year's position paper and action plan
- the college self-assessment report

- programme end of year review minutes and notes
- a completed teaching and learning assessment pack
- details of any curriculum developments that related specifically to your area and need to be included in your planned developments
- a copy of the teaching and learning policy
- inclusive learning support materials
- the college's annual corporate objectives.

Review

1. Self-assessment of teaching and learning

Last year all programme teams completed a self-assessment workpack and allocated a grade for each of the programmes they offered. These grades were then aggregated to provide an overall grade for the section.

This year, programme teams are asked to complete the exercise again and to consider their performance against the self-assessment they completed last year.

When the workpacks have been completed you need to summarise in the position paper the key strengths and weaknesses that have arisen out of this exercise. For example, there may be a trend in an improved grade for assignment setting, no movement on tutorials and a downward trend in lesson planning – all of which should be addressed in your action plan.

Please note that it is as important to highlight improvements and build on these in the action plan as it is to highlight areas to be improved.

2. Review of the previous position paper and action plan

Take each of the action points from last year's position paper and comment on whether you and your team completed the actions and the effect this has had on provision and delivery. For example, if you had an action point to extend the range of modules on a particular programme, was this achieved and if so did it produce the desired effects? If it was not achieved, why not? Was it that the timescale was too ambitious or the qualifications were not available – or was it that staff were not identified to lead the developments through.

3. Retention and achievement

Comment on the position of the section in relation to retention and achievement. For example, are trends up/down? Did you employ specific strategies to improve? Were these successful? How does performance compare with national averages?



Example (continued)

4. Grading

Enter here your grade for the section. If the grade is higher or lower than last year you must outline why this is so.

In grading the section please note the following:

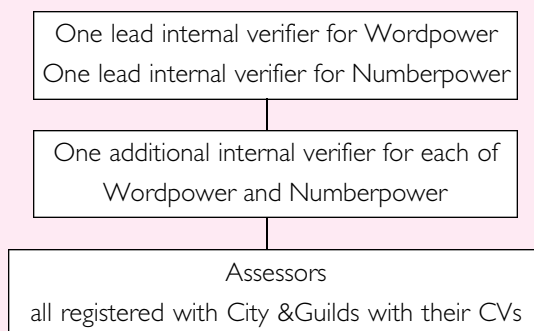
- if there have been improvements, have these improvements been in place long enough to justify a shift in grade
- grade 1s have to be supported by consistently high levels of retention and achievement – above the national averages
- if weaknesses have been addressed, has this resulted in an overall improvement in quality
- have you given equal consideration to your strengths or have you focused too much on your weaknesses
- are the strengths you have identified 'real' strengths or could they be considered as normal practice.

Moderation and verification procedures are used to promote consistency in standards and, as such, are important elements of a quality assurance framework. The following example describes the processes used by one college to ensure consistency of standards in two programmes.

Example 1

Process to ensure consistency of standards and approach in Wordpower and Numberpower

Internal verifier and assessors



The lead internal verifiers verify the majority of the folders. Their own folders are verified by the additional internal verifier.

Assessors

All assessors are either accredited with D32 and D33 or with the Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills. They will also have another teaching qualification or equivalent qualification.

Volunteer tutors do not assess learners' work for Wordpower and Numberpower but pass work for assessment onto their fully qualified support tutor.



Example 1 (continued)

Training of assessors

All assessors new to Wordpower and Numberpower attend an initial training programme.

This covers the following areas:

- the importance of teaching and practising skills and tasks before competence in the task is assessed
- practice in identifying the skills needed to complete a particular task
- the importance of the assessed work being the independent work of the learner
- the importance of performance criteria and how to use them
- practice in assessing pieces of work against performance criteria.

Regular meetings of assessors

All assessors attend one meeting a year which is dedicated to issues on Wordpower and Numberpower. The meeting focuses on borderline pieces of work, issues about interpreting performance criteria, suggestions on selecting and creating materials to meet particular elements and ensuring consistency in assessment. In addition as all assessors are paid college tutors they also attend one tutor's meeting a term. Wordpower and/or Numberpower may be an agenda item at these meetings.

Regular meetings of internal verifiers

The internal verifiers are also the area organisers for primary basic skills provision. They meet on a fortnightly basis and any internal verification issues are placed on this agenda. This meets the college requirement of at least 5 I.V. meetings per year.

This is the key to the maintenance of consistency in standards and approach.

Contact between assessors and the internal verifiers

New assessors are given on-going guidance on the work they are offering and assessing.

Experienced assessors seek advice on any pieces of work about which they are uncertain.

Small group discussions between internal verifiers and assessors take place on any borderline work.

The principal internal verifier keeps a note of the names of all candidates currently working for Wordpower and Numberpower and the expected date of completion.

Contact between internal verifier and the external verifier

Any areas of doubt that cannot be resolved by the college staff are posted to the external verifier, e.g. the level of spelling error acceptable from a dyslexic student.

Observation of assessor

All assessors are observed annually by the internal verifier. (This observation can take place as part of the college Assessment of Teaching and Learning Process.)

The actual internal verification

The college guideline on sample size for internal verification is 10%. The sampling framework for the college also requires that every unit, every assessor and every candidate should be internally verified. In practice this has meant that the sample size for internal verification is closer to 50%.

The use made of the external verifier's reports and visits

A copy of the external verifier's report is sent to the director of curriculum responsible for basic skills to monitor any action points. Copies are also kept in the programme log.

The principal internal verifier for each of Wordpower and Numberpower writes a report of the external verifier's visit which is copied to all assessors.



Example 1 (continued)

The following gives extracts from the reports of the external verifier which are used in the process of quality assurance.

Extracts from reports following the visit of the external verifier

Wordpower

Meeting all p.c.s in an element

If one p.c. is not met in a particular piece of work, e.g. inclusion of an image is not relevant, this p.c. must be met by another of the pieces of work included for this element.

If a gap in evidence continues, use 'what if' questioning to establish the students' ability to meet the p.c., e.g. Unit 301.E1.3 Refer to instructions to carry out an activity p.c. 'If the outcome is not achieved, check the instructions and identify and report the reason.'

'What if...?' questions can be used if all instructions are always carried out accurately and the end product achieved. Another example when 'what if...?' questions can be used is for reading elements where the p.c. says.

'Identify the meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases and image accurately.'

If the student knew all the words, etc. the tutor should ask 'What would you have done if you had not known all the words in the text.'

Level 2

The folder should not just be one topic. Even if a student on a vocational course is doing a folder, different aspects should be taken.

Forms should be complex, e.g. accident report form or job application form with free writing involved.

Key factors in the verification process which improve and maintain the quality of the delivery of Wordpower and Numberpower

- good initial training
- the regular availability of the internal verifiers to assessors for discussion of areas of uncertainty
- the regular monitoring of assessors who are new to Wordpower or Numberpower
- the circulation of written comments to all assessors and to individual assessors both following the E.V.'s visit and following the I.V.'s verification of portfolios
- the high level of sampling keeps the internal verifier closely in touch with all aspects of delivery and assessment. This is particularly important in relation to the materials being used and the assessment feedback for the learners
- the college allowance of time to the internal verifiers to carry out this work.

Example 2



The notes on internal moderation provided for staff in another college are shown below.

Internal moderation notes for basic skills programmes

Aims

- to standardise assessment across basic skills provision
- to review assessment procedures and documentation
- to support development of staff and curriculum.

Procedure

Internal moderation meetings will take place at least twice a year, usually in terms 1 and 2.

It is the responsibility of teaching staff to bring at least three pieces of assessed work for each qualification aim.

Forms will be used to document moderation.

For each piece of assessed work the teacher should complete sections 1, 2 and 3 before submitting assessed work for moderation.

Assessed work will be moderated by colleagues who will complete the remaining sections and return the form to the teacher. Comments should be constructive with suggestions for improvement as appropriate.

Any issues regarding quality of assessment should be referred to the internal verifier.

The internal verifier will retain copies of all forms.

Sampling will be recorded by entering the initials of the moderator and date of moderation on the sampling overview form.



Example 2 (continued)

One of the forms used in the process is shown below.

Basic skills internal moderation form	
1. Title:	2. Teacher
3. Evidence required:	4. Does the assessed work meet the evidence requirements?
5. Learning objectives:	6. Does the assessed work show that learning objectives have been met?
7. Feedback Is there evidence of feedback for the student? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Is feedback appropriate? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Is there evidence that the student has responded to feedback? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Level Is the assessed work: At/Above/Below the level you would expect for the programme?	
9. Documentation Are there clear records of: The individual achievement? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Additional comments	
Moderated by:	Date:
Verified by:	Date:

Self-assessment



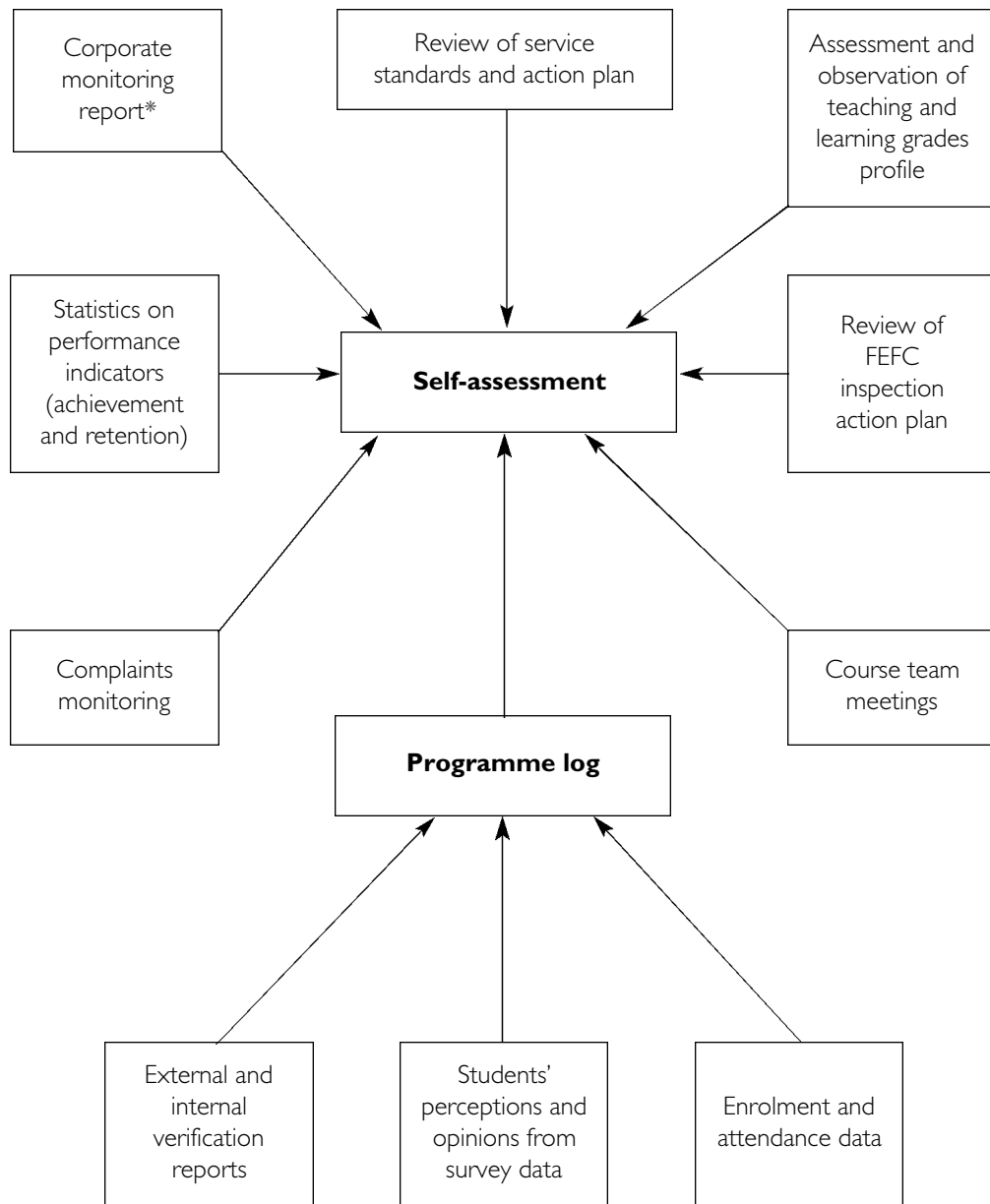
Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Self-assessment is now a well-established element of programme reviews. In many colleges self-assessment drives quality assurance procedures.

Example 1

The following diagram illustrates the separate elements of one college's framework for self-assessment.

Framework for Self-assessment



*Corporate monitoring = monitoring of teaching and learning by senior managers. Includes observing classes, talking to staff and talking to curriculum managers.

Example 1 (continued)



A description of the procedures used by basic skills staff to assess the quality of basic skills provision follows:

Involvement of basic skills staff in the self-assessment of basic skills primary provision

A termly course team meeting is held for primary provision and a separate team meeting for learning support although many of the staff teach in both areas.

All staff, permanent and part-time hourly paid, are invited to these meetings.

Part-time hourly paid tutors are paid for attendance at one meeting a term.

Further meetings are attended in their own time.

On-going process of self-assessment

- individual follow-up meeting to assessment and observation of teaching and learning (all staff)
- course team meetings with agenda items of E.V. and I.V. reports, reviews of enrolment and attendance, reviews of student survey data, review of performance indicators (all staff)
- termly Board of Studies meetings (managers and teaching staff representatives).

Writing the self-assessment reports

- information for report collected from all sources listed in the organisation's framework
- course team meeting prior to writing includes a discussion of strengths and weaknesses
- discussion of evidence for strengths and weaknesses
- written by manager responsible for basic skills.

Validation of self-assessment reports

- reviewed by staff responsible for organising different areas of basic skills provision
- area organisers for basic skills primary provision
- basic skills staff on permanent contracts.

Also reviewed with curriculum manager, director of curriculum and deputy principal.



Example 1 (continued)

An example of an action plan following self-assessment for primary provision is given below.

Action plan: Primary provision	
Action	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out training for staff on the use of information technology as an aid to learning and assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Staff aware of and confident in using information technology as a means of learning and assessment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop Learning Bases with access to computers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Learning Bases for ABE and ESOL programmes in place on 3 additional campuses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of information technology within learning and assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increased usage of information technology evidenced during assessment and observation of teaching and learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop improved systems for recording retention on roll-on, roll-off programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Systems developed with student records to record retention on roll-on programmes, taking account of early completers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop improved systems for measuring and recording achievement against non-externally accredited primary learning goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Systems developed with student records to define and record achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Promotions Unit to widen the focus of publicity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Wider publicity has led to recruitment of non-traditional students.

