



Northern Ireland Post Qualifying  
Education & Training Partnership

**REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE  
FOR ACCREDITATION IN  
NI PQ FRAMEWORK**

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# REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE FOR ACCREDITATION IN NI PQ FRAMEWORK

## Introduction

1. The Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership (PQ Partnership) is approved by the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) to determine and manage the arrangements within the Northern Ireland Post Qualifying (NI PQ) Framework for the provision of post qualifying education and training in Northern Ireland.

Its mission is to provide a visionary, comprehensive and flexible approach in supporting the continuing professional development of social work staff throughout their careers in an effort to promote effective, safe and competent interventions with service users.

2. This paper provides information to course providers seeking accreditation in the NI PQ Framework. It should be read in conjunction with:
  - A. NISCC NI PQ Framework June 2006
  - B. NIPQETP Arrangements For APL September 2006

3. NISCC is the Awarding Body for the NI PQ Framework. There are 3 Professional Awards:

NI Specific Award in Social Work;

NI Specialist Award in Social Work;

NI Leadership and Strategic Award in Social Work.

4. The NI PQ Framework and its 3 Professional Awards are at Post Graduate M Level. Each of the Awards are based on a range Professional Requirements that reflect professional activity or practice from different perspectives. Being all at M level, this provides the opportunity to accommodate, demonstrate and recognise both vertical and horizontal progression. The M Level provision also ensures flexibility by supporting professional achievement alongside the opportunity for academic progression and achievement, whilst not being mutually dependent on each other.

5. The PQ Partnership is the Accrediting Body for the NI PQ Framework. Details of accredited programmes and progression to awards are recorded on the PQ Database, providing information to DHSSPS, NISCC, education and training providers and employers.
6. The Accreditation Board receives and makes decisions on all submissions for accreditation.
7. Where course providers are seeking validation or approval with an academic institution or a separate professional body, joint accreditation arrangements are welcomed.
8. The following will be used to recognise progression and achievement:

Transcript – The PQ Partnership will provide a verified transcript of achievement of any Professional Requirement and Programme/Module that has been accredited within the NI PQ Framework. The Transcript will provide details on the route and pathway.

Certificate – The NISCC will issue certificates to those who achieve any of the 3 Professional Awards within the NI PQ Framework.

Programme Certificate – The Programme may issue its own certificate.

## Submission for Accreditation in NI PQ Framework

### Statement of Intent

1. The Management Board requires that all course providers intending to apply for the initial accreditation of a programme should submit a Statement of Intent in the first instance to the Management Board. The purpose of this is to ensure that scarce resources allocated to training are used to best effect, and accredited programmes are developed as part of a strategic plan for post qualifying social work training within Northern Ireland.

Information Workshops are provided on a regular basis to prospective course providers.

The Management Board requires the following information:

- the identification of the market for the programme;
- how the programme fits into the development of social work and the needs of both employing organisations and the profession;
- a brief outline Business Plan for the programme; and
- any other relevant information.

(See pro-forma - Appendix One)

2. The Management Board will consider this information, and give an opinion on the viability of the proposed programme, whether it is likely to be supported by partner agencies, and any other feedback which the course providers should consider before deciding whether to make a detailed submission to the Accreditation Board.
3. The Management Board will give advice to the course providers, but it should be noted that the final decision as to whether to proceed with the accreditation procedure rests with the course providers.

## Submission to the Accreditation Board

1. Preparation Workshops are offered to course providers to provide advice and guidance on preparing a submission and to facilitate learning and exchange of information across providers.
2. At the point of first submission, the course providers will be required to pay an administration fee. Details are available from the office of the PQ Partnership.
3. Dates for submission are arranged by the office of the PQ Partnership. Course providers will be notified of these as part of the feedback given on the Statement of Intent.
4. Programmes are required to submit all documentation to the PQ office within agreed timescales. This will normally be 6 weeks before the Accreditation Board is scheduled to meet.
5. The submission should provide details of a named correspondent, title, address and contact numbers and should provide sufficient information to demonstrate the accreditation requirements set out overleaf (see page 7). A pro-forma is provided in Appendix Two. **Ten copies of the submission and any additional supporting material are required.**
6. An Expert Reader will be appointed for each new submission. The purpose of appointing an Expert Reader is to obtain an opinion from an external 'expert' on the appropriateness of the level and content of the submission in terms of subject area and 'M' level provision to inform the decision making processes of the Accreditation Board.
7. The Members of the Accreditation Board will be required to declare any interest in or association with the programme seeking accreditation. Where a conflict of interest arises, the Member will be required to withdraw from involvement in the particular submission.
8. The Accreditation Board may appoint an Associate Member or Members to join the Board in considering the particular submission.

