Arrangements for:

Professional Development Award (PDA) in Learner Support at SCQF level 7

Group Award Code: G94K 47

Validation date: February 2005

Date of original publication: April 2009

Version: 02 (February 2013)

Acknowledgement

History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualification, and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below.

Version number	Description	Date
02	**Changes to codes and titles:** *Learner Support: Support Strategies - Key Functions* from DP9D 34 *(lapse date 31/07/2012, finish date 31/07/2014)* to *Learner Support: Key Support Functions* H366 34. *Learner Support: Principles and Practice of the Learning Facilitator/Assistant in Supporting Learners with Diverse Needs* from DP9C 34 *(lapse date 31/07/2012, finish date 31/07/2014)* to *Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Facilitator/Assistant* H367 34.	25/02/13

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose

This is the Arrangements Document for the Group Award PDA Learner Support (SCQF level 7) which was validated in February 2005. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure and guidance on delivery.

The PDA Learner Support is designed for those already working as, or wishing to pursue a career as a learning assistant and also those who work with and support learners with additional support needs within the Further Education environment.

1.2   Background

The PDA Learner Support was initiated in response to changes within the FE sector influenced by the amended Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and the BRITE Initiative (Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technology and Education) As a result of these changes, the sector took a pro-active approach to ensure that it meets the needs of individuals with diverse needs. To meet these requirements, many of the FE colleges employed learning facilitators/learning assistants to provide support to learners with additional support needs. From all these developments, and through consultation with centres, the need for a qualification for learning assistants and facilitators emerged. This PDA therefore formalizes training for learning assistants and facilitators and ensures that centres deliver a quality provision for all learners.

This PDA was developed as a result of consultation by SQA with staff in further education colleges and local authorities in the West of Scotland. Feedback from this consultation identified the diverse skills required to support learners with specific tasks such as note-taking and scribing and prompting and also more general tasks such as providing assistance with time management and enabling learners to become more independent through the application of assistive technology.

2   Rationale for the development of the Group Award

The sector had identified the need for a recognised qualification which would enhance career prospects for individuals working on special programmes or in mainstream Further Education with students who require support for learning. This support could be in general ways — such as increasing independence, or by providing support in specific tasks, eg by scribing and reading, or by using assistive technology.

The development was influenced by the following factors:

♦   The response of the Further Education sector to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
♦   The increasing number of students with additional support needs participating in FE programmes and courses
♦   The increase in the number of learning assistants in colleges, and the need to provide a qualification for them and recognize their role
♦   The FENTO Report which identified gaps in the provision of support roles for the FE sector, and is particular how support staff could help young people

♦ The needs of the learner in making the transition from school to college
♦ The responses to the consultation exercise organized by SQA in collaboration with the Development Team

3 Aims of the Group Award

The PDA Learner Support is designed to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role of a learning assistant working with students in Further Education who require additional support needs.

3.1 General aims of the Group Award

The general aims of the PDA are to:

♦ develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of the role, responsibilities and values expected of a learning assistant and to develop the skills to be able to apply these in a range of situations
♦ develop skills in how to communicate effectively with the learner and to carry out tasks such as scribing, note-taking and proof-reading
♦ develop skills to identify and use appropriate assistive technologies with learners
♦ develop candidates' understanding of specific legislation
♦ help candidates to understand support strategies that could help overcome barriers to learning and could encourage and develop independence of the learner
♦ provide candidates with the knowledge and understanding of specific legislation that impacts on support for those with additional support needs

3.2 Specific aims of the Group Award

The specific aims of the PDA are to:

♦ put in place a recognized qualification which would provide career prospects for Learning Assistants
♦ provide Learning Assistants with access to SCQF level 8
♦ develop staff so that they have more self esteem, are more professionally confident and better informed
♦ provide candidates with the required communication and interpersonal skills
♦ provide increased quality of support for students
♦ provide a value-base that is anti-discriminatory and encourages independence in the students that the candidates are supporting
♦ help the candidates find ways to help the students overcome barriers to learning
♦ provide candidates with transferable skills so that they can transfer their knowledge and skills to relevant practical situations with learners

3.3 Target groups

This PDA is designed for Learning Assistants and Facilitators who are working in some capacity to support learners with disabilities and /or additional support needs within a formal learning environment.

Candidates will normally be engaged in supporting students with additional needs on mainstream courses or special programmes. They could be working in a classroom situation or within a library or a designated support base.

Candidates will normally be employed in work of this nature but in special circumstances may be not be in post and may be seeking employment in learning support.

In most cases candidates will undertake the full programme for the Group Award. However, the Units are free-standing Units and may be taken as such for purposes of Continuing Professional Development.

3.4 Employment opportunities

Candidates will normally be working or intending to work as Learning Assistant or Facilitators in a further education environment, which may be based in a college or in a Learning Centre affiliated to a college, or in any other appropriate formal or informal educational environment.

4 Access to Group Award

Prospective candidates may come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds and may bring a wide range of experiences. Candidates will normally be working in some capacity to support learners with additional support needs. This is advisable as much of the evidence required for the Unit assessments is drawn from real life experience and reflection.

