

The logo for the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, featuring a large blue circle containing the text 'northern ireland' and a smaller light green circle above it.

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**Standards for Approval of  
the Post Qualifying Education  
and Training Partnership**

Author: Alison Kavanagh

Produced by:

Northern Ireland Social Care Council  
7th Floor, Millennium House  
19-25 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7AQ

Tel: 028 9041 7600

Fax: 028 9041 7601

Textphone: 028 9023 9340

Web: [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info)

Email: [info@niscc.n-i.nhs.uk](mailto:info@niscc.n-i.nhs.uk)

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## Part 1

### Background to the development of new Standards for Approval.

- 1.1. The Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership (the PQ Partnership) was approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) in 1993 to implement a framework for continuing professional development in social work.
- 1.2. In 2003, in the context of reform of social work training and the advent of an Honours Degree in Social Work, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (the Department) commissioned work to determine the changes required to the framework for post qualifying professional development in social work.
- 1.3. The resultant report recommended the development of a new framework and, recognising the valuable contribution of the PQ Partnership, recommended that it should retain its operational independence and its role should be strengthened.
- 1.4. Consequently the Department commissioned the development of a new Post Qualifying (PQ) framework. This was taken forward by the PQ Partnership working with the Department and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (the Council). The Department endorsed the Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Framework (NI PQ Framework) in June 2006.
- 1.5. New Standards are required to regulate the delivery of the NI PQ Framework. The *Standards for Approval of the Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership* have been developed by the NISCC to regulate the operation of the PQ Partnership. The PQ Partnership will be required to demonstrate that it meets the Standards for Approval.

## Part 2

### Introduction to the Standards

2.1. The Rules for the Approval of Post Qualifying Education and Training in Northern Ireland (2006) (PQ Rules), lay down that a Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership, approved by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council will determine and manage the arrangements within the Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Framework.

2.2. The PQ Partnership is a body which has representation from education institutions and social work employers engaged in the provision of post qualifying education and training.

2.3. The PQ Partnership is responsible for the following:

enrolling candidates and collecting such enrolment and assessment fees as agreed with the Council;

recommending standards for candidate support;

ensuring there is a range of appropriate assessment arrangements. Accrediting assessment arrangements and quality assuring the assessment of candidates;

providing assessment structures for individual submissions;

tracking candidate progression and confirming achievement;

making recommendations to the Council to confer awards;

accrediting programmes of post qualifying education and training in accordance with accreditation requirements published by the Council;

monitoring the standard and validity of accredited programmes at regular intervals;

promoting the PQ Framework and providing information to candidates, employers and education and training interests;

providing development and standardisation opportunities for those involved in the delivery of accredited programmes and/or candidate assessment; and

advising the Council of any gaps, or potential gaps, in post qualifying education and training provision.

2.4 This document sets out the Council Standards for the approval of the PQ Partnership. The Standards build on existing good practice.

## Part 3

### Standards for Approval

The Council will approve the PQ Partnership only when it meets the following Standards for Approval.

#### 3.1 Membership and collaborative arrangement

##### Standard Statement

*Key interests are represented on the PQ Partnership and members are clear about their roles and responsibilities.*

##### Criteria

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. membership that includes representatives of education institutions providing post qualifying social work education and representatives of social work employers in all relevant sectors; and
- b. signed agreements by relevant parties at Chief Executive level or equivalent, agreeing to participate in the work of the Partnership including its management and decision-making.

#### 3.2 Management, governance and organisation

##### Standard Statement

*The management and organisation of the PQ Partnership is appropriate to enable it to undertake the responsibilities laid down in the PQ Rules. There are robust accountability systems.*

##### Criteria

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. clear line management structures, reporting and decision-making systems;
- b. arrangements to ensure that the operation of the quality assurance system is consistent with good governance;
- c. financial control systems to manage and account for any funding;
- d. systems to collect and analyse data as required by the PQ Rules;
- e. systems for reporting to the Council on all activities including financial management; and
- f. systems for reporting on requirements in Standards 3.11 and 3.12.

### **3.3 Policy and planning**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership demonstrates strategic planning that takes account of government policies, strategies and workforce information. The PQ Partnership's policies and procedures reflect a commitment to equality, diversity and human rights.*

#### **Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. a Strategic Plan with clear objectives, targets and timescales including estimated numbers of enrolled candidates;
- b. evidence that the plan has been devised to meet identified needs;
- c. an annual, costed, Business Plan;
- d. procedures to identify any gaps or potential gaps in post qualifying education and training and report these to the Council; and
- e. policies and procedures that reflect a commitment to equality, diversity and human rights.