Example 1 (continued)

An example of an action plan for basic skills learning support provision



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Action plan: Basic skills learning support	
Action	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the basic skills software available to students and train learning support staff and learning base staff to access and use the software. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → More student use of information technology as a means of developing basic skills. → Greater range of opportunities for part-time students to develop their basic skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend and develop basic skills training offered to vocational and academic tutors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Vocational and subject tutors more able to develop basic skills within the course context.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Quality Assurance manager to develop a valid system of evaluating students' views on the learning support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Valid and useful information from students on the learning support service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Management Information Unit to develop a system for monitoring retention and achievement of students receiving learning support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Retention and achievement measured, allowing for year on year monitoring.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a system for managing the delivery of support within Support Workshops. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Attendance at workshops has increased. → Achievement of personal learning goals in the workshops has improved. → Achievement of vocational/subject goals has improved. → Systems for recording and monitoring have been established and followed across the college.



Example 1 (continued)

The following chart shows the steps taken to secure implementation and increase effectiveness, by adding detail to the action plan.

The action plan is extended from the self-assessment report to show:

- the detail of the action needed
- who will carry it out
- who will monitor it
- date of completion
- intended outcomes.

Action	Action detail	Who	Monitored by	Date	Outcomes
Extend and develop basic skills training offered to vocational and academic tutors.	City and Guilds 7324 to be offered in free standing modules. Modules to be offered at specified times to individual curriculum areas.	Set up by manager responsible for basic skills linked with staff development unit. Staff recruitment by curriculum area managers.	Director of Curriculum	Programme in place April 2000. To run from June 2000.	Vocational and academic tutors more able to develop basic skills within the course context.

Example 1 (continued)



The following chart shows how action plans were linked to other college procedures and processes.

Action plan feeds into:	
Curriculum area business plan	Identifies resources needed to implement action:
College business plan	College resource allocation.
College staff development plan	Allocates resources for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in-house staff development at corporate level • in-house staff development at curriculum level • externally delivered staff development.
Identifies action needed by:	
Basic skills management and staff	e.g. setting up better systems for managing and developing support workshops.
Other college units or curriculum areas	e.g. Promotions unit, Management information systems.



Example 2

Another college has developed the following ten principles of self-assessment which underpin its self-assessment process.

Ten principles of self-assessment

1. The college is committed to quality, equality and achievement in all areas of its work. Without quality the other two lack meaning.
2. The college is committed to self-assessment as the primary means of increasing quality.
3. Self-assessment is part of the normal pattern of annual college activity and will be supported by college resources. It is not a bolt-on exercise.
4. Self-assessment means self-assessment, not being assessed by someone else.
5. Self-assessment means being honest about strengths and weaknesses and operates in a no blame culture either upwards or downwards.
6. Self-assessment means taking responsibility for the areas you control and attempting to improve them. It operates within the context of the college: its organisation, finance and environment.
7. Statements of quality must be based on evidence that can and will be verified by someone outside the team.
8. Evidence must always include feedback from students or other users.
9. Self-assessment demands action if weaknesses are found: actions which are the responsibility of the team but which are supported by the college.
10. Action plans must be SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-constrained. Above all they are the working documents for the team, school and college. They are regularly reviewed.

Example 2 (continued)



A description of the college's self-assessment process follows:

1. Self-assessment reports (SARs) are the key system for assessing and raising the quality of service we offer. They involve all staff within the college, both teaching and corporate services.
2. Staff in course teams assess and grade the quality of their service, identify strengths and weaknesses and provide an action plan for improvement.
3. The college SAR is based, to a large extent, on the reports from teaching and corporate service teams. The college SAR is the base document for inspection and the key document for raising quality college-wide.
4. The process and timetable for the production of the annual self-assessment report for the college is as follows:

July Each course team or corporate service area in the college completes its own SAR on the year's work.

September Each school produces its own SAR and action plan as an aggregation of course reviews and all the evidence affecting quality that the school has developed throughout the year.

October Production of draft college SAR.

November Presentation of the SAR to Academic Board: Key issues of quality identified in the college SAR inform the planning process for the following year.

February Teams review implementation of action plans in February Learning Week.

March onwards College strategic plan developed which addresses key issues raised in the SAR.

June-July Teams review and sign off action plans and produce new SAR on the past year's work.

5. Proformas for self-assessment purposes are provided for each team. Guidance is available for their completion. The forms follow a similar format for academic and corporate teams:

a. Grading

Each team awards itself a grade which, it feels, best reflects its provision in the previous year.

The grades range from 1 to 5 according to the FEFC criteria.

b. Progress

A list of all developments that improved the quality of provision in the previous year. This would include the completion of the year's action plan as well as significant changes achieved over the year.

Example 2 (continued)

c. Strengths

A numbered list of strengths. For teaching areas this would be related to the FEFC quality statements as published in Annexe B of Circular 97/13 that are capable of verification. All strengths need to be specific, evidenced and measurable.

d. Weaknesses

A numbered list of weaknesses or areas which need improvement. This would normally be a file, where it is kept and who is responsible for it.

e. Evidence

The evidence that proves the strength or weakness. This would normally be a file, where it is kept and who is responsible for it.

f. The action plan

This proposes a response to every identified weakness. It must be:

- specific – targets must be clear
- measurable – targets must be capable of verification
- attainable – what is put in the action plan must be achievable by the team
- realistic – the action plans operate in a specific context
- timed – each action needs a target date for its achievement and its review.

6. Verification of SARs

Verification of SARs is the process by which the accuracy, consistency and reliability of the report can be interrogated. Managers interview those responsible for the SAR. They ensure that:

- the previous year's action plan has been achieved
- progress, strengths and weaknesses identified are appropriate
- no significant progress, strengths or weaknesses have been omitted
- there is evidence to support the identified progress and strengths
- action plans are 'SMART'
- the grade that is awarded is accurate.

Once verified the SARs are signed off by the appropriate manager.

All SARs are verified by appropriate managers:

- course SARs are verified by PALs and heads of school
- school and corporate services' SARs are verified by the Quality Committee
- the college SAR is verified by the academic board and the governors.

7. The college self-assessment report

The annual self-assessment report of the college synthesises all reports and issues generated by the governing body, local employers, accrediting bodies and other stakeholder organisations and the SARs from schools and corporate services.

The Annual College Report follows the guidelines laid down by the FEFC. It contains sections outlining the progress, strengths, weaknesses and action plans of the eleven FEFC programme areas as well as general sections on:

- an introduction to the college
- the college and its mission
- teaching and learning
- students' achievements
- curriculum content, organisation and management
- support for students
- resources
- quality assurance
- management
- governance.

It includes an action plan for the academic year ahead which identifies strategies for improving quality in all areas of the organisation. Progress towards the completion of the action plan is formally reviewed in March and June each year by the academic board.

■

How effective are your arrangements for reviewing and evaluating the quality of the basic skills programmes you offer?

■

How do you help staff to understand their roles and responsibilities in the review process?

■

How might you improve your arrangements for moderation and verification?

■

How effective are your arrangements for self-assessment and action planning?

■

Element I: Measuring Performance



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

The purpose of quality assurance procedures is to improve the quality of the provision. For this to be possible, it is necessary to assess the quality of the provision at a given time, to set the standards it is hoped to achieve, to establish performance indicators to facilitate measurement of progress, and to set realistic but challenging targets for improvement.

Currently, the main performance indicators used in colleges are students' achievements and retention rates. When judging the quality of their provision, colleges are able to use national benchmarking data which enable them to compare their performance against that of similar colleges across the country.

Within basic skills provision, not all students want or need to study for a qualification. For many students, the achievement of a qualification does not fully reflect the benefit they have gained from their studies. National performance indicators are not currently available for achievement which is expressed in terms of individual competencies or gains in confidence or self-esteem. Nevertheless basic skills staff are keen to establish ways of measuring progress and ensuring that the setting of targets leads to continuous improvements in the quality of the provision.

The following section describes the approaches to the above issues adopted by a number of colleges.

Reaching an agreement amongst staff about the standards to be achieved in basic skills provision is an essential first step. The following example describes the process one college used to set standards for its basic skills learning support service and outlines the way the standards are monitored, reviewed and reported. A list of the standards the college considers to be most essential within its basic skills learning support service is shown. Spreadsheets showing desirable features of the provision, the standards to be achieved, the measures which will be used to monitor the achievement of the standards and the responsibilities and dates when the monitoring is to be undertaken are also included.

Process for developing standards in basic skills learning support

1. Meeting between the College Quality Assurance Manager and Learning Support Managers to clarify the system for developing and monitoring quality standards.

2. Desirable features of the learning support service were mapped out under the following headings:

- Pre-entry**
 - Marketing
 - Publicity
 - Admissions
 - Assessment
- On entry**
 - Induction
 - Assessment
 - Support plan
- On programme**
 - Review of support plan
- Achievements and progression**
 - Assessment
- Management and organisation**
- Quality assurance**
- Staff development**

3. The desirable features were then mapped against:

- the standards required to deliver the desirable feature
- the measures that would indicate that the standard had been met.

4. Responsibility was allocated for the delivery of each standard.
All basic skills related standards are the responsibility of the Basic Skills Manager.

5. Dates for monitoring the standards were set.

6. Overall monitoring is the responsibility of the Head of School (now called the Curriculum Area Manager).

7. Results of monitoring are fed into the Board of Studies through the curriculum review.



Example (continued)

Monitoring and review of standards

The standards are reviewed by the managers responsible for delivering learning support:

- disability support manager
- basic skills manager
- ESOL manager

This review is then monitored by the Head of School.

Reporting system for review of the standards

The review of the standards leads directly to the curriculum review and into self-assessment.

Action points are drawn from this process.

The most essential standards for raising the quality of provision

1. Standards relating to ensuring students are informed about the learning support available.

Reason

- these standards ensure that students do not 'slip through the net' of not being identified as needing learning support.

2. Requirements for all full-time and substantive part-time students to complete an initial assessment.

Reason

- identifies a student's need for basic skills support immediately on entry to college
- ensures vocational and academic staff are immediately aware of the basic skills needs of students they are teaching.

3. All students referred for learning support are offered a confidential interview.

Reason

- confidentiality of interview is essential.
- students may not identify relevant information if other students are present.

4. Assessment of learning support needs must be carried out by appropriately trained staff.

Reason

- diagnostic assessment requires specialist knowledge.

5. Learning support offered at a time and place accessible to the student.

Reason

- ensures it is possible for student to attend learning support sessions
- wording of standard recognises need to fit provision of learning support to both student's need and the efficient use of college resources (specifically stated 'at a main campus' and 'to fit in with overall curriculum delivery'. Wording means learning support does not have to be offered at student's 'preferred' time – simply a suitable time.

6. Learning support programme should be individual and meet student's needs.

Reason

- learning support must be planned and negotiated with the student.

7. Review of learning support.

Reason

- ensures achievement is monitored
- ensures learning goals are monitored as still relevant
- ensures achievement/progress is recorded
- ensures liaison takes place between vocational/academic tutor and learning support tutor.

8. Access to appropriate accreditation opportunities.

Reason

- ensures student's assessment is not affected by any disability.

9. Monitoring at senior level.

Reason

- prevents isolation of learning support services.

10. All staff delivering learning support must have a specialist qualification.

Reason

- raises the quality of teaching and learning.

Example (continued)

Some sample quality standards for basic skills

Desirable feature	Standard	Measures	Responsibility	Date of monitoring
<p>On Entry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all full-time and substantive part-time students (180+ hours) receive information on the learning support service during induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all students receive a learning support leaflet or are given information as to where a leaflet can be obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> leaflets kept in all school offices all staff have a copy of 'How to refer a student for learning support' placed in their pigeon hole in September induction talk information plus leaflets sent to all school offices in August record of induction talks leaflets available at all times at Helpline, Reception and Learning Resources leaflets available at Freshers' Fair on all campuses 	<p>All learning support managers</p>	<p>November</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all students have an opportunity to identify their learning support needs during induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all full-time and substantive part-time students receive an initial assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> initial assessment records 	<p>Basic skills manager</p>	<p>November</p>

Placeholder grid for additional quality standards.

Desirable feature	Standard	Measures	Responsibility	Date of monitoring
<p>On Entry and on programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all full-time and substantive part-time students identified as having a learning support need are offered accessible learning support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all full-time and substantive part-time students identified as having a learning support need are offered learning support on the main campus most suitable for them and at a time that fits in with their overall curriculum delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> student's timetable noted on learning support interview form student's accessibility or times on main campus is recorded on the interview form learning support offered recorded on the interview form. 	<p>Learning support managers.</p>	<p>May</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified students have an individual programme of support to meet their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all students who have been assessed as requiring learning support will, following negotiation, receive a support plan which outlines the level and nature of support being offered to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all students referred logged all students assessed logged support plans lodged with school/course tutors, students and learning support tutor. 	<p>Learning support manager</p>	<p>May</p>

Desirable feature	Standard	Measures	Responsibility	Date of monitoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the learning support provided to an individual is regularly reviewed 	<p>The support plan is reviewed with the student at least once a term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> systems are in place to gain feedback on the quality of the support being offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review dates given on support plan review forms completed. student questionnaires student comments on reviews vocational/academic tutors' response requested minutes/notes from course team meetings recorded in programme log. 	<p>Learning support managers</p>	<p>May</p>
<p>Achievement and progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support is available to access accreditation without disadvantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriate liaison takes place with Examination Officer, Award Bodies, course/programme teams to ensure that, where applicable, arrangements are made to facilitate access to fair assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> details of correspondence special arrangements agreed. 	<p>Learning support managers</p>	<p>May</p>

Example (continued)

Desirable feature	Standard	Measures	Responsibility	Date of monitoring
<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is an overall operational plan for learning support which is monitored; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the learning support service produces an annual business plan which outlines the mission, policy and key results areas for the service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> business plans monitoring of key result areas 	<p>Learning support managers</p>	<p>May</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the learning support service is represented at a senior level within the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there are identified people within both the corporation and senior management team with a responsibility to monitor the learning support provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> corporation members with designated responsibility for learning support senior management team member with designated responsibility for learning support 	<p>Head of School</p>	<p>May</p>

Performance Indicators



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

The following example shows how one college used performance indicators in its basic skills provision.

Example

The rationale for the choice of performance indicators is shown below.

The performance indicators selected

- % full achievement of Primary Learning goals
- % partial achievement of Primary Learning goals
- % retention.

