

Introduction

This report is intended to provide a summary of the views of the delegates who attended a series of workshops to consider the development of a Professional Development Award in ESOL Tutoring by SQA. The workshops took place in November and December 2007. They continued the national consultation process, following on from the online survey of ESOL practitioners in Scotland and focus meetings with voluntary providers and other groups.

6 workshops took place across the country:

Inverness	27 th November
Perth	29 th November
Dumfries	4 th December
Edinburgh	6 th December
Glasgow	13 th December (morning)
Glasgow	13 th December (afternoon)

A workshop was also scheduled in Skye. However, the event was cancelled due to lack of numbers.

Aims of Workshops

The workshops were planned to give ESOL practitioners the opportunity to feed into the design of the PDA in ESOL Tutoring currently being developed. The main aims of the workshop were:

- To provide feedback on the PDA in ESOL Tutoring Survey
- To give information on the proposed level and content of the award
- To offer delegates a forum for discussion on key factors related to the development
- To allow participants the opportunity to give their views and help guide the development

General Information on the Workshops

The workshops were well attended and delegates came from a wide range of sectors. Those attending represented the Voluntary sector; Community Learning and Development; the FE sector, the Private sector (EFL) and the Schools sector

As well as plenary sessions, which provided information on the development to date, participants formed groups to discuss issues relevant to the qualification. The groups then gave feedback to the rest of the delegates

Workshop Feedback

Below is a collation of the main findings of the groups. In order to reduce repetition, the feedback is from all the workshops rather than by area. However, where the data is particularly relevant to one geographical area this has been made clear. The group sessions looked at 3 general areas and provided focus questions to guide the groups in their deliberations. These are provided prior to feedback on that area. The views expressed are those of the workshop participants rather than those of SQA.

Focus 1

Professional Development Award in ESOL Tutoring at SCQF Level 6

Do you agree with the title, content, size and proposed level of the qualification?

Is there anything that needs to be added?

What are your views on observation and observed tutoring practice?

Title:

- It was felt by many that there should be a reference to the first stage nature of the award. This could be achieved through the use of a term such as **Introduction/ Initial** or **preparatory** in the title.
- One group questioned the use of the word professional although it was accepted that a PDA was indeed a Professional award
- Concern over the potential confusion with the PDA in ESOL Literacies- a qualification that already exists and sits at SCQF level 8. While this qualification is intended for practitioners who already hold ESOL qualifications, the shortening of this award title to PDA ESOL could lead to confusion

Level and Size:

- In general delegates were happy with the level (SCQF level 6) and size (2 units) of the qualification and felt this was appropriate for the potential candidates. It would be the same as the ITALL award (Introduction to Tutoring in Adult Literacies Learning) currently used as an initial benchmark by Adult Literacies Partnerships for their staff and volunteers and this was seen to be an appropriate level
- There was some concern that, as potential candidates were coming from diverse backgrounds in terms of qualifications and experience, the level might be too low for some. This was especially commented on by qualified school teachers. To take account of prior learning there ought to be different level awards.
- 80 notional hours (2 proposed units) might be very long for some potential candidates. Would volunteers find the length of any course leading to qualification too onerous? Most volunteer tutoring courses were less than half the length of the proposed guided learning hours of this award.
- At the same time, how would the proposed content fit into 80 hours? One group in Dumfries felt that there was an awful lot to cover in the 80 hours.
- In Perth and in Glasgow it was proposed that the qualification had 2 units with an optional 3rd unit, which would be a teaching practice unit
- Some delegates in Inverness proposed 3 units rather than 2:
 1. Focus on the learner
 2. Focus on Language
 3. Focus on Materials and Delivery
- Need to clarify whether award would allow practitioners to assess/verify SQA NQ units. Some participants felt that it was vital that gaining the award would allow assessment of the units; while others felt that there was a need for further qualifications before a practitioner would have the skills, knowledge and understanding to assess successfully.

Content:

The main concern of delegates was whether the award would be flexible enough to take into consideration the diverse needs of the potential tutors, and the learners they were working with. There was a fear the qualification might be too generic and, therefore, not appropriate for all potential users.

- Should there be 3 units rather than 2?
- Would it be possible to have a third optional unit, which would have a focus on teaching practice?

- The different knowledge and skills of practitioners were mentioned. Could there be a fast track route for EAL teachers who already had good language awareness?
- Was it possible to have a core unit, with a range of options for unit 2 – in order to be relevant to different sectors (e.g. volunteers, schools)?