9. The Accreditation Board will normally invite representatives from the Programme to attend part of the Board meeting. This will provide an opportunity for Board members and the Expert Reader to seek clarification on any outstanding issues and for representatives to provide any additional information that they consider to be relevant to the decision-making process.
10. The decisions of the Accreditation Board will be conveyed by letter to the course providers, normally within 5 working days of the Board having met.

If the decision is to accredit, the letter will inform the course providers of the details of the accreditation, any conditions which are to be met before accreditation is finalised and the responsibilities of accreditation.

11. In some instances, the Accreditation Board may request the course providers to provide further written detail before a decision on the submission can be made. The course providers will be provided with a date for this additional material to be submitted to the PQ office. Where the Board considers that the supplementary information satisfactorily addresses the outstanding issues, Chair's Action may be taken in relation to the submission and a decision made and reported to the Management Board.
12. If the decision is not to accredit, the letter will inform the course providers of the decision and outline the steps required for a re-submission.
13. In addition, the Chair or appointee and the Professional Officer will offer to meet with the course team to provide more detailed feedback.

## Submission for Joint Accreditation

Please note: This guidance should be read in conjunction with the programme approval/validation documents of the relevant academic institution or professional body from which joint accreditation/validation is being sought.

### Submission for Joint Accreditation

Where Programmes are seeking accreditation or approval with an academic institution or a professional body, joint accreditation arrangements will be encouraged.

### Submission Process

1. Programmes will be required to submit a Statement of Intent in the usual way to the NIPQETP Management Board. The course providers should indicate at this stage that they are seeking joint accreditation with an academic institution or professional body.

2. The Management Board will inform the course providers and the Chair of the Accreditation Board if approval has been given to proceed to the next stage of the accreditation process. The Chair of the Accreditation Board will then liaise with the Programme Representative/s to discuss arrangements for joint accreditation. It will be the responsibility of the Programme Representative to ensure that notification of the intent to proceed with a joint validation is made to the designated person within either the academic institution or professional body and that the Chair of the Accreditation Board is informed of the nominated person they should liaise with.
3. The Chair of the Accreditation Board (or their Deputy) will liaise with the nominated person to agree a date for the joint accreditation/validation event and to provide notification of the members of the Accreditation Board who will attend the event. This will normally include the Professional Officer to the Accreditation Board and at least two additional members of the Board. The External Assessor to the Accreditation Board will also be invited to attend.
4. The submission documentation should be forwarded to the PQ office no later than 3 weeks before the joint accreditation/validation event is scheduled to take place.
5. While the Accreditation Board will accept the submission document in the format required by the academic institution/professional body, course providers must ensure that they have explicitly demonstrated within the document how the NIPQETP Requirements for Accreditation are met.
6. The Professional Officer to the Accreditation Board will ensure that those members nominated to attend the joint accreditation/validation event are provided with a copy of the written submission upon receipt by the PQ office.
7. The nominated members of the Accreditation Board will meet prior to the joint accreditation/validation event to discuss the submission and to agree any areas that they would wish to discuss further on the day. The Chair of the Accreditation Board will liaise with the nominated person within the academic institution/professional body to ensure identified areas are included on the programme for the joint accreditation/validation event.

### **Joint Validation/Accreditation Event**

8. Nominated members of the Accreditation Board will attend the joint accreditation/validation event and participate as appropriate in proceedings. Their role will be to ensure that the proposed provision meets all of NIPQETP'S Accreditation Requirements as outlined below.
9. The course providers will be informed verbally of the outcome of their submission in relation to professional accreditation on the day of the joint accreditation/validation event, including any conditions of approval. This will be followed up in writing, normally within 5 working days.

10. Where revisions are required to be made to the document or additional information provided, a timescale will be agreed for this work to be submitted to the PQ office for consideration by the nominated members of the Accreditation Board.

The Programme will be informed if the conditions of approval have been met.

The Professional Officer to the Accreditation Board will prepare a written report of the Boards' findings to be presented by the Chair of the Accreditation Board to the Management Board for approval.

### **Complaints/Appeals**

11. Complaints/appeals in relation to the professional accreditation element of the joint accreditation/validation process will be dealt with as per the procedures outlined in NIPQETP's Complaints/Appeals Policy (See Appendices Five and Six).

