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Skills and Innovation for Adult Social Care

DEVELOPING WORK-BASED LEARNING IN THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE SECTOR: GUIDE FOR CARE MANAGERS

MODULE 4: IDENTIFICATION OF AND WORKING WITH VALIDATION
BODIES AND ASSESSING FORMAL LEARNING

LAPIS RESEARCH PROJECT
LEARNING FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRACTICE INNOVATIONS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT
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Introduction

This module will help you identify opportunities for informal learning, and define and explore how to assess informal and formal learning. It will then provide brief information about the role of validation of learning, and will point you to relevant sources of information where you can learn more about organisations which can support you in getting validated qualifications for care workers. This module also links to our next digital course “Turning Work Based Learning into Recognised Qualifications”.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module you will be able to

1. Be able to identify opportunities for informal learning
2. Know how to assess formal and informal learning
3. Understand the role of validation in learning
4. Know where to obtain information and support with obtaining validated learning for care workers in your organisation

Part 1: Formal and Informal Learning (see Module 2 and 3 for more information)

Formal learning can take place in schools, colleges, and universities, but also may take place in non-educational settings. Formal learning includes objectives set by the learning deliverer (teacher, trainer, instructor) and / or external bodies such as exam boards. Formal learning will often include didactic teaching delivered via a classroom, online learning, seminar, workshop, lab sessions, webinar or e-learning programme and has specific desired outcomes for learners, which may include gaining a validated qualification.

Informal learning occurs outside of a structured setting and may often occur because of serendipity (Lester and Costly, 2010). It can include self-study, shadowing a colleague, peer support, one-to-one meetings with a mentor or line manager, informal chats with colleagues, clients, or other stakeholders, through networking or via the internet. Informal learning may not immediately be recognised by the learner and mechanisms to support informal learning include encouraging self-reflection, facilitating communities of practice, and enabling opportunities for experiential learning to take place.



Assessing formal and informal learning

Assessing formal learning is a relatively straightforward process. In planning a formal learning opportunity an analysis of learning needs will first have been conducted (see Module 1). This will include assessing the prior learning (and qualifications) of the learners, the needs of the learner (for example role requirements and responsibilities) and the suitability of the learning programme in meeting the needs. As the learning opportunity is planned there will be learning outcomes set, and activities designed to help the learner achieve these. A marking scheme will be created with detailed criteria for knowledge, skills and understanding which the learner should demonstrate, this enables the learner to produce evidence of their learning and enables an assessor / trainer / teacher to evaluate the learner's assignments and/or exams to establish the level of the work and issue a grade (successful/unsuccessful).

Care organisations wishing to adopt a formal learning programme for staff may be able to access pre-existing learning programmes delivered by colleges, training companies or sector-wide skills organisations (in the UK, [Skills for Care](#) offers significant advice, and support on training and development, including setting learning outcomes for the UK Care Certificate, and offer a wide range of training materials and templates).

If you are running in-house training programmes, there are some easy ways to begin assessing formal learning

1. Set up pre-training assessment, to see what learners already know. After training is completed, run a post-training assessment to check on new learning. This can be a straightforward process using, for example, a short quiz or a question-and-answer discussion.
2. Use the **SMART** format to set learning objectives (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound).
3. Make sure objectives measure skills, knowledge and understanding
4. Ask for feedback on the training from employees – post-it notes with one thing that worked well, one additional thing that would be useful and one thing that could be changed, can be an effective way to do this
5. Provide a chance to revisit the training for revision and reinforcing learning - recording the training session and making it available on the staff intranet, for example, or encouraging discussion after the training can help with this.

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6. If the training has a formal assessment, ensure assignments are second marked by someone with suitable expertise and experience to ensure fairness and consistency in grading. This will be important if work is being externally verified for a qualification, as a sample of graded work will need to be sent to the validating body for moderation.

QUIZ 1

1. Which of these is always informal learning?
 - a. Attending a training course away from work
 - b. Taking part in a webinar
 - c. Observing a colleague undertaking a task new to you
 - d. Completing a workplace induction programme

ANSWER – D

REASON – Attending a training course away from work will be a planned learning event, so formal. Induction is a formal process of learning, even if there is no test of learning. Even if taking part in a webinar is something someone has chosen to do out of interest rather than for work it remains a formal learning opportunity as the webinar will be planned and will have learning outcomes. However, observing a colleague will enable informal learning to take place.