In order to gain access to the course candidates must be able to demonstrate or provide evidence that they have very good communication skills (both written and oral) and very good interpersonal skills.

5   Group Award structure

The PDA Learner Support (SCQF level 7) is comprised of six Units. Thus the Group Award (ie the PDA) has a total credit value of 6 credits.

All Units are mandatory. The PDA will therefore be awarded upon successful completion of all six Units.

5.1   Framework

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Facilitator/Assistant	H367 34*	8	7	1
Learner Support: Key Support Functions	H366 34*	8	7	1
Learner Support: Barriers to Learning	DP9E 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Related Legislation	DP99 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Assistive Technology in Support of Learners with Additional Support Needs	DP98 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning	DP9A 34	8	7	1

*Refer to History of Changes for revision changes.

5.2   Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer

There is at present no direct articulation, professional recognition or credit transfer relating to this PDA.

6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

6.1 Approaches to delivery of Units

Candidates taking the individual Units in the PDA will normally be working towards gaining the Group Award- the PDA Learner Support (SCQF level 7) However, the Units are free-standing Units and candidates may take them as such for purposes of continuing professional development.

The qualification has been designed so that when candidates are undertaking the Group Award, there is a preferred sequence of delivery. The aims of the qualification are most likely to be met if the Units are delivered in the order listed below.

Unit title	SQA credit value
Learner Support: Principles and Practice of the Learning Assistant/Facilitator in Supporting Learners with Diverse Needs.	1 HN credit
Learner Support: Support Strategies— Key Functions	1 HN credit
Learner Support: Barriers to Learning	1 HN credit
Learner Support: Related Legislation	1 HN credit
Learner Support: Assistive Technology in the Support of Learners with Additional Support Needs	1 HN credit
Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning	1 HN credit

Those delivering the qualification will require to support and mentor their learning assistants/facilitators on an on-going basis to ensure that they get access to learners, facilities and materials to support the generation of evidence for this Group Award. Where possible the evidence for knowledge and skills should relate to real-life practice, and candidates should be given opportunities to apply their skills in real-life settings.

Teaching methods and resources could include exposition, discussion, question and answer, exemplars, videos, articles from journals and other publications, extracts from legislation and appropriate websites. There may be opportunities for guest speakers and for visits to other learning organisations. Case studies could be used to enhance the learning experience and to provide opportunities for assessment.

The qualification is candidate-centred and the delivery model should ensure that candidates develop the skill of independent learning.

6.2   Approaches to assessment of Units

Advice on how to assess each Unit is given in detail in the individual Unit Specifications at the section — Evidence Requirements (for each Outcome), and in the Support Notes at the Section — Guidance on the Delivery and Assessment of this Unit.

In the assessment information the number of assessments per Unit is set out.

It is recommended, to promote best practice, that certain Units have two or three assessments, while others are assessed holistically. The Units which deal mainly with Knowledge are assessed by a number of varied assessments, eg short questions or reports. The Units that deal with Practice are assessed by observation of performance of tasks and by a portfolio of evidence which provides a written account of the tasks and usually some self-evaluation.

Where is not possible to undertake some practical aspects, it may be possible to offer opportunities for assessment through role play and/or through the use of case studies.

7   General information for centres

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website **www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements**.

Internal and external verification

All instruments of assessment used within this/these Group Award(s) should be internally verified, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in *SQA's Guide to Assessment* (**www.sqa.org.uk**).

8   General information for candidates

The PDA Learner Support (SCQF level 7) is relevant to you if you are currently working as a learning assistant or facilitator in a Further Education environment, or if you are aspiring to undertake such work.

The PDA Learner Support is a new qualification which provides opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills required to support learners who have additional support needs. The qualification has six Units:

Learner Support: Principles and Practice of the Learning Assistant/Facilitator in Supporting Learners with Diverse Needs

Learner Support: Support Strategies- Key Functions

Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

Learner Support: Related Legislation

Learner Support: Assistive Technology in Support of Learners with Additional Support Needs

Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning

If you complete all six Units successfully you will achieve the Group Award. However, the Units are free- standing and you can achieve them on an individual basis, usually for purposes of Continuing Professional Development.

9   Glossary of terms

SCQF: This stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which is a new way of speaking about qualifications and how they inter-relate. We use SCQF terminology throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at **www.scqf.org.uk**

SCQF credit points: One HN credit is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points. This applies to all HN Units, irrespective of their level.

SCQF levels: The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HN Units will normally be at levels 6–9. Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8.

Subject Unit: Subject Units contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

Graded Unit: Graded Units assess candidates' ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

Dedicated Unit to cover Core Skills: This is a non-subject Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills.

Embedded Core Skills: This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

Signposted Core Skills: This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie outwith automatic certification.

Qualification Design Team: The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the HNC/HND from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

Consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

Specialist single centre and specialist collaborative devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions led by a single centre or small group of centres who provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area. Like consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs, these developments or revisions will also be supported by SQA.