Reasons for selection of these performance indicators

- these are key performance indicators for self-assessment both for basic skills provision and for all other college areas
- retention and achievement are essential for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Definition of achievement

FEFC definition of achievement

'The achievement rate is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved divided by the number of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.'

Ref: Benchmarking Data 1995-96 to 1997-98 Annex B Para 10

Targets set by the college for achievement within basic skills provision

Fully Achieved Primary Learning Goal 78%

Partially Achieved Primary Learning Goal 17%

Reasons for setting these targets

The data was first collected in 1995-1996 when this was the level of achievement measured. These were set as targets for future years as:

- they were known to be achievable using the measures used in 1995-1996
- it was felt that 5% non-achievement was acceptable because of well-documented adult difficulties in maintaining a regular commitment to a learning programme due to external circumstances.



Example (continued)

The college's definition of achievement and how it is to be measured follows.

Inclusion of partial achievement in the targets

Although the FEFC does not include partial achievement it was felt that this was a useful indicator. The difficulties of defining, measuring and recording achievement in basic skills is such that a true picture of the provision was not obtained by dividing students into 2 categories only of full achievement and non-achievement.

Measurement of achievement

Achievement is not measured against external accreditation but against the achievement of the student's personal learning goals as stated in his or her learning plan for the specific time period under consideration.

Definition of full and partial achievement

Each student has a set of learning goals for each half term.

The number of learning goals per student varies.

When the system was first set up, tutors were asked to evaluate from the learning plans whether each student had fully or partially achieved according to a rough calculation as to whether they had achieved the 'majority of their learning goals' or whether they had achieved a 'significant' number but that there were still several goals not yet completed.

It was emphasised that full and partial achievement only related to the time span under consideration.

A new system was set up in 1999 so that the definition of full or partial achievement was more tightly defined and data could eventually be collated on the college's central information system.

Under this system, at the end of each term, the 2 learning plans for that term are reviewed and the number of goals fully achieved and partially achieved is recorded.

These are collated at the end of the year into an achievement score for the year. The following form shows this process in operation.

A student who receives a score of 5 or 6 is seen as having fully achieved for the year, whilst a score of 3 or 4 is recorded as a partial achievement and a score of 2 or under is a null achievement.

This achievement can then be recorded on the central information system.

Example (continued)



The following sheet shows how achievement is to be recorded.

Review of achievements and goals

To be completed at the end of each term.

When the 3 terms are completed or when the student leaves, file top copy in student's blue folder.
Send 2nd copy to ABE Organiser.

Name of student: AB

Name of tutor: TC

Course code: JD 1234

At the end of each term please look at how many learning goals were achieved for the two learning plans for that term.

- Full achievement = 80% of learning goals achieved
- Partial achievement = 50% of learning goals achieved
- Null achievement = Under 50% of learning goals achieved

Tick and date the appropriate box for each term.

Score 2 for full, 1 for partial, 0 for null.

	Full	Partial	Null	Score
Term 1 Date completed	7	2	—	2
Term 2 Date completed	6	4	—	1
Term 3 Date completed	8	1	—	2
Total score For all 3 terms				5

Accreditation achieved in these 3 terms = Full achievement

Name of certificate	Date completed OR	Date exam taken OR	Units completed so far

If student re-enrols start a new form at the end of next term.



Example (continued)

Limitations of the system

- the system depends on the tight definition of learning goals in a measurable form within a half termly time span
- there can be a temptation for tutors to be insufficiently challenging in their definition of learning goals to make sure that students succeed
- achievement of external accreditation goals has been omitted to date. This is needed for comparison with national indicators but setting achievement of external accreditation as a performance indicator may lead to students being required to work for inappropriate external accreditation
- setting the full achievement level at 80% of learning goals appears to be too high. Many students appear to be achieving 70-80% of their primary learning goals even when they have clearly achieved well. If the student states at the end of 6 weeks that they are uncertain about 2 of 8 areas covered this leads to only a 75% achievement rate.

Example (continued)



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

This shows the college's use of retention rates as performance indicators.

Retention

FEFC definition of retention:

'The retention rate is the number of students continuing or completed, divided by the number of students who started the qualification, excluding transfers out.'

Ref: Benchmarking Data 1995-96 to 1997-98 Annex B Para 10

Difficulties with the definition

This definition has been problematical in trying to measure retention on roll-on roll-off programmes through a central computerised management information system. Early completion also complicates the measurement as students may not need the full guided learning hours for which they have enrolled to successfully complete their primary learning goal.

The college's definition of retention

The retention rate is defined as the % of students who remain enrolled on the course for the full period of their guided learning hours or who withdraw having fully achieved their primary learning goals (i.e. early completers).

Example of calculation of retention rate

No. of student who withdrew before completing 72 GLHs	163
Total enrolments	492
Withdrawals as % of enrolments	20.5%
Retention rate	79.5%
Target retention rate set for the basic skills primary provision	80%

Level of target set

20% expected drop out recognises the difficulties some adult students face in attending college and also some referrals are made by other agencies and the student is reluctant to attend.



Example (continued)

The use of performance indicators to improve the quality of provision is shown below.

Interpreting the performance indicators

- in the first 3 years of monitoring, the performance indicators showed that the retention rate remained fairly stable but the level of achievement fluctuated
- close examination of the reasons for the fluctuation in achievement rates suggested that they reflected the difficulties tutors had in defining achievement of non-accredited learning goals
- the fluctuation also reflects the difficulties in predicting the pace at which a student will work in a short time period.

Value of having performance indicators:

- tutors are forced to consider how their student's achievement can be measured - especially when the student is not working for accreditation
- tutors and students are forced to confront issues of partial and non-achievement and assess the reason for it
- students no longer work for vague reading and writing or numeracy goals but are clearer about their aims
- the need to demonstrate achievement has ensured that work offered to students has a much higher link to the student's personal learning goals
- comparison of results between different groups in both achievement and retention forces an analysis of why results differ.

Action that has arisen from a consideration of performance indicators:

- the development of training courses in defining learning goals
- discussion with tutors and management information managers on how achievement and retention can be recorded on central system
- an incentive to tutors to be less tolerant of absenteeism which hinders students' progress and tends to lead to partial achievement only
- consideration of the possibility of including absence rates as a third key performance indicator
- encouragement towards external accreditation where appropriate.



Dangers of setting performance indicators:

- the difficulty of meaningful measurement can be overlooked and the quality of provision judged on a single figure derived from non-rigorous data
- they may lead to an overemphasis on external accreditation simply because students' achievements are easily measurable through this.

Critical factors in setting performance indicators:

- clear definitions
- staff understanding of why they are used
- ease of collection and analysis of data
- important that group tutors return data in a form that can be readily collated.



Prompt Questions for Element 1



What is the process in your organisation for agreeing and identifying standards for basic skills provision?



How do you ensure that the difference between standards and performance indicators is fully understood by the basic skills team?



What is your approach to selecting and reviewing performance indicators?



Element 2: Reporting on Performance and Action Planning



Summative reports

The production of a summative report is an essential element of most quality assurance systems. The report is usually compiled by programme managers, or their equivalent, using information submitted by course teams. The completed report is then submitted to the head

of school or programme area director and onwards along the path stipulated in the college's quality assurance framework to the academic board, senior managers and governors.

To facilitate consistency in reporting, many colleges have devised frameworks which provide headings and prompts to assist staff in the production of the report. The presentation of clear, easily interpreted statistical data to support statements made in the report is of crucial importance.

Examples 1, 2, 3 and 4 which follow show the ways in which different colleges have presented statistical data relating to their basic skills provision.



Example 1

Reporting statistical data

ABE achievement against external accreditation and generic goals											
All courses Summative sheet											
Type of course	Full achievement external accreditation		Full achievement individual learning goals (generic code) 80% of goals achieved		Partial achievement individual learning goals (generic code) 50% achieved		Total achievers generic and/or external accreditation Cols 1, 2 and 3		No achievement, generic or external		Total numbers
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Spelling and writing	45	25.9	62	35.6	38	21.8	145	83.3	29	16.7	174
Numeracy	35	34.3	34	33.3	21	20.6	90	88.2	12	11.8	102
Short courses	6	12.2	22	44.9	10	20.4	38	77.6	11	22.4	49
Basic skills support	5	12.2	19	46.3	12	29.3	36	87.8	5	12.2	41
Total all courses	91	24.9	137	37.4	81	22.1	309	84.4	57	15.6	366

Example 2

ABE achievement against external accreditation and generic goals



Numeracy Summative sheet

Tutor and campus	Day or evening	Full achievement external accreditation		Full achievement individual learning goals (generic code) 80% of goals achieved		Partial achievement individual learning goals (generic code) 50% achieved		Total achievers generic and/or external accreditation Cols 1, 2 and 3		No achievement, generic or external		Total numbers
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
TD WGC	D	0	0	6	50	6	50	12	100	0	0	12
SM HAT	D	4	57.1	2	28.6	1	14.3	7	100	0	0	7
LN BWD	D	1	12.5	2	25	2	25	5	62.5	3	37.5	8
SM SAC Mo	D	9	90	0	0	0	0	9	90	1	10	10
SM SAC Th	D	5	100	0	0	0	0	5	100	0	0	5
EB SAC	D	3	42.8	0	0	2	28.6	5	71.4	2	28.6	7
Total	D	22	44.9	10	20.4	11	22.4	43	87.8	6	12.2	49
MW WGC	E	1	9.1	7	63.6	3	27.3	11	100	0	0	11
SM HAT	E	5	45.5	4	36.4	1	9.1	10	90.9	1	9.1	11
SWC BWD	E	3	25	5	41.7	1	8.3	9	75	3	25	12
TD SAC	E	4	28.6	5	35.7	3	21.4	12	85.7	2	14.3	14
TD SAC	E	0	0	3	60	2	40	2	100	0	0	5
Total	E	13	24.5	24	45.3	10	18.9	47	88.7	6	11.3	53
Total	D&E	35	34.3	34	33.3	21	20.6	90	88.2	12	11.8	102



Example 3

ABE achievement against external accreditation and generic goals

Basic skills support group		Summative sheet											
Tutor and campus	Day or evening	Full achievement external accreditation *		Full achievement individual learning goals (generic code) 80% of goals achieved		Partial achievement individual learning goals (generic code) 50% achieved		Total achievers generic and/or external accreditation Cols 1, 2 and 3		No achievement, generic or external		Total numbers	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
SB	N/A	1	9.1	1	9.1	8	72.7	10	90.9	1	9.1	11	
RM		1	11.1	5	55.6	3	33.3	9	100	0	0	9	
GD		2	14.3	7	50	1	7.1	10	71.4	4	28.6	14	
JN		1	14.3	6	85.7	0	0	7	100	0	0	7	
Total		5	12.2	19	46.3	12	29.3	36	87.8	5	12.2	41	

Example 4

Basic Skills Literacy for 1996-97 to 1998-99





Example 5

The following example is of extracts from one college's end of year report on basic skills. The report includes:

- achievement against the range of performance indicators
- enrolment numbers
- retention rates
- achievement rates.

Staff in this college are given a framework for them to complete which then becomes the

annual report on the quality of their provision. The framework includes guidance to help staff complete the report effectively and to promote rigour and consistency in reporting on quality across the college. In order to reflect the value students gain from their studies over and above their achievements in externally validated awards, senior managers require staff across the college to choose a small sample of students from their course and to submit brief individual pen portraits which describe the progress students have made in the development of personal skills and qualities such as confidence and self-esteem. Such gains are often of particular importance to students but are not always fully reflected by their achievement of external awards.

Example 6

Summary of strengths and weaknesses



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Strengths

- **Curriculum**

Flexible delivery; standardised teaching scheme; variety of accreditation – portfolio and exam based; widening participation by programmes for targeted groups, e.g. travellers;

- **Communication & Development**

Regular organisers' meetings, meetings with key staff

- **Staffing**

Expertise and staff commitment; multi-skilled staff, covering huge variety of opportunities; multicultural representatives supporting area of cultural need

- **Staff development and training**

Termly quality circles; national staff development events; open college training initiatives, dyslexia training

- **Achievements**

Basic skills Agency Quality Mark; exceeded national benchmarks; Students gaining national awards, staff qualifications.

Weaknesses

- **Staffing**

Reliance on ELS. Need more substantive posts, particularly in light of Moser Report and widening participation

- **Staff development**

More time needed for staff development and development of resources

- **Childcare**

More childcare provision needed; linked to play scheme for summer schools.



Example 6 (continued)

The summary of strengths and weaknesses above was used to formulate an action plan, extracts from which are shown below.

Action Plan		
4.1 Action to deal with weaknesses (3 above)		
	By what date and by whom?	
Staffing – bring to attention of senior management	Immediately	RB
Childcare – next year's summer school; change of venues to areas with play scheme link and crèche facilities	Summer 2000	RB
Staff development time for development of resources	Development weeks	RB/ Organisers
4.2 Short term (within 6 months)		
	By what date and by whom?	
• Family learning expansion – parents supporting children's numeracy	Starting September 1999	PL & RB
• Further expansion of European experience in community, lateral progression for some students	Continuous through the year	JK
• Gain new basic skills agency Quality mark	December 1999	
• Internal/external moderation review	October 1999	RB/ Organisers/ external moderator
4.3 Long term		
	By what date and by whom?	
• Widening participation – Moser recommendations	By 2001	Basic skills team
• Staff development for new national curriculum	By 2001	RB/ Basic skills organisers
• New national qualifications for new staff and opportunities for existing staff	From 2000 onwards	RB/SB



Monitoring and reporting the quality of provision does not in itself lead to improvements in the quality of provision. For this to happen it is essential to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses which have been identified through the quality assurance procedures. The development of an action plan provides a clear framework to help staff understand what they have to do, who is responsible for particular actions and the timescale within which it is to take place. For it to be effective, the action plan has to have specific objectives which clearly state what is to be achieved. Without specific objectives it is impossible for the college to monitor whether or not the action taken has had a positive impact on the quality of the provision.

The following section includes extracts from action plans which have been developed to improve the quality of basic skills provision in two colleges.