2. What should learning outcomes cover?
 - a. Learners' knowledge, skills and understanding of the topic being taught
 - b. Specific measurable outcomes for the learner
 - c. Grades or marks obtained by the learner from assignments
 - d. The prior knowledge of the learner

ANSWER – A

REASON – outcomes should be specific and measurable, but should particularly aim to establish the learner's level of knowledge, ability to apply that knowledge (skills) and level of understanding of the knowledge in the wider context (understanding). For example, a training session about nutrition for patients with liver disease might include the following learning outcomes:

- Knowledge – the learner will know the specific dietary requirements for patients with liver disease (e.g. low salt, limited fluids, high protein)
- Skills – the learner will develop skills in planning tasty meals for patients with liver disease
- Understanding – the learner will be aware of and able to make adjustment for cultural differences in dietary preferences which will affect the implementation of a suitable diet for a patient with liver disease.

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Identifying and Assessing Informal Learning

Informal learning, is, by its nature, more difficult to identify and assess than formal learning. Nevertheless, it can be an extremely effective way of learning in the workplace and there are some easy strategies for identifying and assessing this type of learning. Some easy to adopt examples of informal learning include job rotation (lateral secondment) which gives staff a chance to learn a range of roles, allowing time for self-study, and providing team building opportunities which give staff a chance to learn new skills in a safe and informal space. Other examples that research has shown will encourage and support informal learning are detailed below.

Enable Communities of Practice

A community of practice is an informal group of people, usually colleagues, who get together to discuss work. You may already have communities of practice taking place in your organisation but may not realise this. People may meet up over lunch or coffee, or by chance, and exchange ideas, information or worries and problems. Enabling opportunities for staff to get together in small groups where they can informally chat about their experiences in the workplace enables learning to be shared and encourages new ideas and solutions to be developed. This is not a staff meeting, with someone in charge, this is a far less formal process, and should not involve managers if this will limit opportunities for staff to feel comfortable to discuss things.

Encourage Reflective Practice

Self-reflection is important in learning. Medical, social work, teacher and nurse education has made use of reflective practice for many decades now. Encourage and enable staff to keep a brief reflective log each week of one thing that surprised them at work, one thing they learned, one problem they solved and so on. These logs can be short but should aim to move beyond description into thinking about WHY something was surprising or puzzling, what they learned from the experience and what they would do next time. These logs can provide evidence of informal learning in the workplace, can help identify training needs, and will support the annual PDR (personal development review) process.

Facilitate Experiential Learning

Many people learn best by doing. Provide opportunities for staff to shadow more experienced colleagues, so they can try out new skills under experienced supervision, and enable staff with specialist skills to share their knowledge with others. Encourage staff to reflect upon their learning too as this will help embed the learning. You can also make use of role play, case studies ([the LAPIS](#)

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[case studies can be found here](#)), and provide staff with mentors who can help them unpack experiences. Experiential learning will help your staff to consolidate and apply their learning more effectively.

QUIZ 2

1. Informal learning can take place in which of the following activities
 - a. A team building day in the forest, building a bridge
 - b. Shadowing a colleague
 - c. Meeting colleagues for a coffee
 - d. Having meetings with a mentor
 - e. Meeting your line manager
 - f. All of the above

Answer – F - All of the above

Reason – There are many opportunities for informal learning in the workplace, but the culture of the workplace needs to be such that they can take place. This may mean enabling staff to have time and space to allow for informal learning, perhaps by setting aside specific paid time for keeping a reflective journal each week, or where care workers are visiting patients in their own homes, and are not working closely with colleagues, enabling them to meet up.

2. A Community of Practice is a formal group in a workplace (True or False)

Answer – FALSE

REASON – A community of practice is generally informal but usually enables people in the same organisation to chat informally, perhaps with colleagues they do not see regularly.