## **Accreditation Requirements**

1. In order to gain accreditation with the PQ Partnership, the following requirements must be met:
  - a. There is a rationale for the provision that demonstrates identified need and available resources;
  - b. The provision meets relevant policy requirements, rules and standards as applicable to the programme context and setting, including taking account of NISCC Codes of Practice for Employers and Social Care Workers.
  - c. A statement of who the collaborative partners are. These arrangements should reflect management and accountability structures that are appropriate to the programme and meet governance requirements;
  - d. A range of stakeholders (may include people who use services, carers, candidates, employers, academic institutions) are actively involved at the appropriate stage in the design, delivery and evaluation of the programme.
  - e. There is an entry requirement that applicants are able to undertake work and study at M level;
  - f. The provision must meet a minimum of one Professional Requirement. The target Requirement/s are to be identified and mapped to Programme Modules
  - g. There are Learning Outcomes with an outline of how each Module is constructed and which PQ Requirements are demonstrated.

- h. There are Assessment Criteria and methods that demonstrate how they meet the proposed Requirements;
- i. Arrangements are in place for accreditation of prior learning (APL);
- j. There must be an external contribution to the assessment process that reflects experience of M level;
- k. The assessment process must include assessment by a registered social worker who has experience of or has been trained to assess at M level;
- l. Programmes that are not academically accredited must consider how Candidates might access academic credits should they wish to do so;
- m. There are equal opportunities, complaints, appeals and termination procedures in place. These should fit with parallel employer arrangements and, where applicable, higher education arrangements;
- n. There is accessible information to Candidates and Employers;
- o. There is an internal quality assurance system that will ensure the maintenance of standards and adherence to requirements;
- p. There are systems in place to adhere to NIPQETP monitoring arrangements.

Where a Programme is subject to other professional or academic monitoring processes, joint arrangements are encouraged.

2. It should be noted that the PQ Partnership accreditation requirements reflect those required by NISCC which are specified in Appendix Three of this paper.

## Guidance

1. The NI PQ Framework seeks to be flexible, innovative and responsive to the needs of the service.

Course providers therefore have the opportunity to consider the following:

1. How many modules best meet the objectives of the programme?
2. How many and which Requirements are appropriate for each module?
3. Does the programme meet an identified range of Requirements or a full Award?

4. Can the programme meet Requirements across both the NI Specialist Award and the NI Leadership and Strategic Award, if so how can this mix and match be best managed?
2. Course providers may wish to consider providing access to Academic Credits and Academic Awards. Appendix Four sets out the links between professional and academic credits.

## Arrangements for Professional Awards:

The following arrangements are in place for each of the awards:

### NI Specific Award

The Accreditation Board will consider submissions for accreditation for one or more Requirements.

Each Requirement for this award should equate to **a minimum** of 100 notional effort hours, therefore, the full NI Specific Award should equate to no less than 600 notional effort hours.

Flexibility may be achieved by providing the option of taking stand alone module/s that allow for the achievement of Professional Requirement/s.

Accumulation of Professional Requirements across a range of Programmes or Modules may build towards the full NI Specific Award.

Where applicable, flexibility may also be achieved by accumulation of Academic Credits across a range of Programmes or Modules to build towards an Academic Award.

### NI Specialist Award

The Accreditation Board will consider submissions for accreditation for one or more Requirements.

Each Requirement for this award should equate to **a minimum** of 100 notional effort hours, therefore, the NI Specialist Award should equate to no less than 900 notional effort hours.

Flexibility may be achieved by providing the option of taking stand alone module/s that allow for the achievement of Professional Requirement/s.

Accumulation of Professional Requirements across a range of Programmes or Modules may build towards the full NI Specialist Award.

Where applicable, flexibility may also be achieved by accumulation of Academic Credits across a range of Programmes or Modules to build towards an Academic Award.

Application may be made for up to three Professional Requirements of the NI Specialist Award to be transferred and count towards achievement of the NI Leadership and Strategic Award.

## NI Leadership and Strategic Award

The Accreditation Board will consider submissions for accreditation for one or more Requirements.

Each Requirement for this award should equate to a **minimum** of 200 notional effort hours.

Flexibility may be achieved by providing the option of taking stand alone module/s that allow for the achievement of Professional Requirement/s.

Accumulation of Professional Requirements across a range of Programmes or Modules may build towards the full NI Leadership and Strategic Award.

Where applicable, flexibility may also be achieved, by accumulation of Academic Credits across a range of Programmes or Modules to build towards an Academic Award.

Application may be made for up to three Professional Requirements of the NI Leadership and Strategic Award to be transferred and count towards achievement of the NI Specialist Award.

<sup>1</sup>Effort hours include teaching input, tutorials, study time, practice and assessment.