Example 1

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Quality Improvement Action Plan

Department		Basic Skills			
Programme/Functional Area		Basic Skills			
Programme/Functional Manager(s)					
Manager responsible for Monitoring Plan					
Issue	Actions	By whom	By when	Process and timetable for monitoring and evaluation	Progress to date
1. Induction into the whole college for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use NOCN "Making choices/managing learning" as a framework Identify learning managers to act as personal tutors for each student Induction process to be formally agreed and recording forms designed 	Basic skills team	Sept 99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review timetable at co-ordinators meeting Report formally to interim self-assessment 	
2. Inconsistency in providing precourse and exit guidance in the community and sharing good practice with all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominate member of staff to develop the sharing of good practice Conduct training and support at staff meetings and events Link to county development group regarding community provision Raise awareness amongst college part-time tutors of college based provision and work more closely with the guidance unit 	JD and team	Oct 99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visits to classes and observations, student perceptions and monitoring of course planning 	
3. Improvement of attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More detailed initial assessment and agreeing individual learning programmes to be the responsibility of learning managers Attendance to be tracked more systematically by tutors Referral to learning managers as soon as attendance becomes irregular Progress review to be conducted by a learning manager outside of the learning environment to encourage openness 	JW and team	Sept 99 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly attendance reviews with co-ordinators 	



Example 2

Basic Skills Quality Initiative Basic skills area action plan 1999/2000

Issue	Action	Performance indicator	Target	Timescale	Responsible person	Monitor 2 Review
Support take up rate of students in the 10th percentile	Target course teams, foundation to intermediate by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Attend course team meetings to raise issues regarding student support Close liaison with personal tutors of identified students Offer timetable slots to course teams 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A rise in the percentage of students that fall within the 10th percentile attending for support Timetables 	A 2% rise in students falling in the 10th percentile	1st November 2000	DD/HS	June 2000 and October 2000
Proving the benefit of basic skills support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Record the achievement of identified students who received support compared with those who did not accept support Record the retention of the identified students who received support in comparison with the students who did not accept support 	The retention and achievement of students accepting support will be a higher percentage compared to those who are not receiving support	70% of the students identified will remain on course and achieve accreditation for their main course	September 2000	PD/HS	Review study skills attendance stats on each funding date against withdrawals

Prompt Questions for Element 2



Basic Skills Quality Initiative



How effective are your arrangements for reporting statistical data?



How do you decide what statistical data you will report on?



How do you help staff to produce effective summative reports on the quality of their provision?



How effective are the action plans you have developed for basic skills provision?



How do you help staff to set specific objectives within action plans?



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Element I: Staff Appraisal and Performance Review



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Performance review

To ensure good quality provision it is essential for colleges to have skilled staff who work effectively to promote continuous quality improvement. Most colleges now have systems for appraising the performance of staff in order to celebrate their strengths, identify areas for development and provide support to enable them to improve their performance.

For appraisal to work effectively it is essential for staff to be clear about their roles, responsibilities, targets and objectives. The college's approach to appraisal needs to be clearly stated and the procedures for its implementation require careful thought and planning. Where the process is effective, appraisers and appraisees have undertaken training to help them understand the process and to play a full part in it.

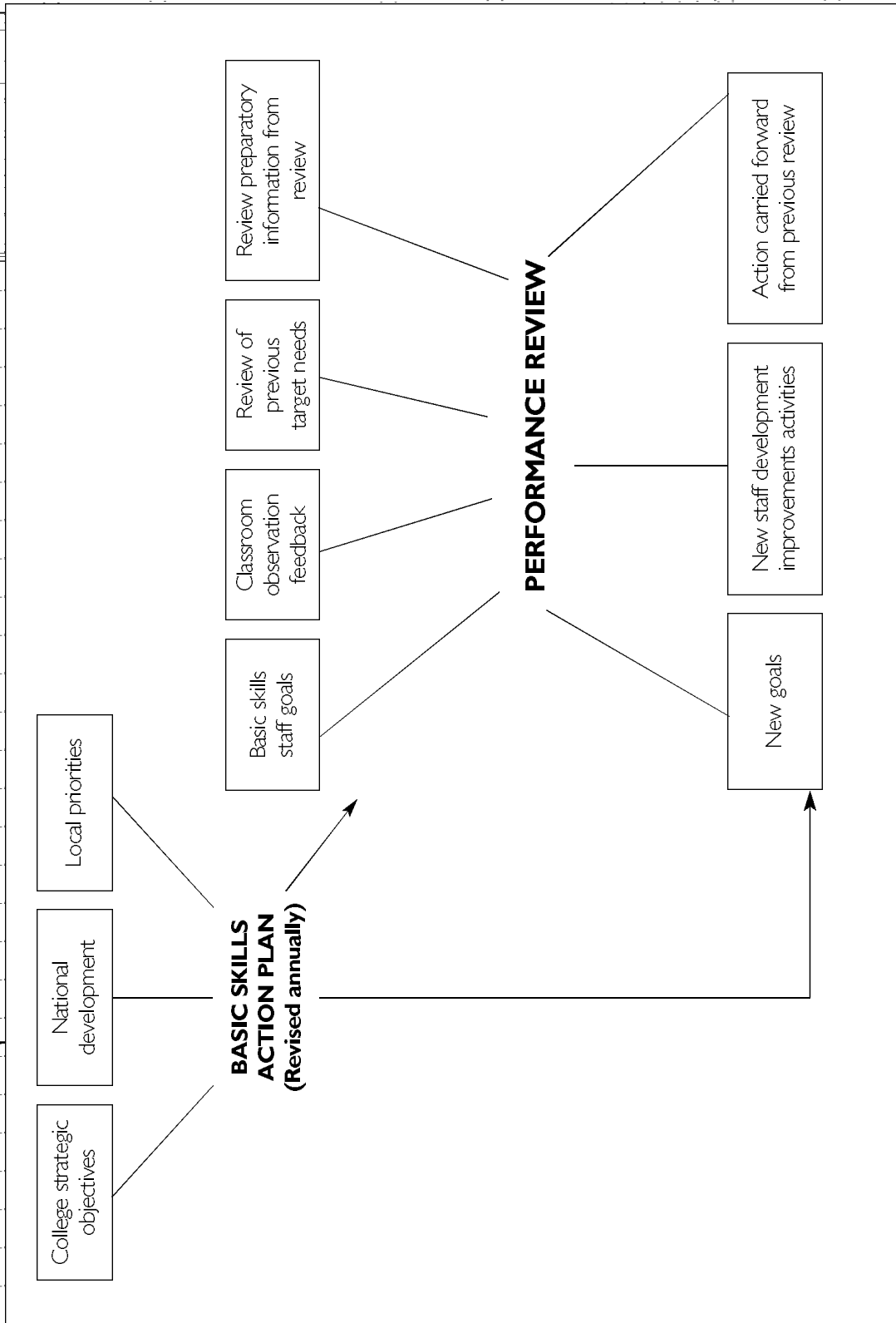
The monitoring of teachers' performance through classroom observations forms a central part of most appraisal systems. For this to work effectively care is needed to ensure that observers have the necessary skills and experience to make accurate judgements. Many colleges have now developed clear criteria to help them to judge the quality of lessons. (More information on classroom observation can be found in aspect 1 of this unit.)

The following section shows the approaches to appraisal and performance review developed by different colleges. Also included are examples of the documentation used to support the process, and descriptions of the ways in which the outcomes from appraisal have been used to improve the quality of basic skills provision.



Example 1

The following charts summarise one college's approach to performance review.

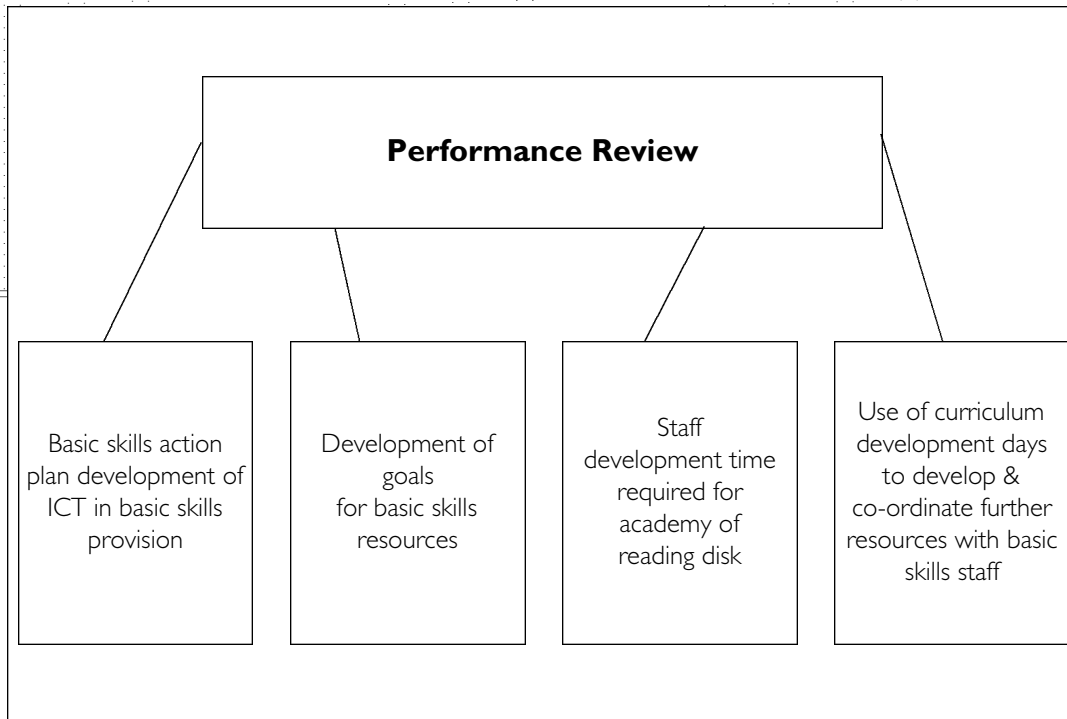


Example 1 (continued)

Team Leader Basic Skills Performance Review Extract



Basic Skills Quality Initiative





Example 1 (continued)

The documentation used by the same college to explain the rationale and procedures of its performance review are given below.

Performance review

Performance Review is a key strategy to ensure that an organisation improves student learning and experiences by enabling staff to evaluate their role and skills within the organisation. The review frameworks and process will enhance the effectiveness of staff development provision by helping to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of all the staff. Both the reviewer and the reviewee share a mutual responsibility for the success of the review process. The development benefits of the Performance Review are only likely to be realised if both reviewer and interviewee

behave with mutual respect, openness, honesty, sensitivity and professionalism.

The purpose of the scheme is to continually improve the quality of the service provided to the student. The scheme provides a model in which organisational objectives and outcomes are delivered through the professional development of all staff. The emphasis of the scheme is:

- evaluation of past performance
- agreed target setting
- identification of development needs
- monitoring continuous improvement.

It is not the function of the scheme to determine pay in relation to performance.

Principles

The basic principles underlying the scheme that are the staff give of their best if they:

- know and agree what is expected of them
- receive feedback from colleagues
- are able to raise issues with those who have managerial or organisational responsibility for them
- receive support and guidance to achieve agreed objectives
- have their contribution recognised
- can see how their performance helps other colleagues to meet strategic objectives.



Aims

The aims of this scheme are:

- to support the staff to meet organisational objectives
- to support development planning and the effective management of the educational organisation
- to improve the quality of education for all learners by enabling staff to perform their duties

effectively

- to provide an opportunity to review the performance of the individuals within the organisation
- to recognise achievements and workloads of staff
- to support staff to realise their full potential
- to target areas for professional development and support
- to improve teamwork and the effectiveness of departments within the organisation.

The essential feature of the scheme is to manage and support performance. Individuals will benefit from an annual review meeting by having an opportunity to evaluate performance, assess and plan workload and identify development needs linked to their role within the organisation.

Staff will be reviewed by someone with management, supervisory or programme management responsibility. The identification of the individual reviews will be the responsibility of the line managers in consultation with each member being reviewed. Requests for an alternative reviewer will be considered.

The scheme will operate on a yearly basis. New staff will be reviewed within their first month of appointment to identify any immediate development needs. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to meet informally in the interim period.

All reviewers will receive training on performance review skills including target setting and measuring performance against standards.

Briefing sessions for staff being reviewed will also be held by line managers.

Example 1 (continued)

Procedure

- seven days prior to the review, the reviewee is to complete a review preparation form PR1. This is to be sent to the reviewer. This allows the reviewee to consider current roles, responsibilities and achievement of previously set targets and training development needs. This allows the reviewer to prepare for the review.
- an initial discussion will take place with the reviewer and reviewee to consider PR1. This will assist in clarifying roles and responsibilities and provide an opportunity to consider and agree

additional duties to be undertaken during the year.

- achievement of targets set in the previous year is to be recorded in section 1.1 of the document PR2 and details of any actions to be carried forward in section 1.2.

Reviewer and reviewee to discuss and agree

- 3-5 key goals, which are to be achieved in the forthcoming year. These are to be recorded in section 2.1 of the document PR2. Methods of achieving these goals and dates are to be recorded in columns 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4. One copy to the reviewer, second copy to be retained by the reviewee (NCR)
- training and development needs are to be recorded on document PR3. (NCR) one copy to be forwarded to the staff development manager, one copy to be retained by the reviewer
- allocation of teaching hours is recorded on staff timetable
- evaluation forms PR6 are to be completed by both reviewer and reviewee and sent to the staff development manager.

Documents are to be agreed and signed by the reviewer and reviewee.

Appeals and complaints

If disagreements emerge during the review process, which cannot be resolved by discussion between reviewer and reviewee, one or more of the following steps must be adopted:

- agree to record the disagreement but complete the review where possible
- adjourn the review process to enable either or both parties to seek advice prior to recommencing the process

- both parties acknowledge that an impasse has been reached and inform their senior manager who will advise on an appropriate course of action, which may include the appointment of an alternative reviewer.

Example 1 (continued)

Performance review scheme goal setting and monitoring PR2



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Name Job Title Sector/Section FT	
Section 1	
I.1 Achievement of Goals	I.2 Action Carried Forward
Section 2 – Key goals (3-5)	
2.1 What will be achieved?	2.2 How will this be achieved
2.3 By when?	2.4 Other comments
Signed(reviewer) Signed (reviewee) Date	
NB. For completion see Performance Review Handbook. Top copy reviewer, second copy reviewer.	



Example 2

In another college, senior managers decided that performance review should focus on communication and relationships, attitude to work, organisation and administration and quality. Staff in basic skills decided to develop criteria under these headings which they felt were of particular significance to their area of work. They also identified sources of evidence which could be used to check if staff were meeting the criteria. Their work is summarised in the framework below.

