

10. Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement – RARPA

10.1. Introduction to RARPA

10.1.1. What is RARPA?

10.1.1.1. RARPA stands for Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement. The term describes an approach to the quality assurance of provision in the learning and skills sector that focuses on individual learner achievement. The RARPA approach gives providers a framework for supporting the progress and achievement of learners, through consistent and effective methods of recognising and recording.

10.1.1.2. The RARPA approach was developed explicitly to support the recognition and recording of progress and achievement in circumstances where no external qualification or certification is offered to learners. As the majority of such 'non-accredited' programmes in the learning and skills sector are offered to adult learners, the RARPA approach was originally developed to meet the needs of these learners.

10.1.1.3. The RARPA approach has been particularly appropriate to the curriculum offered by Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) providers, (formerly known as ACL) where the majority of learners are studying non-accredited programmes. However, the RARPA approach is relevant to all non-accredited provision and has also been demonstrated to be appropriate in the following contexts:

- Entry to Employment (E2E) centres
- **Learndirect** and UK Online centres
- specialist colleges for learners with learning difficulties and /or disabilities
- family learning
- Offender Learning and Skills (OLAS)
- neighbourhood renewal provision
- provision offered by voluntary organisations

10.1.1.4. The RARPA approach has also been tested in sixth form colleges. However, there is currently no requirement for the approach to be applied to non-accredited activities within the full-time 16-19 entitlement curriculum.

10.1.2. How has the RARPA approach been developed?

10.1.2.1. The RARPA approach originated through work commissioned by the LSC from the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). The RARPA approach was devised primarily so that providers offering non-accredited provision funded by the LSC would be able to provide evidence to both the LSC and the inspectorates that such provision was supported by appropriate quality assurance procedures. The LSC's work on RARPA has been taken forward as part of the measures of success as the measure for non-accredited learning.

10.1.2.2. The RARPA approach was developed from examples of demonstrated effective practice in non-accredited provision, and is directly mapped to the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). NIACE and LSN (Formerly LSDA) worked together with the LSC during 2001-02 to develop, test and refine the model, and towards the end of 2002 the LSC formally endorsed the RARPA approach as its preferred model for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning.

10.1.2.3. During 2003-04 the RARPA approach was tested out through a range of pilot projects involving many different types of provider and provision. LSDA and NIACE together produced an evaluation of the pilots in November 2004 that confirmed that the RARPA approach could be applied to all areas of non-accredited provision in the learning and skills sector.

10.1.2.4. From 2004-05 the work of LSN, NIACE and the LSC on RARPA prepared providers for implementation of the RARPA approach across all relevant LSC-funded provision, and to supporting organisations to build their capacity to fulfil the requirement to implement RARPA from September 2006 onwards.

10.1.3. What is the RARPA 'staged processes'?

10.1.3.1. The RARPA approach is based around the application of a simple five-stage process to all programmes of learning. Each of the five stages can be mapped to a key question in the CIF, and follows a logical sequence familiar to many people working in the sector. At its heart, the RARPA approach embodies effective practice in teaching and learning developed over many years with adult learners.

10.1.3.2. The five stages of the RARPA Process are outlined in Table 1 below. The table includes some suggestions as to how each stage (or element) of the process might be evidenced, although it should be noted that a key criterion in implementing RARPA is that the activities designed to generate such evidence are fit for purpose. This means that the evidence generated may not necessarily be paper-based but

should be appropriate. Table 2 maps elements of the staged process to both the revised CIF and the original CIF.

Table 1: The RARPA staged process

Element	Evidence
1 Aim(s) appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners	Clearly stated aim(s) for all programmes
2 Initial assessment to establish the learner's starting point	Record of outcomes of process of establishing learners' starting points
3 Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives (initial, renegotiated and revised)	Clearly stated and suitably challenging objectives for all programmes and, wherever feasible, individually for each learner
4 Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment) , including tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews	<p>Examples of appropriate evidence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • records of learner self-assessment, group and peer assessment • tutor records of assessment activities and individual or group progress and achievement • learners' files, journals, diaries, portfolios, artwork, videos, audiotapes, performances, exhibitions and displays, individual or group learner testimony, artefacts, photographs and other forms of evidence
5 End-of-programme learner self-assessment, tutor summative assessment, review of overall progress and achievement in relation to appropriately challenging learning objectives identified at the beginning or during the programme. It may include recognition of learning outcomes not specified during the programme	

Table 2: RARPA and the Common Inspection Framework

Element of staged process	Mapping to old CIF questions	Mapping to new CIF questions
1 Aims appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners (clearly stated learning aims)	1 How well do learners achieve? 5 How well do programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?	3 How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?
2 Initial assessment to establish the learner's starting point	4 How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress? 1 How well do learners achieve? 2 How effective are teaching, training and learning?	1 How well do learners achieve? 2 How effective are teaching, training and learning? 4 How well are learners guided and supported?
3 Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives: initial, renegotiated and revised	2 How effective are teaching, training and learning? 4 How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress? 5 How well do programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?	1 How well do learners achieve? 2 How effective are teaching, training and learning? 3 How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?
4 Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment): tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews	1 How well do learners achieve? 4 How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?	1 How well do learners achieve? 2 How effective are teaching, training and learning?
5 End-of-programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement	1 How well do learners achieve? 4 How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?	1 How well do learners achieve? 2 How effective are teaching, training and learning? 4 How well are learners guided and supported?

