

**PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR
OBTAINING LEARNER FEEDBACK, ONGOING MONITORING AND THE
EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES**

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1. INTRODUCTION

NCGE is committed to attaining feedback from learners on all its programmes to ensure that programmes are delivered to a high professional standard. It is necessary that procedures are in place which will effectively capture learners' views and that such procedures lead to improvements which will benefit current and future learners.

2. LEARNER APPRAISAL OF PROGRAMMES/MODULES

All learners will be provided with the opportunity to evaluate programmes through the Learner Feedback Form (Appendix XIII) which should be distributed a number of times throughout the duration of a programme. This enables the Coordinator of the Programme and staff to identify key areas in need of improvement and to address these areas without delay so that current learners can directly benefit from the changes.

At the end of a programme learners should be provided with the opportunity to provide direct feedback to staff involved in delivering a programme. This should take place in the context of group work and facilitated by an independent representative if possible. The Coordinator of the Programme should be provided with a report detailing the nature of the feedback. The report should be considered by the Programme Board and changes and/or improvements should be made to the programme as appropriate.

3. PROCEDURES FOR ONGOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

The procedures below will guide staff involved in the monitoring and evaluation of full time/part time programmes. The monitoring and evaluation refers to the programme as a whole and not to the progress of individual learners.

4. PURPOSE

The purpose of these procedures is to:

- Ensure that systematic processes exist for collecting information that can be used to improve a programme.
- Ensure that programmes remain up to date and respond to the needs of learners.

5. NATURE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All programmes should be monitored on a continuous basis and comprehensively evaluated by an independent consultant once every five years. For new programmes, it is recommended that a comprehensive evaluation takes place one year after the programme has commenced and five years thereafter.

a) Ongoing Monitoring of Programmes

Monitoring Programmes involves an ongoing examination of programme delivery. The experience of delivering the programme should be evaluated in the context of the programme aims and learning outcomes. All programmes should be evaluated by the Programme Board at the end of a programme. The Programme Board should meet to discuss the experience of delivering a programme and to recommend changes to the programme based on this experience. Membership of the Programme Board includes all staff involved in preparing and delivering a programme. The Programme Board should consult with learners as part of the evaluation process. The deliberations and decisions of the Programme Board will be recorded in the form of minutes.

The External Examiner appointed by HETAC/NCGE (refer to procedures on assessment) also contributes to the ongoing monitoring of programmes through his/her appraisal of the programme in the External Examiner's report. The External Examiner's report contains important information for consideration by the Programme Board. Proposed measures for improving the quality of a programme will be considered and acted on by the Programme Board as appropriate.

b) Evaluation of Programmes

Self Evaluation

A major evaluation of a programme should take place every five years and should be initiated by the Management Committee. The evaluation affords a Programme Board with the opportunity to engage in a major evaluation of a programme and to make significant changes to it if appropriate.

The purposes of the evaluation are to:

- Ensure that the academic standards of a programme continue to be maintained and meet HETAC's requirements for the award.
- Ensure that there is a market demand for a programme and that it is academically viable.
- Ensure that the Programme Board obtains ongoing feedback on the programme from learners, external examiners, stakeholders of the NCGE.
- Examine procedures for ongoing monitoring of the programme.
- Ensure that HETAC requirements in relation to access, transfer, progression and learning outcomes and standards are met.

The evaluation process should be initiated well in advance of the proposed evaluation event to ensure that there is adequate time for the procedure to be conducted. The review panel (see below) will rely on reports by the Programme Board, developed as a result of the ongoing monitoring of the programme (see above), programme documentation (including the learner handbook, reading materials, learner evaluations and other programme associated materials), consultations with current and past learners and NCGE stakeholders.

Evaluation Event

The evaluation is carried out by a review panel. This review panel will consist of at least three members of the Management Committee to include the Director of NCGE and a stakeholder of NCGE (i.e. a representative from a professional association of guidance counsellors). In addition the review panel will include two learners and a staff member from NCGE. The external examiner should be invited to participate on the review panel.

The review event is organised by the Director of NCGE and is held in the Centre's premises. The review panel examines the programme documentation submitted to it by the Director (to include learner evaluations, minutes and documentation prepared as part of the ongoing monitoring of the programme and programme material and text) in

advance of the review event and holds a meeting with the Programme Board to discuss the programme.