Example 2 (continued)



Appraisal criteria: Making the college system fit basic skills support

College Heading	Basic Skills Support criteria	Sources of evidence
Communication and Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to communicate clearly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - face to face/telephone/writing with staff/manager/students/team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self evaluation checklist • examples, observation, feedback • completion of tasks; e.g. setting up a meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to communication regularly, quickly, appropriately <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from staff/students/manager/team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written responses, e.g. end of year report • speed of response • preparation of communications • contributions in meetings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to work as part of a team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prepared to share ideas, materials - offering support, not judgmental - willing to contribute - adaptable, able to broaden role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributions to team tasks, e.g. choosing materials • feedback, observation • attendance at team meetings • involvement in projects e.g. writing new courses
Attitude to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to providing a service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - willing to let others lead - reliable and positive - patient, negotiating skills - persistent and self-motivating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feedback, e.g. from students at progress interview • observation by college staff • effects on customers, e.g. changes in practice from college vocational teams
Organisation and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record-keeping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all required records are kept - records kept are accurate - records kept to required level of detail - procedures adhered to 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initial interview/programme plan/progress review - course name and initial interview form is accurate - students complete their section of progress review - copy of progress review sent to personal tutor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - able to prioritise - able to move fast when needed - use of quiet times in centre to work on team objectives 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attends to needs of regular attenders versus new arrivals during busy times - preparing worksheets,
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - able to manage workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - photocopying - not taking up projects and pulling out later when becomes busy



Example 3

Colleges often adjust performance review arrangements for different groups of staff. The following example describes the arrangements made by one college.

Arrangements for the performance review of basic skills staff

Permanent staff

College process

All permanent staff have three appraisal reviews as part of the college appraisal programme. A summative appraisal review is held in the summer term at which performance objectives are set for the following year. These performance objectives must be consistent with the curriculum area

business plan and the college strategic plan. In the autumn and the spring term the tutor's achievements are reviewed and objectives are amended following discussion between appraiser and appraisee. Appraisal covers the tutor's whole job as outlined in job descriptions, not just the priority areas specified in performance objectives.

Review of performance

Both appraiser and appraisee review and grade the appraisee's performance in the following areas:

- awareness of college's key strategic objectives
- current job knowledge and skills
- quality of work
- personal organisation
- communication skills
- working with others
- dependability
- initiative.

Appraisees are also asked to comment on how they could improve their own performance.

Setting performance objectives

The performance objectives set in the summative review must be SMART.

Specific The tutor must have a clear understanding of the objectives and know exactly what is required or expected.

Measurable It should be possible to assess what has been achieved within a given timescale.

Achievable The objective or task should not be too large or obscure to be achievable.

Relevant The objectives should be relevant to the job and correspond to wider plans in the curriculum area or the college.

Timescale Sufficient time should be allowed to achieve the goal.

It is important in setting objectives that they are accepted and agreed by the appraisee and that they take into account the appraisee's own comments on how to improve performance.

Support in achieving performance objectives

- training or staff development required to achieve the objectives is agreed and recorded
- actions are agreed that will support the achievement and the date by which they will be undertaken. The actions may be by the appraiser or appraisee.

Performance objective

- to increase the use of IT with basic skills students.

Staff development required

- staff development on the programmes currently loaded on the machine in the learning base. by July 1999
- staff development on how to write/adapt the programmes to be able to provide relevant learning materials to students. by July 1999

Agreed activities

By whom and timescale

Set up staff development session	Line manager by April 1999 (appraiser)
Attend staff development session	Tutor (appraisee) by April 1999
Offer IT based materials to students for whom this may be appropriate.	Tutor (appraisee) by June 1999
Prepare learning materials linked to vocational areas. Materials should be accessible by other students and tutors.	Tutor (appraisee) by July 1999



Example 3 (continued)

The way in which another college monitors the work of voluntary tutors who provide individual support for students in rural areas is shown below.

Part-time hourly paid staff

The performance of part-time hourly paid staff is reviewed through the process of assessment and observation of teaching and learning. The key performance requirements of these tutors are that:

- the learning experience of the students for whom they are responsible should meet all standards required for high quality teaching and learning
- the paperwork required by the college to assess and record achievement, retention and attendance is completed correctly and at the time required.

The tutor being observed has the opportunity to record his/her own comments on the session that has been observed. Up to an hour is allocated for the feedback and discussion following the observation.

An action plan is agreed at the end of this feedback. This may contain action points for the tutor being observed and for the college to provide staff development and/or appropriate access to resources.

Voluntary tutors

Review of performance only takes place with volunteers working on a one-to-one basis.

The performance review system was originally introduced for all volunteers. However, it was found to be less useful for volunteer tutors working in groups and did not justify the time it took.

These volunteers already had on-going contact throughout the session with the group tutor who monitored all programme planning and record keeping. As all group tutors are observed at least twice a year the deployment of volunteers could be observed at the same time, as could the relationship between the volunteers and the students.

Staff development requests are either fed back directly to the course organiser or through the group tutor.

Example 4

Framework for performance review of voluntary tutors working on a one-to-one basis.



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

Another organisation uses the following approach to review the performance of voluntary tutors.

All voluntary tutors are attached to a qualified basic skills support tutor

All voluntary tutors are observed at least once by a support tutor

All voluntary tutors have the opportunity for regular contact with the support tutor. Some have frequent contact – some have very little contact.

All voluntary tutors must have a performance review at least once a year.
Duration – usually two hours.
Title – review rather than performance review for greater acceptability.

Process for review of voluntary tutors

- prior to review each volunteer completes a questionnaire in which they review their own delivery of the learning programme to a student.
- this is sent to their support tutor before the meeting.

The questionnaire was designed:

- to enable both voluntary tutor and support tutor to prepare for the meeting
- to ensure the review covered all key aspects of the voluntary tutor's work with the student
- to ensure a record was kept of the issues raised and the action points planned.

Using the Information Gained from the Performance Review Process to Improve the Quality of Provision

As the main purpose of performance review is to improve the quality of provision, it is essential to make good use of the information gained from the process. One of the main outcomes of performance review is the identification of staff training needs but other information relating, for example, to resources, communication and team management will point to changes which are required to improve the quality of the provision.

The following examples show how two colleges have used the information gained from the performance review process to improve the quality of their basic skills provision.

Example 1



Ways in which the outcomes of performance review have been used to improve provision

1. Regular staff development programme linked to tutors' requirements

Information collected on future training requirements has led to courses on:

- teaching spelling
- selecting and creating materials
- setting achievable goals
- working with beginner readers

- underpinning skills
- understanding dyslexia
- tackling reading problems
- use of IT.

2. Clarity for individual tutors about what is expected of them

- permanent tutors have clear targets set out in their performance objectives
- hourly paid tutors and voluntary tutors have clear action points which are reviewed at subsequent meetings.

3. Clarity for the manager responsible for basic skills about the support needs of basic skills tutors

- as performance review is a process in which tutors are able to express their needs, the manager obtains an overview of resource deficiencies, accommodation difficulties, difficulties with paperwork and other areas of concern to tutors and can act accordingly.

4. The cohesiveness of the provision is maintained so that all students can expect the same quality of basic skills teaching

This is achieved by ensuring that all tutors and volunteers are included in the review process:

- all tutors are monitored to ensure that the teaching they offer links to the learning goals of their students
- organisers are kept in contact with the diversity of the provision and the needs of all students
- the review maintains a link that ensures all students are offered appropriate accreditation and progression opportunities.



Example 2

Post-appraisal training plan

Needs identified at appraisal	How?	Accreditation available? Funding?	Who might need/want it? Others can too
IT Skills			
Individual needs	Possible peripatetic IT trainer for the department, helping individuals with their particular needs.	Depends on funding	All of us!
IT with students	Our ILT champion has some time allocated to do sessions for us tailored to our needs, e.g. how to use ILT in our teaching	Remission organised centrally. Accreditation not necessary	All who teach
Systematic training	Central training in learning centres or through staff development programme	CLAIT available or OCNs free to staff	Anyone who would like to take it up - good for beginners
Tutoring			
Counselling	Counselling skills in the development of learning	Staff development will fund	Overall Basic Skills Co-ordinator
Liasing and co-ordinating	Team sessions – we can teach ourselves	In-house TDLB C11 co-ordinate the provision of learning opportunities with other contributors to the learning programme	All co-ordinators
Guidance	Team sessions using an internal trainer - perhaps from guidance	In-house TDLB C26 support and advise individual leameers or OCN introduction to adult guidance	All basic skills co-ordinators
Promoting learner autonomy	Team sessions – using each other to learn from and develop new ideas	Nothing available	Everyone - but especially basic skills and study support teams
Identifying learning needs and styles	Team sessions - using each other to learn from and trying out new learning styles materials	In-house TDLB A21 identify individuals' learning aims, needs and styles	Everyone - but especially basic skills and study support teams
Teaching			
General	City and Guilds 7306 for new tutors or those who have only got FAETC stage 1 so far	In-house I hope C&G 7306 in a series of TDLB units (A21, B21, B33, C21, C22, C25, D11, D32, D33, E21, E31, E41)	New basic skills tutors
Literacy	Practical strategies for existing and new staff - a mix between the Basic Skills Initial Certificate revamped to make it more lively and practical for new tutors (it will contribute to the 7306) - and team sessions using our own materials and those in the inclusive learning pack	In-house C&G 9282	New literacy tutors
		In-house C&G 9283	New numeracy tutors
		In-house TDLB B21 designing learning programmes to meet learners' requirements	Most tutors would find it useful
Language training	EFL training Team sessions led by language support co-ordinator	RSA diploma in TEFL through language unit	New language support tutor
		Not accredited	Anyone supporting multilingual students
Assessment	Understanding how to use competence-based assessments e.g. for OCNs, basic skills qualifications like Wordpower, or key skills	In-house TDLB D32 Assess candidate performance IN-house TDLB D33 Assess candidate using diverse evidence	Anyone who hasn't got it already - this is compulsory
Co-ordinator Skills			
Internal verification	Checking that assessment systems are being adhered to, helping maintain quality	In-house TDLB D34 support and verify the internal assessment process	Any co-ordinators who haven't got it - and me!
Prioritising and time management	Team sessions sharing good ideas	Not accredited but might contribute to certificate in management studies at a later date	All co-ordinators!



■
How could you improve your arrangements for monitoring the performance of staff?

■
How effective is your training for appraisers and appraisees?

■
What guidance do you give to staff who observe lessons?

■
What arrangements do you make to review the performance of part-time staff and volunteers?

■
How do you ensure that the information gained from the performance review process is used effectively to improve the quality of the provision?

■



Element 2: Identifying Training Needs

The role of providers

One adult education service uses the following process to identify training needs and plan staff development.

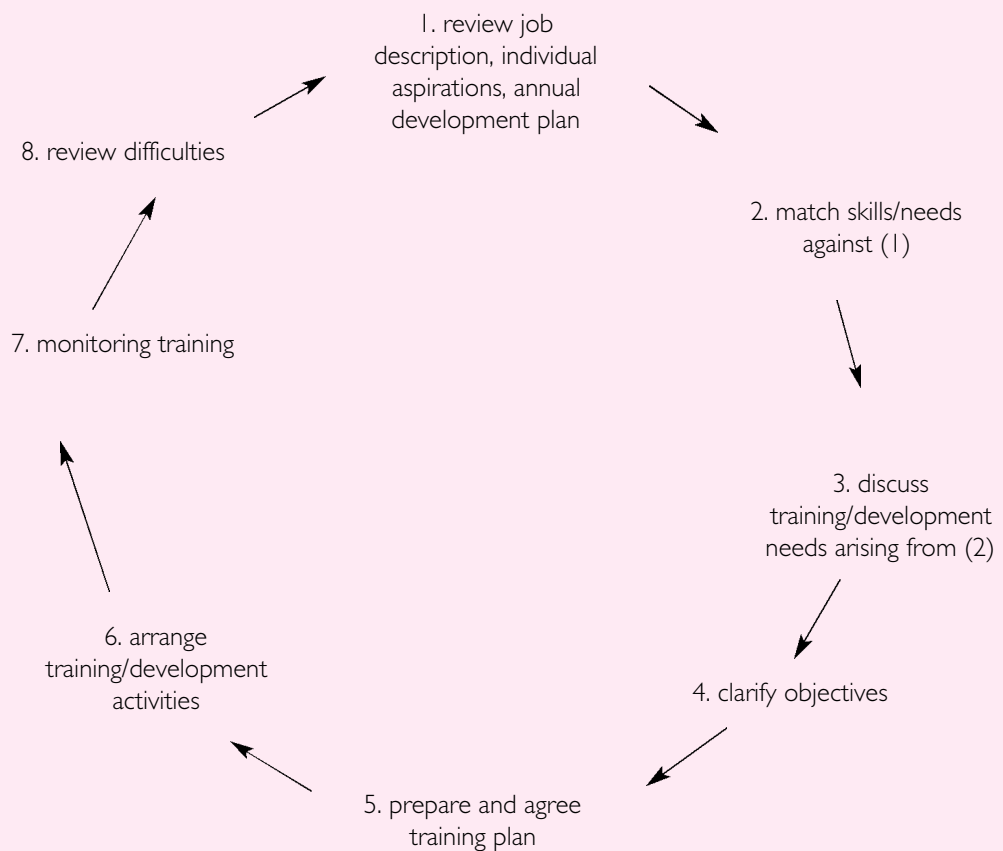
Example 1

Staff development statement

The adult education service is committed to developing a culture of lifelong learning throughout the county. Its Lifelong Learning Development Plan is set within the context of the Council's mission statement and strategic objectives. The concept of lifelong learning is an entitlement for all staff.

In line with this, the quality of provision offered by the adult education service and the development of a responsive, flexible and relevant curriculum will be supported by a planned programme of development. This will be designed to meet the needs of all staff in ways that are consistent with the Council's annual development plan.