- There needs to be a link to/ overview of SQA NQ ESOL units and levels in the content of the PDA
- How would levelling of learners (ESOL students) be tackled? This was considered very difficult for new teachers to cope with.
- What type of focus will PDA have in terms of groups? Is this training for one-one tutoring, small groups or whole class?
- The need to specify entry requirements for candidates was questioned. It was felt that some people would bring experience, whether or not they had formal qualifications
- Delegates were interested in the depth to which topics would be covered.
- There would be different training needs according to sector. The needs for schoolteachers would be different to volunteers working one-one with adults. The content would need to be flexible enough to take this into account
- Should be about 'hands on' English.
- Emphasis should be on community needs
- Literacy issues should be incorporated
- Phonology/pronunciation/phonetics need to be included
- Must make sure that the qualification includes practical elements. Equipping people to DO the job, therefore, lesson planning, teaching strategies etc.
- Qualification should be relevant to the social practice model (ref: ALN Curricular Framework)

Observation:

There were lots of differing viewpoints on the question of how observation should be incorporated and assessed in the award. While most delegates recognised the value of observation, some questioned the practicality in terms of delivery of courses leading towards the qualification.

- Observation is very important in order to teach, but more focus should be on observing tutors who are already qualified i.e. shadowing
- Observed assessment may put people off, so observation could be given as support method and not formal assessment
- Must ensure people are able to teach and can go out to deliver ESOL so some form of observed assessment useful, but to what extent? There were concerns over tutors being able to gain a tutoring qualification without any observed teaching
- Could observed assessment be done AFTER tutors have had some experience tutoring, a few weeks down the line?
- In favour of portfolio because if tutors know they have to be observed, they will spend their whole term focussing on that one lesson.
- Observed practice should be included but further on in course, towards the end of the 2nd unit.
- Observation of trainees is essential (2 or 3 observations to allow for development). One hour is not enough, needs to be sequential
- If portfolio were used, would this be based on a fictional student?
- Observation is necessary and needs to be promoted as developmental.
- Observation is important and technology could be used to observe tutors in remote areas
- Needs to be more than one observed lesson to be effective
- Centre delivering courses would need to find tutors willing to be observed
- Observed TP might not be necessary due to level of award
- Being observed is nerve-wracking, can be intimidating, especially in a one-one situation. Therefore, portfolio assessment may work better.
- Portfolio assessment sufficient for these 2 units.

Focus 2 Delivery of Courses leading to PDA

What are the challenges with respect to delivery?
How can the design of the qualification help overcome these challenges?
Is there a need for training for trainers?

Challenges:

Delegates were asked about the challenges with respect to delivering courses leading to the qualification. The main concerns centred on time, funding and accessibility for those in remote areas. Geography/distance may cause problems for people in more remote areas, especially if face-to-face teaching is required. There may also be problems with finding qualified trainers to deliver the course in more rural areas. There will be challenges getting people together at the same time and place.

- There is a need for peer support (face-face) and management support.
- There need to be options for local needs and learners
- Viability in terms of numbers – will uptake make running a course worthwhile?
- Funding issues. Who would be paying for the course? Will it be eligible for ILA (Individual Learning Account) funding? Will there be any Government funding? What would be the real cost of undertaking qualification?
- There will be different cohorts of candidates with distinct needs (volunteers/community-based, schools)
- Concerns over length of course-would take too long to deliver, especially to those who have full-time work commitments. 80 hours too long for volunteers
- Problem of ongoing training. The current support network does not fit with the PDA framework. Would tutors stop learning once they have achieved award?
- ITALL qualification and proposed ESOL qualification are at the same level. This might have a negative impact in ABE (Adult Basic Education) in terms of which qualification tutors may wish to undertake.
- Quality Assurance would be crucial to maintain standards.
- What about individuals who do not belong to an organisation? Where is the progression for them? How do they then find work? Centres should provide them with contacts in order for them to gain work placements/ experience

Overcoming Challenges:

- On-line/distance learning element but face-face teaching also needed included allow tutors to develop their skills
- Bringing on-line learning into course will force people into using ICT so is useful.
- Use of technology (video conferencing)
- Possibility of having self study or online modules to allow tutors to complete in their own time.
- Optional units adapted by the trainer to meet local needs (e.g. in some areas tutors working solely with migrant workers, in other areas the potential learners might include asylum seekers, refugees, BMEs.
- ILA funding (awareness raising on this issue)
- Flexibility is key e.g. intensive programme or longer course in smaller blocks
- Providing advice on practical learning strategies such as further reading
- Range of delivery times = should accommodate all different tutors so those with work/family/ other commitments can still fit this into their lifestyles
- Should be a minimum requirement for attendance so someone can't just attend here and there, and still receive same award as those who attended all the hours.

Training for Trainers:

Most people felt there should definitely be training in place for trainers delivering courses leading to the qualification. It was felt that this would lead to greater standardisation in delivery.

- Some delegates felt that it was not specific training that was needed and a trainer's qualifications and experience would be sufficient to provide good delivery and assessment.
- There should be a minimum level of qualification for trainers. Some felt they should be at least DELTA (or equivalent) qualified, however others felt that CELTA was sufficient.
- It was not only qualifications but also significant experience that would be important. (A DELTA qualified teacher returning from overseas might have no experience of working with the learners or the learning environments that the (community) ESOL tutor would encounter.)
- This raised questions as to whether there would be a big enough bank of trainers to deliver courses, particularly in remote areas.
- In Dumfries, one group questioned the incentive to train as a trainer, unless it guaranteed a higher salary, as there would be a greater workload involved.