The following areas are examined by the panel:

- Purpose and rationale of the programme.
- Programme aims and objectives.
- Assessment procedures.
- Learning methodologies employed.
- The learning environment.
- Programme materials including content.
- Immediate and long term impact of the programme on the learner.
- The learning environment.
- Support provided to learners.
- Model of support provided to staff for personal and professional development.

At the conclusion of the event the panel considers the recommendations it wishes to make and reports its findings to the Management Committee and the Chair of the Programme Board. A report of the evaluation is sent to HETAC outlining the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats of the programme. The Management Committee and the Programme Board consider the recommendations of the panel in the context of available resources and meet with the panel to discuss the implementation of the recommendations.

External Evaluation

An external evaluation should take place every five years and is initiated by the NCGE Management Committee. This evaluation will take place after the self evaluation process has been completed. The Management Committee, in consultation with the Coordinator of the Programme, identify a number of appropriate experts to undertake the external evaluation. These experts should have an in-depth knowledge of the area of study of the programme, experience of the learning and teaching methodology employed to deliver the programme and have had experience of undertaking such evaluations in the past so they are competent to make national and international comparisons in relation to the programme. They should also have had experience in working with an organisation

similar to NCGE. An invitation to submit a proposal for the evaluation is drafted by the Management Committee and circulated to the list of experts (refer to Appendix XIV for an example of an invitation to tender). An expert(s) is chosen based on the proposal submitted to him/her that best matches the assessment criteria outlined by the Management Committee in the invitation.

The external evaluation covers the following areas:

- Purpose of the programme.
- Programme aims and objectives.
- Programme content and support materials.
- Learning and teaching methodologies employed by the programme.
- Assessment methodology.
- Support provided to learners.
- Support provided to staff delivering the programme.
- Staff training and development needs.
- The learning environment where the programme is delivered.
- The short/long term impact of the programme on learners.
- The delivery of the programme.
- The coordination and management of the programme by NCGE.

The work of the expert(s) is supported by the Management Committee which arranges meetings of stakeholders, learners and staff with the expert(s). In addition all appropriate documentation is sent to the expert(s) including the self evaluation report.

The outcome of the external evaluation is a report which sets out the findings of the expert(s). The Management Committee and Coordinator of the Programme (Chair of the Programme Board) are provided with the opportunity to comment on the report before the report is formally submitted for consideration and action by NCGE. The NCGE Management Committee forwards a copy of the report to HETAC prior to its programme review. NCGE implements the recommendations of HETAC through the Management Committee and the Programme Board. A subcommittee of the Management Committee

consisting of the Director of NCGE and three other members one of which should a stakeholder (appropriate professional association) to monitor the implementation of the recommendations taking into account available resources and training needs.

APPENDIX XIII: LEARNER FEEDBACK FORM (SAMPLE)

**WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLANNING: WORKSHOP I
EVALUATION FORM**

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. Your responses will assist us in improving future workshops.

PRE WORKSHOP MATERIALS

Please indicate if the materials provided were:

Comprehensive	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all <input type="checkbox"/>
Useful	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all <input type="checkbox"/>
User friendly	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not at all <input type="checkbox"/>

Any comments you would like to make:

How might the pre-workshop materials be improved?

VLE

Please indicate using the criteria below your initial experience of the VLE:

User friendly:	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not <input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible:	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not <input type="checkbox"/>
Attractive:	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not <input type="checkbox"/>
Interactive:	Very <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/>	Not <input type="checkbox"/>

Were the instructions provided useful? Yes Somewhat Not

How could these be improved?

WORKSHOP I

Was the workshop structured to suit your needs? Yes No

Please explain:

Please list what the key learning(s) were for you during the workshop?

What session was particularly useful? Why?

Do you feel confident in undertaking the next stage of the module as a result of the first workshop?

Very confident Fairly confident Not at all confident

Why _____

Please indicate your competence before and after the workshop by using the scale below:

1 = completely unable/unaware

2 = very little capability/awareness

3 = fairly competent/informed

4 = competent/well informed

At the end of the workshop learners will be able to:

Outline action research processes	Before	1	2	3	4
	After	1	2	3	4
Use the VLE	Before	1	2	3	4
	After	1	2	3	4
Provide an overview of whole school guidance planning	Before	1	2	3	4
	After	1	2	3	4
Convene a staff guidance planning group and initiate a review of the existing school guidance programme	Before	1	2	3	4
	After	1	2	3	4

How satisfied were you with the facilitation of the workshop?