3. How can managers best encourage informal experiential learning?
 - a. Through running regular off-site training sessions
 - b. By giving staff opportunities to rotate their job roles with the support of a mentor
 - c. By making sure all staff training is led by experts in theoretical aspects of social care
 - d. By allowing staff to watch training videos in work time

Answer – B

REASON – Off site training (A) and theoretical training (C) may be useful, and off site training could be experiential, but would not be informal experiential learning, the BEST encouragement would be experiential learning in the workplace through job rotations supported by mentoring. Training videos (D) are formal learning and are passive.

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Part 2: Linking Validation with Formal and Informal Learning

These next materials will help you develop your learning about validation of learning. One of the key problems the LAPIS project has identified in working with care managers, leaders and staff is that there is a limited range of training and it does not meet their specific needs. Much research shows care staff leave the sector because they cannot access high-quality training. Through conducting a training need analysis with staff (see Module 1), identifying formal and informal learning opportunities (such as those earlier in this Module), and then working with training and validation bodies, care leaders can develop bespoke training programmes that make use of formal and informal learning opportunities. Most towns and cities in Europe have learning organisations in their region that specialise in providing technical and vocational education. You can make links with these and with care sector organisations in your country to develop the validated training programmes you need within your organisation. These programmes will be able to make use of formal and informal learning in the workplace and provide your staff with validated qualifications they will feel proud to have earned.

Validation of Learning

At its most simple level validation of learning means the learner can achieve an acknowledgement of competency in a skill or knowledge from an external organisation which specialises in ensuring quality standards in learning are met. The learner will be assessed against standards set by an external body and which meets an agreed level of learning e.g. Level 1, 2, 3 and so on up to Level 8. These are set out in qualifications frameworks. The UK qualifications framework differs slightly from the European Union Qualifications Framework, although both have 8 levels. The area of overlap occurs at Level 5.

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UK and EU Qualifications Framework

The list of qualifications below does not cover all the possible qualifications at each level

EU Level	UK Level	Explanation	Examples (other qualifications are available at these levels)
Level 1	Entry Level (1,2,3)	Entry level qualifications cover basic skills and knowledge. Entry Level 3 is the most difficult.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry Level Functional Skills • Entry Level Skills for Life • Entry Level Essential Skills
Level 2	Level 1	These qualifications are equivalent to those learners might obtain before age 16, or lower grades at GCSE (age 16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music grades 1,2 and 3 • GCSE grades 3,2 or 1 (D,E,F,G) • First Certificate
Level 3	Level 2	The qualifications are the expected level of a school leaver in the UK (age 16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE grades 4-9 or C-A* • Intermediate Apprenticeship • Music grade 4 and 5 • Level 2 diploma (BTEC, NVQ)
Level 4	Level 3	These qualifications are the expected level of a post-16 learner (Further Education, 6 th form, adult college)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'A' Level • International Baccalaureate • BTEC Level 3 • 'T' Level • Advanced Apprenticeship • Access to Higher Education Qualification • Music grades 6,7,8
Level 5	Level 4	These qualifications are equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate (Bachelors) degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) • Higher Apprenticeship • Higher National Certificate (HNC) • Level 4 NVQ

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Level 5	Level 5	Qualifications equivalent to two years of study for an undergraduate (Bachelors) degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) • Foundation Degree • Higher National Diploma (HND) • Level 5 NVQ
Level 6	Level 6	Qualifications equivalent to a Bachelor's degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree apprenticeship • Degree with honours (Bachelor of Arts / Science) • Ordinary degree without honours • Level 6 NVQ
Level 7	Level 7	Qualifications equivalent to a Master's degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree (MA/MSc) • Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) • Level 7 NVQ
Level 8	Level 8	Qualifications equivalent to a doctorate (PhD/DPhil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD

Each of the different qualification levels has a set of descriptors that set out the knowledge, skills and responsibility levels which can reasonably be expected of a person with that qualification. These are broad descriptors, but they provide the foundation for developing learning outcomes for qualifications. Learning outcomes set out the specifics of what a programme of learning will achieve for the learner, once they have accessed all materials and taken part in all learning activities. (You can learn more about setting learning outcomes in Module 1 of the LAPIS programme).