The stages to be followed in planning individual staff development are as follows:



Example 2



Training and development needs can be identified in a number of different ways, some focussing on the team, some on the individual, and some more formal than others. The various approaches identified by one provider include:

Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self assessment, using a standard proforma • appraisal: all full and part-time tutors, with line managers, once a year
Team/Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • observation of teaching and learning: all full and part-time tutors observed by line manager once a year • self assessment process: annual, at course team and at section level • course team meetings, where ideas and issues arise
Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal inspection • response to external audits e.g. Basic skills Quality Mark, IIP • response to national developments • individual student satisfaction and progress reviews, completed termly • moderation and verification processes, internal and external

Example 3

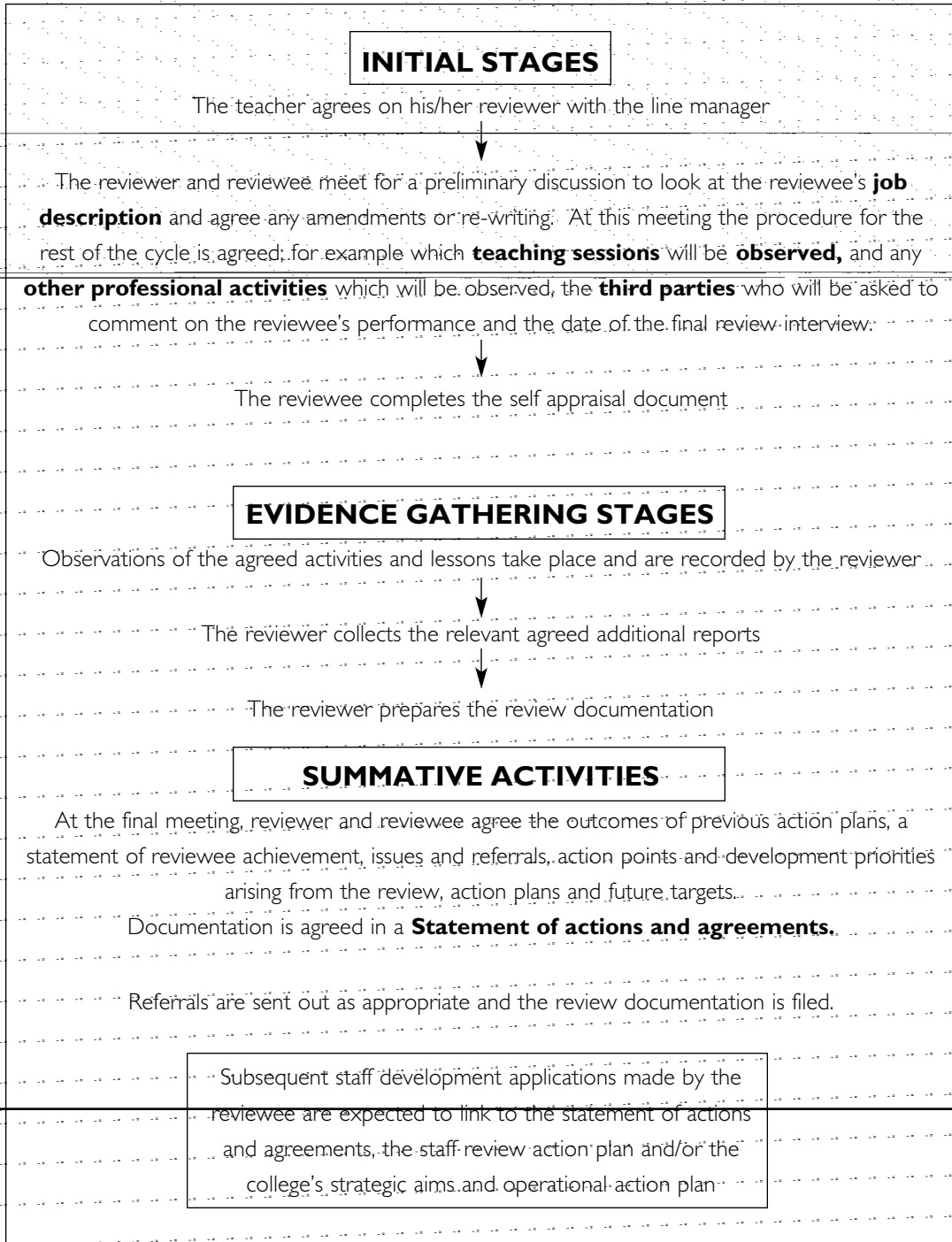
The example which follows shows how many of these elements are brought together by one provider to form a Staff Review Process, leading to the identification of training and development needs. The provider's Basic Skills team consists of a co-ordinator, 5 part-time tutors and about 30 volunteer tutors. All full and part-time staff participate in the review process, and this year all volunteer staff were offered the opportunity to participate. The provider highlights the important features of this process for basic skills practitioners as follows:

- review of personal job descriptions and the opportunity to update them
- the fact that each individual can choose their reviewer and their observer, which enables both specialist and non-specialist staff and managers to be involved
- self assessment, supported by a 'self-monitoring inventory' and a 'teaching evaluation checklist' used independently by individual teachers
- the observation of other professional activities as well as teaching, which recognises the varied roles and demands on basic skills teachers, e.g. support of volunteers, individual advice and guidance for students, progress reviews
- the opportunity for each individual to invite others to contribute to 'third party' reports; this is often a volunteer tutor or another colleague
- the final outcome, which is a statement of actions agreed and/or agreements reached



Example 3 (continued)

How needs are identified – the staff review cycle



Example 3 (continued)

Self-monitoring inventory – first page



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

It can be helpful to your development as a tutor if you keep an eye on progress in those areas which are important to you personally. You can use this Inventory to help you with this process by checking yourself on the various items listed and any others which you think are important to you.

Be gentle with yourself and be honest about your strengths as well as about areas which you feel need more attention.

~~IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU DEVELOP ALL-ROUND SKILLS OF SELF-EVALUATION SO THAT YOU CAN BECOME A SKILLED OBSERVER OF YOUR OWN PERFORMANCE.~~

Once you have identified areas which need more attention, you will find it encouraging...

- if you try to tackle one or two of these areas at a time rather than the whole lot together
- if you start by trying to tackle areas which are easier to deal with rather than those which are more difficult
- if you invite the co-operation of your colleagues in this activity and discuss your own self assessment with someone else from time to time.

	Satisfied with this at present	Keeping my eye on this	Needs more of my attention
Introducing myself to students			
Becoming friendly and welcoming			
Encouraging the students to work together, share and support each other			
Being able to negotiate an individual programme to meet students' learning needs/goals			
Diagnosing students' learning needs and acting on these			
Setting realistic and achievable learning goals with students			
Identifying students' different learning styles and mixing and matching these			



Self-analysis of Training Needs

Many providers make good use of individual self evaluation as a way of encouraging staff to be constructive and self-critical. Sometimes this forms part of the provider's quality assurance cycle, contributing to the production of an annual self-assessment report for the curriculum area or for the provision as a whole. Sometimes it is used to help an individual prepare for a development interview or an appraisal. Sometimes it has a sharper focus, and is used solely to identify individual training needs or contribute to the development of an annual programme of training or development.

The principle of self assessment applies to basic skills team leaders and managers as well as teaching staff, and is used in the same ways. The extracts which follow illustrate two approaches from the same provider, one a 'can-do' profile for middle managers and the other targeting more senior managers and encouraging them to consider not only whether they have a particular skill but also its effectiveness.

Example

Self Assessment Checklist (extract)

	Confident	Like Support
...3 Supporting students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• interviewing and assessing new students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• organising dyslexia assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• arranging and recording progression routes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...4 Financial management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• setting up teacher salaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• using budget codes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• using budget codes to monitor expenditure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• submitting claims to external agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• managing the imprest account	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

....continued

Example (continued)



Needs Analysis Form (extract)

In order to evaluate present skills and effectiveness as well as assess priorities for development/training, indicate on a scale of 1-5 how frequently you perform a task, how satisfied you are with the way you perform the task, and how successful you have been in achieving the task. 1 = lowest, 5 = highest.

Tasks	Frequency					Satisfaction					Success				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Curriculum															
Develop curriculum, setting objectives and strategies															
Hold team meetings															
Carry out teacher observation															
Meet quality standards															
Set up systems which provide evidence for quality assurance															
Develop business plans															

All those providers who use volunteers recognise how essential effective training and support are for volunteers. 'Pre-service' training helps to ensure that volunteers are clear about what is expected of them as well as providing them with the essential skills and understanding they need if they are to be able to contribute constructively to the learners' success. Most volunteers are only too willing to take advantage of subsequent training and development opportunities in order to continue building their expertise or to help them prepare for a move to a different role within the organisation.

Example 1

One provider identifies the following needs for volunteer tutors:

Volunteer tutors need:

- to have initial training that will enable them to support students and group tutors effectively in a variety of settings – community groups, family centres, hostels, work based provision, study skills support
- to have on-going support in their placement, in preparing and delivering, recording and evaluating sessions
- to know how to use the standard paperwork procedures in a particular learning environment, e.g. goals and progress record, C&G or OCN paperwork, job centre forms
- support and guidance in helping students who have particular learning needs, e.g. hearing impairment, problems socialising
- opportunities to raise and discuss issues relevant to their work, and to review their roles and responsibilities
- access to health and safety procedures, to complaints procedures and to equal opportunities policies and procedures
- access to continuing training and development

Example 2

One provider asks volunteer tutors to complete an application form which includes a 'free writing' element to support assessment of written communication skills and inform initial selection. Prospective volunteers are then invited to an interview where the role of the volunteer is discussed, together with any expectations they may have. The next stage maybe an invitation to undertake the City & Guilds 9281 training course. Throughout this initial training period, there are opportunities for further review and assessment.

Example 3

Once initial training is over, it is essential that providers offer a programme of continuing support and training to their volunteers. The diagram which follows illustrates the process established by one provider to help it develop an annual training programme to meet the needs of volunteer tutors as well as others.

The Basic Skills team includes 30 volunteer tutors, most placed within groups but a few working one-to-one with learners. All are required to have the C&G Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills, which is offered as an initial training course. This diagram shows the process for developing the in-service training programme for volunteer tutors.

A meeting is held at the beginning of the academic year to which all volunteer tutors are invited. This is both a business meeting (to pass on relevant information, distribute paperwork, outline new developments and projects, discuss important issues), and a chance to talk to each other informally.

At this meeting an in-service training questionnaire is distributed, discussed, completed and returned. The questionnaire asks tutors to select the training that they feel they need from a checklist, which is compiled from previous comments made by the volunteer tutors, requests from end-of-course evaluations and comments from group tutors. They are also required to complete a grid confirming their availability.

Questionnaires are also sent to all volunteer tutors who did not attend the meeting.

The results of the questionnaires are analysed and the training programme is planned to include the topics requested by most volunteers and to cover daytime and evening sessions.

The training outline is sent to all volunteer tutors and part-time staff. (Part-time staff are invited to join this programme in addition to any other training they may undertake. They are also invited to join the planning and/or delivery as a development activity).

The sessions are planned and delivered by the co-ordinator as tutor-trainer and part-time staff or volunteers who offer to take part in delivery. There is no minimum number necessary to make the training session viable.

Evaluation forms are distributed at the end of the sessions that include an opportunity to suggest or highlight future training needs. These suggestions are included in the initial questionnaire for the following year's in-service programme.

Teachers from other disciplines

The increasing emphasis on improved retention and achievement has confirmed what has been conventional wisdom for some time: that many non-specialist teachers are often unable to provide adequate support for learners in their classes who have poor basic skills, and these learners are likely either to leave their course early or not to succeed in their achievement aims, even if they do complete the course.

Although many of these teachers recognise they would benefit from a greater understanding of basic skills and the problems faced by learners with basic skills needs, finding acceptable ways to give them the knowledge and understanding they require is no easy matter. A range of responses has emerged, ranging from a requirement for all teachers working at NVQ level 1 and 2 or equivalent to obtain an initial certificate in teaching basic skills to the redeployment of basic skills staff from teaching roles to working alongside other teachers to support their learning on the job.

Teachers from other organisations

As well as working with staff from within the same organisation, many providers offer training to teachers from other organisations, for example, other colleges or basic skills providers, the WEA and voluntary organisations.

Administration and reception staff

One of the key roles of administrative or front-of-house staff is to respond to enquiries from people who have a basic skills need and who have come forward for information and help. These members of staff are usually not basic

skills specialists, but they give information as part of their general duties. They are very often the first contact a prospective learner has with the basic skills service. It is therefore essential that they are able to respond to enquiries in a supportive and reassuring way, as well as being knowledgeable and effective. They are key members of the team, and accordingly need access to appropriate training and development opportunities both as part of their induction and regularly thereafter.

Example

The checklist which follows is used by one adult education service as a self-assessment checklist during induction and as a prompt for discussing aspects of the job at appraisal. They have found that its use makes it easier for staff to ask for more information and support if they need it, and to discuss further training and development.

Induction checklist for administrative staff

Dealing with basic skills enquiries

Task:

please tick

Can you answer questions/advise on...?

range of course available

location/time/cost of courses

process of joining a course

how basic skills assessment is carried out

the type of support available within courses

what prior knowledge is need to join a course

what a student needs to bring to the first session

the make-up of students in a class (age, sex, etc)

what leaflets are available

Would you know...?

who can deal with specific requests/answer questions about

dyslexia

maths

English as an additional language

communication skills

family learning

special learning needs

learning support

basic skills in the workplace

who can deal with complaints

who else provides basic skills courses in the community/colleges

Would you know how to give information to someone who

speaks very little English?

Would you know how to...?

process the information given to you by a prospective student

use referral forms

deal with confidential information

Are you familiar with...?

BSA quality standards

Council policy on equal opportunities

Inclusive learning

Example (continued)

Induction checklist continued...

Information, guidance and training is available to cover the following areas:

Please indicate aspects that you are particularly interested in:

Basic skills provision –

Types of classes/courses available/course content

Staffing structures

Accreditation opportunities

What a learner can expect from a class

Adult learning

Barriers to learning

Impact of lack of basic skills on adults' lives

Individual learning styles

Student expectations/motivation

Dealing with enquiries – on the phone and face to face

Using language clearly and unambiguously

Dealing with difficult behaviour

Dealing with complaints

Understanding the referral system

Quality assurance

Equal opportunities

Inclusive learning

Basic Skills Agency standards

Other:

Many providers have found it helpful to ensure that the members of their board of governors have some awareness of basic skills issues and an understanding of how they are being tackled. For some, this has been a development of the inclusive learning initiative. For others it is part of a planned cycle of presentations by department heads or equivalent on the work they do. Increasingly it results from the growing emphasis on retention and achievement, and the importance of appropriate basic skills strategies in response to under-performance.

While it is not necessary for governors to have an in-depth training programme focussed solely on basic skills, it is helpful for their awareness to be supplemented by less formal lines of communication. This might be by the attachment of a board member to the basic skills area to attend appropriate meetings and meet staff and students. Or it might be, as in the example which follows, a board member deciding to become a volunteer tutor and putting that experience to use where relevant within the board.

Example 1

Governor awareness

One way of informing and raising awareness of the particular issues surrounding basic skills provision came about by accident when one of our governors decided to become a volunteer tutor. She is a co-opted member of the Board, and her decision was based on an interest in the work and desire to help, rather than having anything to do with her role in college governance.

She says she had very little knowledge of basic skills before achieving the C&G Initial Training Certificate and joining a community group as a volunteer tutor. This has given her opportunities to:

- meet staff and students and understand the rationale and ethos of the work
- consult with staff about current college issues
- be aware of facilities, accommodation, staffing, marketing and funding issues as they relate directly to basic skills.