Very satisfied Somewhat satisfied Unsatisfied

Why _____

How could the workshop be improved?

Please indicate your satisfaction with the venue on the criteria below.

Facilities: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Room layout: Very satisfactory Satisfactory Poor

GENERAL

Any other comments/recommendations you wish to make:

APPENDIX XIV: INVITATION TO TENDER (SAMPLE)



CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PLANNING MODULE 1: REVIEWING WHOLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE

AN EVALUATION OF MODULE 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is an agency of the Department of Education and Science (DES) that was established in 1995. The Centre aims to support and develop guidance provision in all educational settings and to inform the policy of the Department pertaining to guidance. The NCGE acts as a focal point for the development of guidance across the educational sector, primary to adult, and advises the Department accordingly. Client groups of the NCGE include:

- Support teachers in primary schools.
- Guidance counsellors in post primary schools.
- Guidance practitioners working in Youthreach and similar programmes.
- Careers and appointments officers in third level education.
- Guidance practitioners working with adults in education.

The NCGE is also a member of the Euroguidance network of National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG) under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The Network aims to support guidance practitioners in promoting European mobility and the European dimension within education and training.

In 2004 the Department of Education and Science endorsed an NCGE proposal concerning the development and delivery of a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) to support guidance counsellors in whole school guidance planning.

RATIONALE

The Education Act (1998) requires all school to prepare and draft a school plan (Section 21). Department of Education and Science guidelines relating to students access to appropriate guidance as outlined in Section 9c of the Education Act (1998) state that the guidance programme should be part of the school plan. In addition, the Department Circular Letter PPT 12/05 states that “each school is expected to develop a school guidance plan as part of its school plan”.

As part of its remit the NCGE is required to assist schools and other Centres of Education to implement guidance programme planning and delivery, through the provision of materials and other supports and to initiate and facilitate the career development of guidance practitioners, in response to current and emerging needs.

Initially in meeting its remit the NCGE developed resource materials and published *Planning the School Guidance Programme* in 2004 to assist guidance counsellors with whole school guidance planning. The Centre also organised workshops and seminars for guidance counsellors at the Institute of Guidance Counsellors’ (IGC) annual conference (2004) and the Higher Options exhibition (2004). However, guidance counsellors reported that they wanted more ongoing support. In the spring of 2004 the NCGE developed a proposal outlining a programme of CPD for guidance counsellors in school guidance planning to be delivered using a blended learning approach (combination of workshops and e-learning). The programme of CPD included three modules, Module 1 – *Reviewing Whole School Guidance*, Module 2 – *Action Planning* and Module 3 – *Evaluation*. The proposal also outlined the need for a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to be developed by the NCGE to deliver the programme in a way that would respond to the needs of guidance counsellors. The proposal was approved by the Department in 2004 and work began on the development of the programme and the VLE.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The NCGE convened three committees in autumn 2004 to assist and support it in developing the programme of three modules and the VLE. By the summer of 2005 Module 1 and the VLE were completed.

Module 1 Overview

The module is 12-14 weeks duration and is delivered using a blended learning approach. The aim of the module is to assist learners in conducting a review of the school guidance programme. The module content is delivered using an action research approach and learners are expected to develop reflective practice as part of the process (appendix I). To fulfil the assessment criteria of the module learners are required to submit two progress reports, a final report and a learning journal. In addition, learners are required to access the VLE on a regular basis and to attend all three workshops (refer to appendix I for more information).

Learners participating on the module are required to attend three workshops which are held in DES Education Centres around the country. In addition the school Principal is

asked to attend a briefing offered at workshop 1 or 2. The aim of the briefing is to inform the school Principal of the roles of the guidance counsellor and other school staff in the guidance process and to provide the Principal with an overview of the school guidance planning process. It is envisaged that attendance at the briefing will enable the school Principal to support the guidance counsellor in the school guidance planning process.

There are a number of entry criteria that guidance counsellors have to meet in order to participate on the module:

The guidance counsellor

- Must have a qualification in guidance approved by the DES (Circular PPT 12/05) and be currently working in a post primary school.
- Have secured the approval of the school Principal to participate on the module.
- Be IT literate and have access to a computer and the internet (minimum ISDN line).

