

Careers Guidance Bridging the Gap between Formal and Vocational Qualifications

The Careers Service Northern Ireland (CSNI) sponsored a group of Careers Advisers to undertake the Qualification in Careers Guidance, a 1 year's full time course, at the University of Ulster, Magee.

Initially it was anticipated that this qualification would be sufficient for Careers Advisors to practice without further development, however it was later identified that there was a gap between application of knowledge and assessed work-based practice.

It was decided to initiate a project with the aim of bridging the gap between knowledge and assessed practice. The objectives of the project were:

- To identify and address development issues in practice
- To identify and share best practice
- To improve the performance of individuals
- To improve the quality of

service delivery through staff accredited to a national standard

Research undertaken concluded that the NVQ 4 in Advice & Guidance was the best model to support practice development as it was a competence based qualification assessed within the workplace.

An intensive mapping exercise was undertaken by University of Ulster and DEL across the 7 units selected from the NVQ which would enable the CSNI to assess and monitor practice.

Line managers were developed as assessors and internal verifiers and were invited to attend monthly workshops with the candidates. These workshops

covered areas of the NVQ e.g. roles and responsibilities, action planning, making judgements on evidence and final assessments.

An evaluation was done on completion of each unit and again on completion of the programme.

In conclusion seventeen candidates commenced the NVQ and fifteen went on to complete a year later. The flexibility of the NVQ meant that the final two candidates have since gone on to complete their full awards.

Feedback from candidates throughout the project reflected a significant increase in knowledge and overall good investment of time.



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