It benefits basic skills by offering a different and more direct way of making the views of staff and students known to the board of governors.

The governor comments:

"I believe I have a better understanding of staff issues and contact with students is always useful. I don't broadcast my role as governor".

If the primary reason for a governor to become a volunteer tutor is a genuine interest in the work, this seems one way of making sure that discussions about funding, marketing, accommodation and staffing as they affect basic skills are well informed.

Those involved in basic skills support in the workplace

An increasing number of employers are interested in offering workplace support for their employees, not so much by using an adult education service or a college to provide the support but by looking for ways in which supervisors, trainers or managers can be helped to integrate basic skills support with the work they do. The kind of supervisory and managerial staff who may benefit from an improved understanding of the aims, content and models of workplace support include:

- personnel staff, who may need to consider basic skill levels when recruiting supporting staff
- supervisors, who may encounter the need to help employees when training employees on the job
- trainers who may find employees struggling with essential training programmes because of problems with basic skills
- managers who wish to discuss an employee's basic skills needs at an appraisal but are unsure how to go about it
- staff who draft written material such as operating instructions, graphs, newsletters, and who wish to make them more accessible
- trainers who are considering open or on-line resources for employees.

An adult education service identifies the following stages in developing this work:

1 Initial contact

Usually an approach from the employer, followed up by a phone call or a letter from a basic skills adviser outlining the range of training models and services available, and the provision of an information leaflet, summarising the range of courses that can be delivered on site.

2 Obtaining background information

An initial meeting with an employer to establish the context, including the number and type of employees, and the general level of qualification; job tasks and responsibilities; induction and other training offered; management structure and lines of communication... It is also useful to ask about any production or training issues, such as difficulties in making internal promotions; health and safety problems, quality assurance problems and quality assurance procedures, that have been experienced in the past, are current or are anticipated.

3 Identifying training needs

Before moving on to look at how basic skills support can be offered, it is useful to have a concise summary of the different needs of employees, and in this context in particular, of managers, supervisors and other staff who will be offering support.

This can be summarised using a training needs checklist and/or a workplace skills checklist, looking at the basic skills underpinning frequent tasks at work. These will need to be customised to

reflect the type of work environment under discussion. The example used was drafted for hospital work.

4 Reaching the agreement

To help clarify the options available to the workplace supervisors, managers and trainers, it is useful to have examples of the resources, topics or support materials that have been used in similar provision elsewhere. These might include publicity leaflets, simplified operating instructions, customised assessment materials, and customised training resources.

This will help those involved gain a clearer understanding of their own training needs as well as an insight into possible ways forward.

Finally, before starting to implement any training programme it is essential that those teachers who will be involved are familiar with the main developments which have impacted on the workplace and the ethos of training at work. Some of these may indeed have prompted the employer to consider offering basic skills support at work in the first place. They include:

- the introduction of total quality management and the flattened management structures that increasingly place decision-making and problem-solving within teams
- the various quality assurance initiatives, e.g. ISO 900, the Business Excellence model, Investors in People
- quality control systems like statistical process control which involve all employees in gathering and using data to bring about improvement
- the downsizing of organisations, resulting in a smaller workforce that needs to be flexible and multiskilled
- tighter health and safety legislation
- new technology in manufacturing processes and in communication and management systems.

These will form an important element of any briefing or training programme for workplace teachers.



Example 2 (continued)

Checklist of workplace training needs

	Urgent need	Longer term interest	Not relevant
Employees			
Numeracy e.g. averages, metric, %, graphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written communication e.g. downtime sheets, accident forms, reports, note-taking at meetings, operating instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job specific oral communication e.g. team briefings, improvement groups, presentations giving instructions, telephone skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study skills, e.g. for NVQs, team leader training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managers and Supervisors			
Raising awareness of the need for support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to assess basic skills in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing a customised assessment pack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrating basic skills support into current training, e.g. health & safety, food hygiene, SPC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Readability of workplace resources e.g. use of plain English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How to discuss basic skills needs in appraisals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance on open learning materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accredited training, e.g. C&G 7324	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Workplace skills checklist – writing

Complete time-sheets, work records

Fill in forms
 • self-certification for sickness

- incident reports
- holiday requests
- applying for internal promotion
- other

Complete patient records

Leave telephone messages, notes, and memos

More formal letter writing

Complete and update order forms,
 • stock lists, log sheets

Make notes during training sessions

Take minutes, write reports for staff meetings,
 • social clubs, newsletters

Written tasks and projects on training
 courses, e.g. hygiene certificate

Any other writing skills relating to job responsibilities, training, NVQ assessments



Prompt Questions for Element 2



What is your approach to identifying the training needs of basic skills teachers?



How do you ensure that other staff, contributing to basic skills provision, have their training needs considered?



How effective are your arrangements for reviewing and prioritising training for basic skills?



Support mechanisms

This element looks at the various approaches providers have developed in order to meet the training and development needs of those involved in basic skills provision. Most providers, especially those involved in extensive provision, have a considerable portfolio of training and development activities which they have developed over time and which they review, adjust and add to continually to meet changing demands.

One of the weaknesses of basic skills provision has been the relatively small number of staff who have relevant teaching qualifications. While most full-time staff and increasing numbers of part-time staff have qualified teacher status, until relatively recently few held qualifications specific to this area of work. This is now changing significantly. Whereas at the start the focus was largely on initial training alone, most schemes now have a range of courses, from initial training certificates through to teaching diplomas and beyond.

As well as formal qualifications, providers continue to offer substantial numbers of training courses and events that they devise for themselves, to develop and maintain the commitment and professionalism shown by their staff. One provider lists the following areas of training activity for 1999/2000:

Example 1

- courses leading to qualifications
e.g. C&G 9281, 9285, 7324
- INSET on specific topics:
 - measuring and recording achievement
 - teaching basic skills
 - inclusive learning and ABE
 - Moser report: general
 - Moser report: achievements other than qualifications
- quality assurance and basic skills
- equality assurance
- funding ABE
- key skills
- BSA quality mark
- OCN qualifications and funding
- observations and standards
- Edexcel: entry level provision
- OCN moderators' award
- deaf awareness
- observation of teaching and learning in drop-in centres
- improving delivery in ABE
- inspection
- better basic skills in practice



Example 1 (continued)

Although this element is mainly concerned with examples of courses and training activities, other forms of support and development are also available to basic skill teachers. For example, staff handbooks are often used to provide important information and guidance. These handbooks may be known by many other titles, including staff manual, tutor information pack, or staff folder but irrespective of title, they form an essential part of basic skills provision, offering a consistent framework for the team's work, a focus for planning and reviewing, and an invaluable source of reference for all staff, particularly new ones. Additionally, the process of developing and maintaining the handbook provides a real opportunity for team members to share ideas and good practice.

Example 2

One provider outlines their approach to the handbook as follows:

Rationale for staff handbook

There had been discussions about the need for a handbook, but staff were concerned about the tension between the need to allow for individual creativity, particularly with experienced staff, and the extent to which less experience staff would benefit from a more prescriptive approach. However, internal verification highlighted the need for much greater consistency within the primary basic skills provision, and the decision was taken to produce a staff handbook which was prescriptive about policies and procedures. The draft handbook was the focus of a half-day's staff development at the beginning of the year, and staff were given until the first half term to assimilate the contents and begin to implement the procedures. After half term, each member of staff met with the basic skills team leader to discuss how they were coping with the procedures, bringing with them examples such as records of progress, and to raise any issues of concern they had. This proved invaluable, and some parts of the handbook were modified in the light of experience. The handbook is now an accepted and valued part of support for staff.

Example 3

One college highlights the importance of the staff handbook where there are significant numbers of part-time as opposed to full-time staff.

Because of the amount of teaching done by part-timers it is difficult to ensure the quality of the provision:

- part-time staff place their own interpretation on the service they need to provide
- they find it hard to keep up with changing college procedures
- they can feel isolated; they do not always receive general college communications
- as a result, learners have different experience depending on who is teaching them.



To address these problems, a tutor folder was developed to go in each study centre which held:

- information on student enrolment processes and register practice
- guidance on initial assessment, marking and interpretation of results
- information about how the tutorial system works, and learning support available to students
- record-keeping and student folders.



Mentoring

A second development method that does not involve formal training is the helpful support and encouragement obtained as a result of good coaching and mentoring processes. One approach is to use mentoring to help newly appointed staff, or existing staff about to take on an additional role or who are in need of help. At its simplest, the process consists of providing opportunities for less experienced staff to observe good practice in operation, that is, to observe skilled teachers going about their work. It can also involve opportunities for those being observed to contribute to tuition in a supportive context, so that they can extend their skills and confidence.

Example

The example which follows shows how one provider uses this approach to support and develop the skills of volunteer tutors. It also enables the provider to assess their suitability for paid employment, if appropriate.

Sharing good practice with volunteer tutors

The basic skills team consists of a part-time co-ordinator, five part-time teachers and 28 volunteer tutors. This flowchart shows the way in which we are able to support and develop our volunteer tutors by building on and sharing the good practice of others.

Trainee volunteer tutors' progress and achievement on initial training is assessed against the course criteria and those successful are allocated to groups to begin work.

Once established, enthusiastic and capable volunteers are invited to work within a second different group to extend their range of experience.

Those who are willing and able can be invited by the group tutor to take responsibility for a particular activity or for a particular group within the main group, e.g. working with two or three learners to develop a particular skill, or helping a learner prepare for an assessment

Enthusiastic and able volunteers can be invited to take on some short-term paid basic skills work, perhaps as a paid support assistant in a large group, covering for an absent teacher, or running a short course. The co-ordinator and other tutors provide support through co-teaching, helping with planning and/or preparation, etc.

We use a similar approach to support newly appointed group tutors. They are invited to work in another group as an 'apprentice group tutor' in addition to their own teaching, for a short time. This is mutually beneficial; as well as sharing good practice it enables existing tutors to extend their roles, acting as coach and mentor.

It is important to acknowledge the key contribution that team meetings make to staff development. Providers recognise their important role in establishing a sense of identity and shared purpose in a team or a service, in keeping staff in touch with developments internally and in the outside world, in identifying problems and pooling resources to solve them, and in sharing and developing good practice. It is for that reason that many providers have found ways to pay part-time staff to attend. Many indeed have extended the concept, perhaps using contacts made through Lifelong Learning Partnerships developmentally or building networks to support specific areas of activity. The example which follows describes one such network, a county-wide family learning network, set up in support of the county's family learning strategy, to share information and good practice, promote developments in the field and provide training opportunities.

Example

Family learning network

Participation in the network is open to those involved (or potentially involved) in supporting and delivering family learning, from adult education providers, family centres, primary and secondary schools, school library service, adult education and LEA advisers. Meetings therefore offer an excellent chance for building connections and developing working partnerships. There are opportunities for looking ahead and for reflecting on work in hand or completed.

Six two-hour meetings are planned in a year and notified in advance. Each provides space for networking and a topic focus for the session. For example, this year's programme includes monitoring and assessment, curriculum planning, considering wider family learning developments, resources and ILT, planning coherent family learning programmes, parenting. Notes from meetings are prepared and circulated to members with notifications of meetings.

This is a field where it is possible to feel quite isolated if one is not aware of other provision in the locality. This is not only detrimental to those teaching and working in the field, but disadvantages learners in a number of ways - by impairing recruitment from existing provision and by reducing the effectiveness of possible progression and transfer routes. A full and coherent picture of family learning opportunities in a given area is therefore highly beneficial to all involved from county to local level.

A network is a very flexible structure, but attendance is necessarily unpredictable with such a wide ranging clientele. Discussions both formal and informal have informed co-ordinators and, although any individual meeting may not be fully representative, taken over a period, all sectors have been involved and contributed to the county planning and delivery strategies. Reports from meetings provide a basis for planning further training "at the chalk face".



Initial Training for Volunteer Tutors

Volunteer tutors have made a significant contribution to basic skills provision from the start of national campaigns for adult literacy in the seventies. Originally they worked largely in one-to-one teaching but increasingly now they offer support in a group setting. In those early days, as now, volunteers were required to attend an initial training course before they began their work. These courses were generally devised by providers to meet their specific needs and the ways they intended to use their volunteers, and there was no external accreditation. Increasingly now, providers use generic courses for initial training that lead to external accreditation, for example, the C&G 9281 initial certificate in teaching basic skills. They customise the course or supplement it to make sure it continues to meet their specific needs.

Example

One provider's description of its training for volunteer tutors is shown below.

All our volunteer tutors are required to have the initial certificate in teaching basic skills. We have been running the course for six years now, and have evolved a 26-week programme which not only covers the course content as specified by C&G but also responds to the comments of past trainees through feedback, evaluation checklists, observations of achievement and understanding, portfolios of evidence and the end-of-course evaluations.

The programme works for us because we have added extra sessions to

- prepare trainees before they start the course
- give more support to prepare trainees for the teaching placement
- include contributions from current learners and tutors.

The preparatory meeting covers adult basic education – the learners, approaches to teaching and learning, and the role of the volunteer tutor. There is a video of learners talking about their experiences, and an outline of the training course. The session finishes with a chance to talk to current volunteer tutors, dealing with any issues they want to raise.

Examples of good practice include making extra support easily available on request, and offering at least one individual tutorial during the teaching placement. Some providers make extensive use of current students on their courses. Some providers take care to ensure that from time to time the course is taught in different ways or at different times: a two or three hour session, daytime or evening, weekly or fortnightly. A number of providers have produced information packs or handbooks to guide placement tutors, and for trainees to help them put together their portfolios of evidence. One provider in a rural area recognises the demands posed by travelling to the training course by giving volunteers a voucher entitling them to a free college course of their choosing.



To complement initial training and make sure that it is translated effectively into action in the workplace, most providers take pains to ensure that part-time teachers receive an effective induction to the service within which they will be working. It is worth noting that the processes of inducting as well as training new teachers is for many providers a significant part of annual training activities. Providers invest much time and trouble in ensuring that their induction processes as well as the initial training offered are thorough and effective and establish the right professional ethos for basic skills work from the start.

Example

One large provider typically offers between four and six induction sessions a year for its new volunteers and part-time teachers, each lasting a day and covering between 15 and 50 people, depending on needs and the time of year. This is complemented by an induction booklet and a checklist, which the relevant programme leader or manager completes with the member of staff concerned.