EU / UK Level	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility / Autonomy
1 EU Entry UK	Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
2 EU 1 UK	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tool	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy
3 EU 2 UK	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
4 EU 3 UK	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
5 EU 4/5 UK	Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities

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	within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	creative solutions to abstract problems	where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others
6 EU & UK	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
7 EU & UK	Highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	Specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
8 EU & UK	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to	Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the

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		extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	forefront of work or study contexts including research
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How is a qualification validated?

Different organisations (schools, colleges, employers) create qualifications that suit learners needs and are related to specific programmes of study. They can then seek validation for their qualification from an AWARDING BODY. Some organisations both teach and validate teaching (UK universities fall under this category), but most organisations have qualifications validated by an external organisation. In the UK there are over 200 organisations registered to validate qualifications.

The process of validation requires the learning programme/ potential qualification to be validated to have learning outcomes mapped onto a qualification's framework. During this process the validation body considers if the numbers of hours learning are suitable, what types of assessment are planned (coursework, exams, or a mixture of both), the criteria for success and how much time students will need to spend on self-study. If the mapping is successful, then the qualification is accepted by the awarding body. To maintain quality samples of student work will need to be sent for verification by the awarding body.

QUIZ 1

1. Achieving a validated qualification means a learner:
 - a. Has studied hard and passed an exam
 - b. Has taken part in a programme recognised by an external body
 - c. Has taken part in learning at work
 - d. Has completed coursework to a high standard

ANSWER – B

REASON – The learner may have achieved all four of these options but, not all qualifications have an exam, and not all have coursework, and some students will undoubtedly work harder than others but all validated qualifications are recognised by an external body which sets quality standards and thresholds for passing.

2. Learners who have achieved Level 2 (EU) or Level 1 (UK) can be expected to
 - a. Work or study under direct supervision
 - b. Take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge

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- c. Have a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems
- d. Use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems

ANSWER – C

POINT TO NOTE – a person who has achieved a qualification at Level 1 (UK) or 2 (EU) may well be able to work at a higher level than their qualification. Managers / educators should conduct skills audits with staff / learners in order to ensure they can reach their full potential.

3. All learning must be validated to be worthwhile (TRUE or FALSE)

ANSWER – False

Reason – Learning can be either formal or informal, both can be equally valuable. Within formal learning there is no need for validation in many instances, for example, young children first learning to read to not generally take an exam in reading, the fact they can read is demonstrated practically. However, validated qualifications are very useful for measuring progression, supporting recruitment decisions, evaluating training needs and allocating roles within an organisation.

Glossary

Awarding body

- Awarding bodies regulate recognised qualifications and provide an assurance of level and quality of study and issue certificates to learners who satisfactorily complete regulated programmes of study.

Community of Practice

- Often an informal group (although sometime formally established) who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to discuss these and develop solutions, innovations or provide support and mentoring for each other.

Experiential Learning

- Experiential learning is an engaged learning process involving opportunities to “learn by doing” and by reflecting on the experience. It offers learners the chance to engage intellectually, creatively, emotionally, socially, or physically.

External Verification

- The process by which training providers can get an **external** independent confirmation that their assessment processes are valid, reliable and meet the standards which they must adhere to.

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Learning Outcomes

- Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge, skills and understanding learners should acquire by the end of a particular program of learning. They help tutors set suitable assessments and allow learners to understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them.

Moderation

- Moderation is the process in which student work is checked over by an independent marker to ensure that marking standards are appropriate and have been applied consistently and fairly.

PDR Process

- The Performance and Development Review, also known as PDR, is an annual process which provides all staff with the valuable opportunity to reflect on their performance, potential and development needs.

Self-reflection for learning

- Self-reflection involves learner identifying key learning incidents in their work to develop a deeper understanding of what went well, what did not work so well and to allow action planning. They may find the use of a model of reflective practice such as Gibbs 'Cycle of Reflection' useful for this.

SMART Objectives

- SMART objectives (or SMART goals) are a form of objective setting which allows managers and employees to create, track and accomplish, short-and-long-term goals.

Bibliography and Useful Reading / Websites

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