For guidance counsellors who have successfully completed the module the opportunity for them in turn to become tutors on the module is provided. Interested guidance counsellors participate in a one day tutor training preparation course provided by the NCGE. Guidance counsellors who then sign up to the tutor role are offered further training prior to each of the workshops. This usually involves half a day preparation followed up by support via email/telephone.

The VLE

In developing the VLE it was essential that it be attractive, interactive, intuitive and user friendly. The VLE consists of a main page providing an introduction to the site, a reception area, an ante room and a classroom. The VLE includes the following features, a:

- Facility to apply for a programme/module
- Discussion board
- Email facility
- Chat facility
- Personal diary
- Library containing essential readings
- Core text book

The VLE can be accessed through the following URL:

www.vle.ncge.ie

To access all aspects of the VLE the user must have the Flash plug-in on his/her machine. Flash (version 7 or higher) can be downloaded from the main page of the VLE website.

Delivery of the Programme

To date Module 1: *Reviewing Whole School Guidance* (appendix I) has been offered to 19 schools as part of a pilot programme (September – December 2004) and 44 schools on the February 2006 programme in three centres located across the country (Cork, Dublin and Galway). Staff delivering the programme included a module coordinator and a tutor

and they were supported by a mentor and staff from the NCGE. Representatives from the SDPI (School Development Planning Initiative) also provided inputs to the programmes. Technical advice was provided by the NCGE IT consultant as required. The programmes were evaluated by a questionnaire (appendix II) distributed to learners after each workshop and through an informal interview between a number of learners and an independent evaluator at the end of the module (pilot only).

Module 1 will be offered to approximately 62 schools in centres located in three locations around the country (Athlone, Cork and Dublin) from September 2006. Each centre has a module coordinator, a tutor and a mentor. In addition, each centre has administrative support and technical advice available to it from the NCGE.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the proposed evaluation of module 1 are to:

- Establish if the programmes achieve the learning objectives of the module (including the briefing for Principals).
- Assess the appropriateness of the module core text and readings, and assessment criteria as ways of achieving the learning objectives of the module.
- Evaluate the learning methodologies employed by the module i.e. action research and blended learning approaches to deliver on the learning objectives.
- Analyse the impact of the module on learners and schools both during and after the module has been completed (valorisation).
- Assess learners' evaluation of the VLE as an e-learning environment and as a medium for delivering the learning objectives.
- Evaluate the workshops as a medium for achieving the learning objectives of the module and a form of support to learners.
- Evaluate the support provided to learners by the tutor, module coordinator and the NCGE.
- Assess Education Centres as suitable venues for the workshops.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the tutor training programme offered to guidance counsellors in preparing them for the role of tutor.
- Assess the model of support provided to centre staff by the NCGE.

In evaluating the module strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats should be identified. In addition recommendations concerning the future development and delivery of the module should be outlined in the report.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology should include interviews with learners and staff working on the programme.

OUTPUTS

The output of the evaluation will be a report that will contain the following:

- Introduction.
- Executive summary and recommendations.
- Literature review of good practice (blended learning, action research, CPD).
- Methodology.
- Findings of the research and analysis.
- Recommendations.

TIMESCALE

The timescale for undertaking the evaluation is from the 11th October – 20th December 2006.

SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL

The following criteria will be used to select the successful proposal:

- The quality of the submission: This should demonstrate the consultant's understanding of the project requirements, include an overview of the proposed methodology stating how project objectives will be met and the consultant's fee (including a breakdown of costs e.g. travel and subsistence) for undertaking the work.
- Previous experience: This includes the consultant's experience dealing with either NCGE or other clients appropriate to the NCGE, as well as the consultant's knowledge and expertise in the area of study.
- Relevant consultancy experience to date: This reflects the qualifications of the consultant assigned to this project and his/her experience in carrying out similar work. Reference should be made to the points under 'consultants' below.
- Consultant capability: This takes account of the ability of the consultant to meet deadlines.

CONSULTANTS

The consultant will be an experienced researcher who has a:

- Background in learning and teaching.
- Familiarity with VLEs.
- Knowledge of Action Research.
- Familiarity with guidance in post primary schools and of strategic planning.

MONITORING

The Director and Guidance Programme Coordinator (Acting) of the NCGE will oversee the implementation of the project. The consultant will be required to liaise with the NCGE staff members (above) on progress.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Completed proposals should be sent to Linda Darbey by mail/email (Linda.Darbey@ncge.ie) no later than 5pm on the 18th September 2006.