Induction checklist:		
area to be covered	comments	done?
induction booklet		
team structure and names		
work roles: programme leader		
team leader		
teacher/volunteer		
liaison officer (ava, travel claims)		
registry (enrolment, student records)		
technical support staff		
clerical support staff		
resources:		
photocopies, resource bank		
stationery		
health and safety		
quality assurance		
teaching information		
course/term dates		
team meeting dates		
syllabus/scheme of work		
lesson plans		
assessment information		
admin information		
complaints, concerns		
claims, queries		
Additional comments:		
I confirm that the above has been explained to me:		
Signature of staff member:		Date:
Programme leader:		



In-service Training Programmes

In-service training plays a crucial role in basic skills provision. It is frequently presented to staff as an entitlement and indeed, in some instances, attendance on particular issues is obligatory.

Example 1

One adult education service structures its in-service programme around an annual training plan, linked in turn to the service's business and strategic plans.

Objectives for in-service training

- to provide a relevant range of training and development opportunities
- to identify and disseminate good practice
- to ensure we meet our service standards
- to provide information on current trends and requirements
- to enable us to respond positively and effectively to changes in educational ethos and practice.

Extracts from annual training plan

Goals	Training need	Approach	When	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key staff to gain D units 32, 33/34 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to work more effectively on OCN and vocational courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self study taught sessions • tutorials 	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievement of accreditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to extend work-based learning provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarify good practice for external provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training and workshop sessions 	Sept/Oct initially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in WBI • repeat business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to register as a centre for additional accreditations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet college and centre requirements and set up procedures needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions 	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approval as registered centre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to review and extend opportunities for numeracy accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish what is to be offered and set up standardisation and moderation processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions 	April onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registrations for new courses • student achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve our service in relation to customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote customer care code, complaints procedure, performance standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions • support visits • individual tutorials 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey results • feedback from visits • customer care targets met

For a range of reasons, most providers base their training on courses that they provide themselves rather than on attendance on training events run by external organisations. They also use a blend of accredited and non-accredited courses, varying the mix to meet changing needs and resources. The same adult education provider uses primarily in-house provision, reserving attendance at external events mainly for keeping up to date and obtaining information that can then be cascaded more widely, internally. It sets out the costs and benefits of the different types of provision it uses as follows:

Training Programme – Costs and Benefits		
Rationale	Costs	Benefits
In-house training programme		
This part of the training programme is delivered by our own training team. This ensures that the trainer fully understands the need for and the required outcomes of the training. This way it is 'customised' to the exact needs of our staff. Expertise in this field could not be attained to meet our specific needs through the use of outside trainers.	Provided by training team at hourly rates with on-costs.	Pre-course and post-course evaluation is able to be used more effectively through the continuous interaction of staff. The availability of further support following training is an important feature of this type of training.
Externally accredited training		
Quality for internal staff development is high because all training is provided through the training team. It is strategic policy to uphold our quality training by retaining its planning, delivery and evaluation in accordance with Lead Body Standards and external verification	Hourly rates with on-costs a) dedicated part of staff time b) funded by college but re-couped through student fees	Provides benchmarking of the quality of our training.
Attendance at external training		
Attendance at external training such as national and regional conferences and initiatives allows us to keep up to date with national and local initiatives. 'Quality assurance' initiatives are an important part of this training.	Paid from: a) college training budget b) the income generated from full-cost courses	Enables us to gain a wider picture of what the future holds for providers in our field of expertise. This knowledge is essential to us in formulating our vision and business plan.

One area receiving increasing attention in training and development programmes is understanding and meeting the needs of accrediting bodies, as the emphasis on retention and achievement post-16 increases, both generally and particularly in relation to basic skills. This is particularly true where

accreditation involves internal assessment of course work and portfolios. One provider, for example, offers a day's training on open college units in basic skills, supplementing the taught sessions with a reference folder of guidelines for paperwork and portfolio building. Another offers training to help staff with Wordpower and Numberpower, including internal verification processes, assessing evidence, and understanding the amount of support that can be given.

Training to help staff provide effective guidance about progression opportunities

As well as training relevant to the teaching and assessment of learning and courses, support is given for the other aspects of a teacher or tutor's work. One area of particular importance for basic skills is helping the learner move out of basic skills to other provision, and a number of providers now offer training and support for staff to help them with this. One provider offers the RSA certificate in Educational and Vocational Guidance to its teachers and to its clerical and administrative staff. Last year, 15 staff took the course. Another provider has developed an accredited unit enabling staff to offer advice and guidance that will help learners choose the best route through a wide range of learning opportunities, and then to link this to the student's programme of learning. As well as its use with basic skills staff at main sites and in

community centres, the unit is also used by relevant non-educational organisations offering help and advice in other contexts, such as social services, the probation service and health centres.

Training for Vocational Tutors



Basic Skills Quality Initiative

One provider requires staff teaching on NVQ level 1 courses, and sometimes level 2, to undertake a training course, usually one leading to accreditation.

Example 2

Training for vocational teachers – a case study

The college identified a need through staff appraisals for vocational tutors to take part in basic skills training. This needed to include raising awareness of the impact that poor basic skills has on a student, and how to identify and support a student who has basic skills needs. Vocational teachers themselves had recognised that they were often unable to give these students the help they needed, and as a result students were dropping out of courses or not completing them successfully. There was a need to give these staff the skills they required to support all their students. The course chosen for this was the initial certificate in basic skills because:

- it is relatively short (16 weeks)
- it is delivered in taught sessions with time allowed for portfolio building
- it covers the generic skills needed for literacy and numeracy
- the content can be adapted to accommodate relevant specific issues such as dyslexia and learning styles
- assignments can be contextualised to the vocational area, e.g. catering tutors chose activities and materials to work with that were already familiar to them, other tutors did the same for their areas.

The course was delivered at a mutually convenient time to suit all the participants who came from four vocational areas. There was the opportunity to discuss and compare basic skills needed in these areas and how the staff dealt with these. The participants were able to swap and share ideas.

Example 2 (continued)

Issues arising

- timing of classes to fit with teaching demands
- observation of basic skills classes by the participants, who found they needed to take time out of their own teaching to do this. There are fewer basic skills classes on campus than at community venues
- how to identify a student in class to work with without 'singling' them out as needing extra support

- how to integrate basic skills activities into vocational classes without students 'noticing'.

Responses

- classes were held between 3.30pm – 5.00pm
- participants observed basic skills classes on the campus. This meant minimum disruption to their own teaching
- during tutorials the basic skills tutor discussed how literacy and numeracy activities could be incorporated into teaching the whole class. Individuals could then be supported within the normal classroom session without feeling 'singled out'
- the tutor focused the sessions on vocational areas during the sessions. Participants were given the opportunity to brainstorm and share ideas on how to integrate the activities within the area.

Comments on usage

Evaluation of the course shows that the participants found the techniques and strategies useful. Portfolios are yet to be completed but the assignments are being handed in for marking. This suggests that they are not finding the amount of written work too demanding on top of a working week. Feedback has been positive; participants are already using some of the strategies in class and in tutorial sessions. They all found the link to learning styles and how to accommodate multi-sensory techniques into their teaching particularly useful.



A less formal approach to training adopted by a number of providers is to involve basic skills teachers in working in-class alongside vocational teachers. This approach has evolved in response to many of the issues identified in the previous example. One provider sets them out as follows:

Example 3

- difficulties in finding a time when all can attend
- teachers who resent having to attend staff development sessions which encroach on their administration and preparations (or their own time, if they are unpaid or part-time)
- staff development that is too generic and that a particular teacher will consider irrelevant to his or her particular needs or context
- the fragmented nature of the training: two hours a week, rather than a more intensive experience that they can try out straight away.

In response to these difficulties, the basic skills team decided the best approach was for basic skills teachers ('basic skills development tutors') to work in class with vocational teachers, removing the issues around timing, ensuring relevance to need, and providing instant feedback and support.

Over time, they developed a comprehensive approach to providing in-class support that included:

- identifying and developing the skills needed by basic skills development tutors
- guidelines for partnership teaching to help both basic skills and vocational staff.

What follows is the handout given to managers and staff outlining the role of the basic skills development tutor.

Example 3 (continued)

The partnership approach

Role of the basic skills development tutor

The precise role will differ according to the course, the students and the vocational teacher they are working with. The role includes:

- supporting students in-class
- increasing the awareness of the mainstream tutor of basic skills issues and approaches
- providing extra support sessions if the need arises
- providing materials to develop the basic skills needed for that course and/or for progression to the next level
- adapting course materials so that all students can use them
- providing differentiated materials on topics and for assignments
- carrying out an analysis of the basic skills requirements of the course
- helping identify where basic skills development can happen naturally.

For this to work, it is vital that the vocational teacher and the support tutor work together when in-class and that the support tutor becomes part of the course team.

It is helpful if the tutor:

- can attend course and divisional meetings
- has a pigeon-hole somewhere in the vocational area and somewhere to store materials
- is included in all course/divisional communications.

Remember:

- vocational staff can feel intimidated by having someone else teaching with them
- basic skills staff can feel intimidated by having to work in someone else's territory
- staff can feel it is a personal criticism of them when someone suggests adaptations to approaches or materials they have produced.

Example 3 (continued)



How this partnership approach worked in practice is shown below.

Basic skills development work in a practical setting: NVQs in technology

Characteristics of student group

The majority of students had difficulties with reading, writing and numeracy identified through the initial screening procedure. 50% were stated as having specific learning difficulties or showed indications of these.

Students reported

- difficulties copying notes from OHT
- difficulties in understanding some of the technical words.

Issues

- the vocational tutor felt threatened by the presence of the basic skills development tutor:
 - he lacked confidence
 - he was concerned that he was being observed
 - he felt his own spelling was weak
- the basic skills development tutor took time to explain to the course team the way in which the students' difficulties would affect their learning
- the basic skills development tutor was keen to emphasise the tutor's vocational expertise and her own expertise in basic skills
- the basic skills development tutor outlined ways in which she could help the team in making materials more accessible.

The course team shared materials which the basic skills development tutor simplified.

New strategies were suggested for delivery that did not involve copying from an OHP, students would be given copies of the OHT and tutors encouraged to develop questions to check learning.

Results

- the vocational tutor saw how much easier the adapted material was to read
- the vocational tutor became more aware that other material, including material testing underpinning knowledge, could be improved and was prepared to discuss this with the basic skills development tutor
- the pass rate of the students for short internal tests increased from 20% to 100%
- the vocational tutor was keen to demonstrate to other tutors in this area the difference the changes had made.



Example 4

The following example illustrates the importance of staff development as an entitlement for all staff, non-teaching as well as teaching, and the benefits this brings, not just to individuals but to the organisation as a whole.

Training and development of non-specialist staff

A part-time member of the administrative staff works alongside the ABE team, giving them some clerical and secretarial support as part of her role as faculty secretary. As she became more involved in the detail of the work, she expressed an interest in the role of volunteer tutors and applied to take on this work during her time off. She undertook the Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills and was placed within a basic skills workshop away from the college's main site. She has been successfully working in this group now for two years, attends in-service training and

takes part in other basic skills events (e.g. the Basic Skills Summer School) when time allows, whilst continuing to give some secretarial support to the basic skills co-ordinator as part of her support staff role at the college.

This training and experience has enabled the member of staff to develop her role in college in the following ways:

- as a member of the college's support staff she covers for a variety of other staff, e.g. in the college library, on the college reception desk. She is therefore often a 'front-line' member of staff and is now well able to deal with existing and potential basic skills students, sensitively using her awareness of the barriers to learning and the college which many of them face
- she is a familiar and friendly face to many existing basic skills students and they are able to refer their enquiries to her if they come in to college when the co-ordinator is not available
- she works alongside other support staff amongst whom she is well respected. She is therefore able to pass on relevant information and a positive attitude towards basic skills students which influences her colleagues
- as her voluntary work is away from the main site she has an awareness of the outreach and off-site work with which the college is involved, and of the potential advantages, disadvantages and isolation of this kind of work. Very few other members of college administrative staff have the opportunity to work off site.

We have learned from this experience that it is extremely useful to have a member of the support staff who has the training and practical experience of basic skills work to use in her role within the college, to the benefit of basic skills students, staff, other administrative staff and to the wider college as an inclusive learning institution. The member of staff rightly feels that the experience has helped to give her confidence in the way she deals with all students and the general public, and enabled her to understand the many complex barriers and problems that ABE students can encounter.



One of the issues for basic skills is the need to ensure it becomes an integral part of initial teacher training. The new FENTO standards will undoubtedly help to achieve this, but there is already good practice that can be built on.

One college, for example, has been working with its local institute of higher education to strengthen the curriculum it offers for basic skills and to provide mentoring and work-based experience in this area. Both organisations saw benefits from this partnership.

Example 5

The college identified the following:

- difficulty in recruiting part-time and full-time staff with appropriate training
- importance of teaching staff basing their teaching on an understanding of the underpinning teaching and learning theory
- increasing demand for basic skills tutors, because of changes in funding but the withdrawal of training for basic skills tutors funded through the LEA
- opportunity to broaden the experience of our own staff and to be involved in teacher education
- opportunity to benefit local providers by supporting good quality HE provision
- opportunity to provide good quality work-based experience for PGCE students
- opportunity to respond to the national agenda and national initiatives.

The institute's rationale was as follows:

- the need to work more closely with further education and build on informal links already established with the college
- the ability to use experienced basic skills practitioners as teachers on the course
- increasing demand from PGCE students in basic skills; many had done some work as volunteer tutors
- the need to be able to offer additional accreditation for students within basic skills (C&G 9281/82) and the additional help this would give to students seeking work
- once literacy had been established within the overall PGCE programme, the potential for introducing similar work on numeracy, ESOL, prison education, etc.

Example 5 (continued)

After the pilot course, each partner was able to identify benefits:

- the college recruited 1 full-time, 1 fractional and 4 part-time members of staff from the course
- the basic skills staff had widened their experience by variously teaching on the course and/or mentoring and assessing PGCE students
- all the students mentored by the college were subsequently employed by the college, so that the time 'invested' in mentoring brought a direct benefit
- the institute created a new curriculum area within the PGCE programme that was popular and successful in terms of numbers obtaining qualifications and employment
- the partnership established strong and effective links between the two organisations
- the partnership provided opportunities for staff development – a member of staff worked at the college as a volunteer tutor for one semester
- students benefited enormously from the variety of inputs, experience and expertise contributed by the college practitioners.

Evaluation showed, among other things, a need to link the course and the placement more effectively and the need for an input on numeracy. As a result, delivery of the course element was switched from the institute to the college, and a separate numeracy course was introduced, together with sessions on dyslexia and ESOL.



■

How do you ensure that training meets the needs of all staff involved in basic skills provision?

■

What is your approach to planning and reviewing staff development for basic skills?

■

How effective is the training in making tangible improvements in provision?

■

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