Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA)

This is a briefing document providing an overview of the RARPA approach to teaching and learning for capturing individual learner success.

The aim of RARPA

1 i) RARPA is an approach for assuring the quality of learners’ experience on learning programmes and activities. The aim of this approach is to raise learning providers’ capacity to monitor their effectiveness and impact at an individual learner level and to provide a framework and principles for managing the quality of learning.

   ii) The approach has been piloted in non-accredited learning. The evaluation of the pilot work reveals that the approach can be applied effectively to all learners on a wide variety of programmes. The LSC is currently exploring with the QCA, inspectorates and others the possibility of incorporating RARPA into the proposed shared process of approval for providers wishing to offer awards within the new Qualification and Credit Framework. This will form the basis of a Distance Travelled (DT) measure for adults. RARPA is also the measure of success for learners on Entry to Employment (e2e) provision, learners with learning difficulties and or disabilities in specialist provision and learners on provision at Entry level and below.

The importance of RARPA for local LSCs and learning providers

2 i) RARPA does not contribute directly to the key priority targets but does indicate success and provides a basis for quality assurance provision where progression is a primary goal for example ‘first steps’, ‘E2E’, and much widening participation activity. However, the evaluation of the RARPA pilots has shown it to be important in raising the quality of non-accredited provision in Adult and Community Learning (ACL) which are mostly offered on a part-time basis and in other non-accredited programmes offered within the sector. Implementing RARPA has raised the capacity of organisations to develop effective quality judgement and improvement processes.

   ii) The application of RARPA ensures a common process of establishing a learner’s starting point and providing a robust mechanism for assessing progress and achievement throughout the learning experience.

Framework for Excellence

3 The principles established for the RARPA approach are being developed and standards produced that are applicable to accredited provision. Much work has been undertaken with the inspectorates, awarding bodies and QCA to establish a common quality assurance and improvement platform for the sector. Learning providers will be able to collect evidence in a consistent way and use it for many purposes. (The
early stages of this work were known as the ‘RARPA Extension Project’ or ‘REX’. This acronym has now been dropped and the ongoing work continues under the direction of the Framework for Excellence.

4 The new Common Inspection Framework makes self-assessment pivotal to the inspection process and inspection reports make a holistic judgement about all learning an organisation offers. RARPA encourages providers to do this by valuing and evaluating their non-accredited learning.

The likely impact of RARPA on local LSCs and learning providers

5 The main impact of RARPA is the recommendation that all providers review their Quality Assurance (QA) and self-assessment procedures to ensure that all learning is included. Providers have made a commitment to implementing RARPA in non-accredited learning in their development plans. RARPA is the recommended approach for non-accredited learning. The greatest impact is on Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL), E2E, specialist provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ‘first steps’ programmes introductory and taster skills for life activities and family learning.

6 Further education colleges normally have well-evolved QA systems. Where PCDL provision has been added to the college’s provision, care to align and incorporate the PCDL activity into mainstream QA processes and self-assessment judgements incorporating the RARPA approach is required.

What local LSCs and learning providers need to do

7 Local LSCs need to build capacity in their operational staff to support providers in implementing the RARPA approach and be able to direct them to the resources available.

8 Providers need to review their QA and self-assessment processes to ensure that non-accredited learning is monitored and judged to be effective and that the outcomes reflect the new Common Inspection Framework. Where provision does not include the elements of the RARPA Staged Process, providers will need to develop staff awareness and the capacity to fully implement the approach.

Next steps

9 RARPA was embedded by learning providers during 2005-2006 so that their self-assessment reports for 2005-06 cover the application of RARPA to all non-accredited learning. RARPA will then be incorporated into the providers’ normal quality cycle and activities.

10 Further publications and exemplar materials are being prepared and will be presented through sharing of good and effective practice resources that are to be developed by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA).
NIACE and LSDA offer full cost recovery training and support services on RARPA for learning providers.

The LSC has commissioned further work to explore the application of RARPA to programmes for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The conclusion from this work is that RARPA, like all the measures of success, is applicable to all learners in all learning contexts. The LSC is further exploring the equality and diversity impact of the measures in light of the forthcoming requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act on public organisations.

NIACE has published the findings from research into non-paper based recognising and recording methods using new technology “Signalling Success.” For further details please follow this link to NIACE website at www.niace.org.uk.

Further information on the measures of success for the post-16 sector is available on the dedicated Framework for Excellence area of the LSC website: www.lsc.gov.uk/ffe.