

Building a Professional Awarding Network

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Why we need a professional awarding sector

- Turbulent vocational education, training and skills policy environment
- No established and recognised professional career route for those working within the awarding sector
- No consensus in terms of body of knowledge and skills required to design, develop, deliver and assess qualifications
- False assumption – *‘anyone can do it’*

What's needed to support continual improvement in the awarding sector

- Build a community of practice with shared knowledge, expertise and experience
- Provide access to high quality development and progression opportunities that are recognised and have credibility
- Engage with assessment research community – and contribute to it
- Influence policy – challenging perceptions

The FAB Standards Group

'Defining the body of knowledge required to improve standards, direct research and inform policy development'

- Membership
- Aims
- Progress to date
- What next?
- FAB Qualification Manager's Handbook

The Qualification Manager's Handbook

Part of FAB's wider strategy and on-going programme to define the knowledge required to design, develop and deliver high quality qualifications

The brief for the Handbook

First edition

- To stimulate debate and sharing of expertise and experiences
- To try and capture the essence of a Qualification Manager's role(s) and responsibilities
- To focus on general principles and practice (rather than specific regulations)
- To make reference to theories underpinning the development of vocational qualifications (without becoming too technical)

Some challenges in writing the Handbook

- **There is a lot of stuff to cover** – whole books have been written on assessment, for example
- **There is a lot going on** – the sector is dynamic, constantly changing in response to government policy developments, funding and regulatory requirements, changes in workplace practices
- **No ‘one size fits all’** - role(s) and responsibilities of Qualification Managers are dependent upon the mission, structure and size of their Awarding Organisation, and contexts in which they work
- **Linear presentation of lifecycle stages doesn’t quite do it** – qualification development is a cyclical process

What does a Qualification Manager do?

Some examples...

- Represents their AO, in line with its mission, values, business objectives
- Abides by its policies and quality systems
- Maintains good internal relationships
- Develops and maintains strong external relationships
- Contributes to continuous quality improvements
- Keeps up-dated
- Establishes the business case
- Designs and develops qualifications
- Assures compliance with regulations, meets legal requirements
- Ensures systems and procedures are in place for delivery and monitored to control/assure quality
- Manages the collection and analysis of data
- Reviews and evaluates qualifications

What does a Qualification Manager need to know and understand?

Some examples...

- The Awarding sector landscape, market competition
- Qualification frameworks and regulation
- Legislation
- Government policy developments
- Funding sources/requirements
- The contexts in which their qualifications are delivered
- Project management methods
- What makes a qualification sufficiently valid
- The importance of validation planning
- The principles and ethics of assessment
- Different forms of assessment, pros and cons
- Good practice in developing a qualification specification
- QA systems and procedures

What skills and qualities do they need?

Some examples...

- Project management skills
- Leadership and teamwork skills
- Strategic thinking skills
- Planning and organisational skills
- Negotiation and influencing skills
- Personal and inter-personal qualities
- Written and oral communication skills
- Information and communication technology skills
- Analytical, number and problem solving skills

Handbook structure(1)

- **Introduction** - an overview of the Awarding sector
- **So, you want to develop a qualification** - overview and management of the qualification lifecycle
- **Understanding validity and assessment** - what makes a qualification sufficiently valid; planning for validation; principles of assessment; forms of assessment
- **How to design a qualification** - conduct market research and consultations; establish the qualification's objective and target level; specify what will be measured; identify approach to assessment (strategy); specify how the qualification will be assessed (measurement specification)

Handbook structure (2)

- **How to develop a qualification** – shape the qualification and its progression; develop assessment apparatus, including support materials; put it all together to inform qualification delivery (qualification specification)

Appendices:

- A) Assessment methods – key features
- B) References and further information

- **How to deliver a qualification** - prepare for delivery; provide support for personnel and learners; understand what happens when candidates take assessments; maintain controls and security, deal with malpractice; evaluate candidates' performances; report results, deal with appeals; award and certificate

- **Qualification review & evaluation** – review the qualification's performance; evaluate the qualification, including its validity; use data and findings