

NVQs – meeting the requirements of Investors in People

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety was working towards Investors In People which highlighted the lack of a relevant accredited programme for administrative staff; the Training and Development Unit therefore decided to research a relevant NVQ programme for this group of staff.

Taking account of the Department's Performance Management System, competence framework and roles and responsibilities of staff in the administrative grades, it was recommended that initially level 2 in Administration would be the most relevant programme for the Department.

A member of the training team already had experience of NVQs and held the assessor and verifier awards and was able to use these skills and knowledge to examine the most appropriate occupational standards to meet staff needs and bring benefits to both employer and employees.

The benefits for candidates/employees were identified as:

- NVQs are work-based qualifications and candidates can work towards them during

the course of their day to day work.

- No entry requirements, age or time limits.
- NVQs can be worked towards by completing individual, relevant workplace units and can be linked to the Department's Performance Management System.
- NVQs are proof of commitment to self-improvement and to the organisation's success as well as performing tasks to National Standards.

The benefits for the Department were identified as:

- Can recognise and build on existing skills and experiences.
- Enhances the contribution of staff to improve business performance.

- Identifies training needs and sets clear measurable training targets.
- Shows commitment to quality and investment in people.
- Improves skills base and accreditation of workforce
- Increases motivation amongst staff.

Implementation of Pilot Programme

An initial NVQ 2 Administration pilot programme was planned for Administrative Assistants and Administrative Officers to run for a 12 month period with 12 candidates. However following information sessions to staff and line managers, the interest and enthusiasm was such that the pilot was heavily oversubscribed. Further consideration was then given to additional resources - both financial and staff and it was agreed that there would be enough business benefits to warrant

increasing the numbers on the pilot to 30.

The pilot was headed up by the member of staff experienced in the NVQ process assisted by another member of staff who worked towards the assessor qualification during the pilot. To achieve certification the Department linked with another Department who already held approved centre status for the purpose of registering candidates and submitting claims.

Evaluation

Following the completion of the pilot programme, an evaluation was carried out. The programme had been hugely successful, and it was recommended that the Department should submit an application for approved centre status for the delivery of both NVQ levels 2 and 3 in Administration. The Department successfully achieved this status and the programme went from strength to strength. This continues to be the case and the initial benefits, together with many others, have been realised by both staff and the Department.

The Future

The Northern Ireland Civil Service has now centralised all generic training and so DHSSPS amalgamated with the Centre for Applied Learning as the accredited centre for a range of NVQ programmes.

The NVQ programme moves with the times and recent innovations have included the introduction of e-portfolios, which make full use of the information technology available to staff and provide an opportunity for instant feedback to candidates from assessors on evidence provided.

Feedback shows that candidates still get significant benefits from the programme including the opportunity to gain an accredited qualification whilst doing their job, a greater understanding of the Department, policies and procedures and confidence in their own work and ability.

Feedback from a successful Investors in People assessment of DHSSPS in October 2007 concluded:

“NVQ level 3 in business administration increased personal confidence and the ability to plan and organise work more effectively.”

“NVQs at levels 2 and 3 have helped AAs, AOs and EO2s to develop work organisation skills that have directly benefited the Department’s performance in service levels, response times, and quality”.

The NVQ is now seen as integral part of the Department’s training and development strategy whilst fully contributing to maintaining the liP standards within the Department.



Contact information

Ofqual NI
Glendinning House, 6 Murray Street, Belfast,
BT1 6DN.
Tel: 028 9033 0706 Minicom: 020 7509 6546
Fax: 028 9023 1621

Further information

Email: infoni@ofqual.gov.uk or visit our
website: www.ofqual.gov.uk