### **3.4 Use of resources and staffing**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has appropriate staffing, within available resources, to meet its responsibilities under the Rules.*

#### **Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. sufficient staff with qualifications and experience to manage the work of the Partnership;
- b. procedures to monitor that staff resources are used effectively; and
- c. recruitment and selection procedures of any personnel involved in the provision meets good practice standards.

### **3.5 Candidate enrolment**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has systems in place to enrol candidates and collect enrolment fees.*

**Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. systems to check that candidates applying to be enrolled are registered on the social work part of the Social Care Register and, where appropriate, have completed successfully the Assessed Year in Employment (AYE); and
- b. systems for the collection of enrolment fees on behalf of the Council.

**3.6 Support for the delivery of the PQ Framework****Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has arrangements to provide development and standardisation opportunities for those involved in the delivery of the PQ Framework.*

**Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. arrangements for the training and updating of those involved in the support and/or assessment of candidates;
- b. arrangements for standardisation events for those involved in the assessment of candidates;
- c. arrangements to provide support for any programme provider wishing to seek accreditation within the PQ Framework; and
- d. guidance on candidate support.

**3.7 Assessment arrangements****Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership ensures consistency of assessment across the range of assessment arrangements.*

**Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. a properly constituted assessment board, that includes representatives from social work employers and academic institutions, which can award professional credits at the appropriate level and confirm that candidates have satisfied the Council's requirements for awards. The assessment board will report to the Management Board;
- b. an assessment system which is based on objective and clear criteria about how the professional requirements will be attained;

- c. a system for overseeing that all assessment recommendations on individual candidates are subject to independent verification;
- d. an appeals procedure; and
- e. arrangements for recognition and accrediting prior learning, which are clear and fair and ensure the maintenance of standards.

### **3.8 Accredited programmes**

#### **Standard Statement**

*Post qualifying education and training programmes are accredited in accordance with requirements published by the Council.*

#### **Criteria**

The Partnership has:

- a. a fair and transparent process for accreditation;
- b. guidance is made available to course providers which will assist in preparing an application for approval;
- c. a system for overseeing that all accreditation recommendations are subject to independent verification;
- d. a process to appeal accreditation decisions; and
- e. information is published on accredited programmes and courses.

### **3.9 Quality Assurance**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has a comprehensive Quality Assurance system that will ensure the maintenance of standards of accredited programmes, the validity of assessment decisions and adherence to Council standards and requirements.*

#### **Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. a system for monitoring the standard of accredited programmes;
- b. arrangements for quality assuring assessment decisions;
- c. clear processes for ensuring action is taken where targets or programme provision fall below a satisfactory level;

- d. a mechanism to survey a range of employers on their views on the quality, quantity, accessibility and any other relevant issues regarding their satisfaction with post qualifying education and training; and
- e. a mechanism to survey a sample of candidates from across a range of accredited programmes and individual assessment routes, at intervals that should, normally, be no more than five years.

### **3.10 Equal Opportunities**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has an Equal Opportunities policy and action plan owned by all parties to the provision.*

#### **Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has:

- a. an Equal Opportunities policy statement and procedures that all partners sign up to; and
- b. procedures to ensure that all its activities, including assessment and accreditation, meet good practice standards.

### **3.11 Data collection**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has a system for collecting and analysing data that can provide interested parties with information on PQ provision and candidate achievement.*

#### **Criteria**

The PQ Partnership has systems to:

- a. analyse data on enrolments, progression and awards;
- b. collect, analyse and report equal opportunities information; and
- c. report on post qualifying education and training provision that is accredited within the PQ Framework.

### **3.12 Provision of information to the Council**

#### **Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership provides the Council with information on the operation of the Partnership including management arrangements, learning and assessment, systems for accreditation, provision of information, monitoring of provision and future plans.*

**Criteria**

The PQ Partnership provides:

- a. information on complaints and appeals;
- b. an Annual Report;
- c. monitoring reports as required; and
- d. any guidance documents issued by the Partnership.

**3.13 Public participation****Standard Statement**

*The PQ Partnership has mechanisms to engage with interested parties regarding the provision of post qualifying education and training.*

**Criteria**

- a. the PQ Partnership has an annual programme to consult with a range of key interests.

**For further information about Standards for Approval of a Post  
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**Contact:**

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7th Floor Millennium House  
19-25 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7AQ

Telephone: 028 90 417600

Fax: 028 90 417601

Textphone: 028 90 239340

Email: [info@niscc.n-i.nhs.uk](mailto:info@niscc.n-i.nhs.uk)

Web: [www.niscc.info](http://www.niscc.info)

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