10.1.3.3. The staged process has been developed for and by practitioners. Each element can easily be translated into a language which is meaningful in terms of illustrating a quality learning process for learners on their learning journey. We might translate the staged process into the following questions relating to each element:

1. What does the learner want to learn about?
2. What experiences does the learner have which are relevant to the learning they want to do? Where are they starting from in

terms of skills and knowledge? What might inhibit their learning?

3. What specific learner goals need to be provided to facilitate successful learning? Are these included in the programme content, or do they need to be added/negotiated?
4. How is the learner progressing? What does the learner want following feedback from the tutor? What further instruction and support do they need? Are the learner's aims still relevant or do they need to be modified?
5. How is the learner's progress and achievement going to be recognised? Will it be through tutor-led review, peer review, group review, another form of review and recording which is appropriate to the context and type of programme? What has the learner achieved at the end of the programme? How can these achievements be recorded in a meaningful way for the learner? Are there achievements which were not anticipated to recognise and record? What is the next step for this learner?

10.1.3.4. It is important to emphasise the inter-relationship of the five stages. For example, the identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives will inform the basis of both formative and summative assessment. Feedback from formative assessment may lead to a re-negotiation of learning objectives and so on.

10.1.3.5. It is also possible that, in some instances, elements of the process may be combined, or that the order of application of the process might be changed. For example, in very short programmes, the distinction between formative and summative assessment may not be meaningful or possible. Where the aims of a programme are negotiated with a group of learners, stage two may influence stage one.

10.1.3.6. At each stage of the process providers will be expected to ensure that learners are involved in the process, and that evidence of this involvement is recorded and presented to demonstrate that the RARPA approach is being consistently and effectively applied across all relevant provision. The evaluation of the pilots noted that, where learners are involved and engaged with this process and it is built into the learning experience so that it enhances rather than intrudes on the delivery of the programme, benefits for learners, practitioners and the institution itself are maximised. The stages of the staged process should be evident in the provider's processes though they may not be identified or badged as RARPA. Many providers already have effective learning and quality assurance processes so that applying RARPA may require minimal changes.

10.1.4. Examples of effective practice

10.1.4.1. The publication: *Evaluation report on the RARPA pilot projects* refers to a number of examples of the effective application of the RARPA approach across the learning and skills sector. Copies of the report are available on both the NIACE and LSDA web sites and paper copies of the report may be ordered from both organisations, or from the LSC itself.

10.1.4.2. LSN, NIACE and the LSC have established an Effective Practice Web Resource (EPWR) for providers to support the implementation of the RARPA approach. The Resource was launched at the beginning of October 2005 and is maintained on the LSN website.

10.1.5. The Introduction of RARPA

10.1.5.1. The RARPA approach was introduced across LSC funded non-accredited provision from September 2005. 2005-06 was an embedding year for RARPA with full implementation demonstrated in the self-assessment report (SAR). Providers are expected to commit to effective quality assurance of learning and quality improvement led by self-assessment, as summarised in a statement about the application of RARPA in providers' development plans.

10.1.5.2. From September 2006, all providers in receipt of LSC funding have been required to apply the RARPA approach to all non-accredited provision.

10.1.5.3. The *For action* document: *Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning* (LSC, July 2005) can be accessed from the RARPA web pages (www.lsc.gov.uk/rarpa) or by clicking on the link: [RARPA for action document](#)

10.2. Embedding the RARPA principles in quality assurance, quality assessment and risk based monitoring approaches

10.2.1. What are the implications for 'accredited learning'?

10.2.1.1. As stated in paragraph 1.5 the RARPA approach is the measure of success for non-accredited learning

10.2.1.2. As the RARPA approach is mapped to and supports the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), and as the CIF is applied to all provision across the sector, the LSC, Ofsted, ALI and DfES agreed in March 2005 that the RARPA approach was applicable to accredited as well as non-accredited provision. At the same time, ALI and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority reached a similar agreement in principle that in future the RARPA approach should be developed for provision leading to qualifications.

10.2.1.3. These agreements provide the basis for moving forward in 2005-06 with further development of RARPA beyond the boundaries of non-accredited provision. This work is being taken forward by NIACE and the LSC with QCA in response to these initiatives.

10.2.1.4. Feedback from the evaluation of the RARPA pilots in non-accredited provision demonstrates clearly that the staged process is most effective when it is embedded within the day-to-day quality systems of the provider. The embedding of the RARPA standard ensures that this principle can be effectively extended to programmes leading to accredited awards.