Focus 3

Qualification Framework for ESOL Practitioners

What qualifications/experience should a **qualified** ESOL tutor have?

Are the existing qualifications (e.g.CELTA/DELTA) appropriate for ESOL teaching contexts?

Should SQA develop stand-alone qualifications or bolt-ons to existing qualifications (from other awarding bodies such as Cambridge/Trinity)?

It became apparent during the course of the workshops that some participants did not understand the levels and scope of existing qualifications. To overcome this problem an overview of the main qualifications by Trinity and Cambridge was given at the beginning of each workshop. For the last workshop in Glasgow a handout explaining the level, size and scope of existing qualifications was added to the workshop pack (Appendix1)

- There should possibly be 3 levels of qualification Baseline (level 6), Certificate (level 7/8), Diploma (level 8/9)
- There is a need to take account of existing qualifications
- Any qualifications developed need to have international recognition if SQA are to compete with other awarding bodies.
- There are advantages in both stand-alone and bolt-ons to existing qualifications
- Literacy practitioners should acquire an ESOL qualification, and ESOL practitioners a literacy one
- Schools sector Secondary and primary sectors need a bolt-on qualification for those with existing PGCE
- Special consideration for volunteers in terms amount of study require.
- One group in Glasgow felt that best practice for Community Learning and Development was to provide non-accredited courses to provide ESOL background and that CELTA (or equivalent) and PDA ESOL Literacies qualifications were appropriate. While in FE (where ESOL learners were working towards SQA ESOL qualifications)- lecturers should have TQFE + CELTA or equivalent
- The validity of online qualifications was questioned.
- Was the PDA an appropriate qualification for classroom assistants?
- Problems of accessing qualifications such as DELTA were mentioned.
- Need for higher level qualification such as a Scottish CELTA
- Need clarification on where different awards/units would sit on SCQF
- Would the PDA in ESOL tutoring provide credit transfer on a CELTA/Cert TESOL course?
- Existing qualifications are appropriate for ESOL teaching contexts as they can be adapted for teaching within the UK, as valuable for those teaching here as for those teaching abroad. It is often dependant on the context in which they are delivered. However, tend to be aimed at tutors who intend to teach overseas, while a PDA is for teaching in the UK, especially Scotland.

- Absolute minimum qualification ESOL teacher should be the CELTA/CertTESOL. Concerns raised over people delivering ESOL who have only undertaken a 1- day introduction to the subject. This was felt to be inappropriate and that practitioners should not be delivering with so little training.
- There should be a framework and there was a need to attract people onto the framework. However, there is an issue of funding – who will pay for CPD and qualification attainment?
- Both stand-alone and bolt-ons to existing qualifications were favoured.
- Perhaps possible to develop conversion courses /different units that practitioners can access to develop specialisms, depending on contexts working in.
- We should consider the entry level and not set bar too high.
- Must be clarity in where the PDA in ESOL will sit it in comparison to CELTA/Cert TESOL.

Other Issues:

One of the main issues that arose was how appropriate this qualification would be for the Schools Sector. Qualified schoolteachers have more and more bilingual pupils in their classes. Also, SQA NQ ESOL units are now being delivered in schools, especially at Intermediate 2 and Higher level. Often teachers are expected to work with these units without training and with no ESOL background. There was also a need to consider classroom assistants who work with bilingual pupils. Many teachers felt that there should be a separate qualification, or specific units to help them work more effectively. It was pointed out that teachers had already achieved other qualifications which incorporated methodology, and, therefore, might find the award too low.

There were also concerns about the award becoming mandatory for volunteers. It was deemed unfair to expect people, who are unpaid and giving their own time, to achieve qualifications. How would the qualification be supported (in funding terms)- given the number of input hours necessary?

Participants also mentioned the nature of ESOL delivery and work, particularly in rural and sparsely populated areas. What was the incentive to build on qualifications when it was unlikely to find full-time work, and where ESOL might only be a small part of one's remit? According to the survey most ESOL practitioners were over 40. How could the profession attract younger people-would a qualifications framework aid this?

With the ITALL qualification and proposed ESOL qualification being at the same level this might have a negative impact in ABE in terms of which qualification tutors may wish to undertake. Participants in Inverness had concerns that adult literacy practitioners might choose to take an ESOL qualification, which could have a detrimental effect on the work they do with first language learners with literacy needs.

Final Comments:

There is a need to continue the consultation process with ESOL practitioners and stakeholders who have an interest in the nature of English language teaching provision in Scotland. Without this dialogue, it will be very difficult to develop a coherent professional framework with pathways which suit the diverse but inter-related needs of the sectors involved. Practitioners have shown during this consultation that their expertise is invaluable to SQA's work in this area. We would like to thank everyone who attended the workshops for their input.

Jennifer MacDougall
jennifer.macdougall@sqa.org.uk

