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## **PQ – Post Qualifying Education and Training**

### **A candidate's guide**

The PQ framework was established by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) to support the continuing professional development of qualified social workers. This framework has been adopted by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC), the General Social Care Council (GSCC), the Care Council for Wales (CCW), and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The framework encompasses two Awards in Social Work - the Post Qualifying Award and the Advanced Award - built upon two different levels of competence:

- **The Post Qualifying Award (PQSW)** which builds on the standards of the DipSW and is designed to recognise the developing skills and expertise of social work.
- **The Advanced Award (AASW)** is the qualification that recognises high skills of practice, policy making, leadership and management.

The aim of the framework is to support education, training and qualifications for social workers that will ensure users of the personal social services receive the highest possible standards of service and care.

### **Structure**

The PQ framework is based on a system of credit accumulation and transfer (CATS) and on the assessment of a worker's practice competence as the result of learning. The UK standard for PQ is linked to academic awards. The PQ framework is managed by consortia formed by local collaborations of agencies and educational institutions. There are currently 20 PQ consortia in the UK and they have systems for:

- registering and assessing candidates;
- providing support and guidance to candidates;
- credit rating of courses and training programmes;
- providing information to workers, employers and other consortia.

The four Regulatory Councils (GSCC, CCW, NISCC and SSSC) work together to maintain common systems for approving and monitoring the work of consortia to ensure that a UK-wide standard of post qualifying education and training is maintained.

## **What's in it for agencies?**

The PQ framework offers personal social services agencies a structure for the professional development of staff linked to a UK standard. It is designed to both improve standards of practice and to provide employees with a strategy to improve recruitment and retention of experienced workers. The two awards provide recognised standards of competence. At PQ level in particular, the individual development of social work staff can be structured using a variety of learning and education opportunities. This will enable a more focused use of limited resources.

The framework enables all forms of assessed education and training to be accredited. In-house training programmes, for example, can receive a credit rating which denotes a recognised standard and allows individual social workers to use the credits towards an award. Accreditation allows the purchasers of training to know the quality of external programmes and means that new courses and programmes, designed to meet changing service delivery and work patterns, can be readily brought into the framework.

## **What's in it for workers?**

- The opportunity to work for new qualifications which have a UK-wide standard.
- The formal recognition of your professional skills and competence.
- Credits for different forms of learning including in-service training programmes, work-based learning, distance learning or college courses.
- Portfolio route which will allow you to acquire credits over time and pace your study to fit with other commitments and with changes of workplace.
- Opportunities to use your professional credits towards academic awards.
- A fast track if you have already done ASW/MHO training or have the Practice Teaching award.
- Bursaries to help with the costs of study may be available through the consortia.

## **Further Information**

For more information about PQ training in Northern Ireland, please contact:

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