10.2.1.5. From September 2006 RARPA will be tested in all learning contexts across the Learning and Skills sector (i.e. to both non-accredited and accredited provision) as part of the piloting and trialling of arrangements for; the 'Framework for Excellence', The Qualifications and Credit Framework' (QCF), and 'The Foundation Learning Tier'.

10.2.1.6. The embedding of the RARPA standard has two strands of work. The main strand of work seeks to embed the RARPA approach in a new set of arrangements for awarding body centre recognition and monitoring currently being developed within the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). In this strand of the project the LSC is working closely with both QCA and with awarding bodies through the QCA's Centre Recognition Project.

10.2.1.7. The second strand will ensure that the RARPA Effective Practice Web Resource (EPWR) is extended to include examples of practice from programmes leading to awards within the QCF. The expectation of the further work to develop a common quality assurance and improvement platform is that over time, the application to such provision will maximise learner achievement in the new framework and lead to increased levels of success.

10.2.1.8. The development of standards for accredited provision is closely linked into the VA and DT measure and the Qualification Success Rate measure and will feature in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 'effectiveness' in the proposed Framework for Excellence.

10.2.2. What is the timescale for embedding the RARPA principles?

10.2.2.1. Establishing the common quality assurance and improvement platform began formally in March 2005 and aims to prepare the ground for the introduction of the RARPA approach to provision leading to awards within the QCF from September 2006. Following trials with selected awarding bodies and centres in the autumn of 2006, the project will establish agreed criteria and processes for embedding the standards within centre recognition arrangements in QCA's Centre Recognition Project, the QCF and the Framework for Excellence.

10.2.2.2. The full application of the quality assurance and improvement platform to all provision across the sector will take place alongside the transition from National Qualification Framework (NQF) provision to QCF provision planned for 2006-2010. During this time awarding body centres will be approved for an increasing proportion of the awards they offer. The development and implementation of the Framework for Excellence will support these arrangements with the establishment of a common quality assurance and improvement approach which uses the same information and evidence for many purposes. Trials and piloting will take place in the autumn and spring 2006-07 with final guidance being produced in summer 2007 for implementation in further education (FE), Work based Learning (WBL) and Sixth Form Colleges from September 2007 and the rest of the sector from September 2008 after some further trials.

10.2.3. The relationship of RARPA to planning and inspection

10.2.3.1. The RARPA staged process has been developed in consultation with inspectorates and is mapped against the requirements of the CIF. Evidence of the effective application of the staged process will therefore also be useful in meeting the requirements of the CIF.

10.2.3.2. In conjunction with other measures of success, RARPA will be a key tool for addressing quality assurance and quality improvement issues identified as part of the new arranging for aligning planning and resources outlined in Planning for Success.

10.2.4. The role of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

10.2.4.1. In taking forward the RARPA approach into accredited provision, the partners have taken into account the regulatory framework within which awards are offered to learners on LSC-funded provision. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) thus becomes an

important partner in taking forward the establishment of a common quality assurance and improvement platform.

10.2.4.2. QCA is formally committed to supporting the work to establish a common quality assurance and improvement platform. In particular QCA seeks to ensure Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) takes account of the needs of providers to produce evidence of the application of the RARPA process as part of their responsibilities to both LSC and the Inspectorates.

10.2.4.3. Establishing the common quality assurance and improvement platform is therefore closely connected with two key initiatives being taken forward by QCA. One is the Centre Recognition Project, which aims to establish a shared approach to centre recognition by awarding bodies. The second is the broader development of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) which will create a new system of credit-based qualifications, and within which the need to ensure that learners are being effectively supported towards their individual learning aims will become increasingly important.

10.2.5. Streamlining evidence requirements

10.2.5.1. In working to align the different requirements and processes of awarding bodies, LSC and the Inspectorates aim to implement the LSC's Bureaucracy Task Force principle that evidence should be produced once, used many times by all by providing a common quality assurance and improvement platform.

10.2.5.2. The project aims to establish mutually agreed criteria and procedures that will enable providers to produce evidence that establishes and maintains their status as a recognised awarding body centre, and which will also be useful to LSC and to the Inspectorates

10.2.5.3. Establishing the common quality assurance and improvement platform does not assume that the responsibilities of awarding bodies, LSC and the Inspectorates are identical. It does rest on the premise that it will be feasible to identify requirements and procedures for providers that will result in some of the evidence they produce about the effectiveness of their quality systems for recognising and recording progress and achievement of learners being used for multiple purposes.

10.2.6. Progress to date

10.2.6.1. The focus of work on establishing the common quality assurance and improvement platform to date has been to secure the support of key stakeholders (regulatory authorities, awarding bodies, providers, inspectorates) for the general principles and more detailed proposals which are being developed. The project has also been keen to ensure that it operates in tandem with the Qualification and Credit Framework

(QCF), QCA's Centre Recognition proposals and the development of the 'Framework for Excellence'.

10.2.7. From 2006, the project will work within the initial phase of development of the QCF to test and trial:

- appropriate criteria that awarding bodies might apply to the recognition and monitoring of centres within the QCF.
- the procedures through which evidence is generated about the application of the RARPA process that may be used by all interested parties.

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