**APPENDIX ONE**

**Northern Ireland Post Qualifying  
Education and Training Partnership**

**STATEMENT OF INTENT**

**For**

**ACCREDITATION IN NI PQ FRAMEWORK**

**Programme Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name & Contact Details  
of Programme Correspondent:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Chair of Programme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Co-Ordinator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**For which Professional Award/s do you intend to seek accreditation?:**

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**For which Professional Requirements?:**

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**Are the course providers intending to seek Academic validation?      Yes/No**

**If Yes – Which Academic Institution?**

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**Will the timescales allow for Joint Accreditation/Validation? Yes/No**

**If Yes – Please provide contact details at Academic Institution**

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**Academic Award:**

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**Academic Credits:**

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**Date when submission will be prepared:**

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**Intended Programme Start Date:**

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**Briefly outline details of the proposed programme in the following areas:**

- (i) The market for the Programme**
- (ii) How the Programme fits with the development of social work**
- (iii) Business Plan for the Programme**
- (iv) Any other relevant information**

## APPENDIX TWO

### Northern Ireland Post Qualifying Education and Training Partnership

### SUBMISSION

### FOR ACCREDITATION IN NI PQ FRAMEWORK

#### Programme Information:

Programme Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Professional  
Requirements:

\_\_\_\_\_

Professional  
Award:

\_\_\_\_\_

Academic Award:

\_\_\_\_\_

Academic  
Credits:

\_\_\_\_\_

Any Other Professional Body Accreditation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name & Contact Details  
of Correspondent:

\_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Programme:

\_\_\_\_\_

Co-Ordinator:

\_\_\_\_\_

Programme Site:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide the following information. The letters in brackets refer to the NIPQETP Requirements for Accreditation.**

**1 Programme Overview:**

**1.1 Rationale: (a)**

Outline the rationale for the provision that demonstrates identified need:

**1.2 Relevant policy requirements, rules and standards (b)**

Specify the relevant policy requirements, rules and standards as applicable to the programme context and setting:

**1.3 Collaborative Partners: (c)**

Specify the collaborative partners:

**2. Programme Provision**

**2.1 Programme Specification: (g)**

Summarise the Programme's main features and learning outcomes:

**2.2 Programme Commentary**

Comment on:

- Where the Programme fits with professional progression (a) (b)
- Its relationship with professional/statutory/regulatory bodies and relevant professional standards; (b) (d)
- Its relationship with other programmes or provision (c)
- The involvement of key stakeholders in the planning, delivery, assessment or evaluation of the programme, including users of the service (d)
- How and where the Programme fits with professional progression, i.e. Which NI PQ Award/s and which Professional Requirements (f)
- Teaching, learning and assessment strategies (g) (h) (i) including details of work based elements
- How the programme fits with career opportunities, development and progression (a) (b)

### **2.3 Programme Structure Diagram:**

In table format detail the modular structure of the programme. (f)

### **2.4 Module Description: (f) (g) (h) (i) (j) (k) (l)**

Repeat for each module

- **Professional Requirements of which Professional Award**
- **Academic Credits/Award (if applicable)**
- **Hours – include total notional effort hours and division**
- **Rationale**
- **Aims**
- **Learning Outcomes**
- **Content**
- **Teaching and Learning Methods**
- **Assessment**
- **Reading List**
- **Summary Description – up to 480 characters (for use in PQ database and related publications)**

## **3. Programme Management**

### **3.1 Equal opportunities, complaints, appeals and termination policies and procedures: (m)**

Append these to the submission:

### **3.2 Entry Requirements: (e)**

Specify entry requirements, including that candidates are able to undertake work and study at M level

**3.3 Programme Administration: (c) (d)**

Brief comment or table format on programme committees/personnel role and responsibilities including the involvement/participation of key stakeholders including users of service.

**3.4 Candidate support and guidance: (c) (n)**

An outline of the range of provision for Candidate support and guidance

**3.5 Arrangements for Quality Assurance and Monitoring:  
(o) (p)**

Specify the internal quality assurance system and monitoring arrangement; also statement commitment to complying with NIPQETP monitoring arrangements

**3.6 Arrangements for External Assessor: (j)**

Specify the arrangements for an external contribution to the assessment process, including C.V.

**3.7 Arrangements for APL (i)**

Specify the APL arrangements that are in place:

**3.8 Information to candidates and employers: (n)**

Specify how information will be presented and accessed:

4. **Resources (c) (d)**

Demonstrate that sufficient physical and appropriate staff resources are available; CVs to be included:

**Signed:**

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**Designation:**

---

**Date:**

---

## APPENDIX THREE

### NISCC Requirements for Accreditation

- 1) Collaborative arrangements are in place between employers and providers that include arrangements for an academic and practice perspective;
- 2) There is a rationale for the provision that demonstrates identified need and that realistic resources have been identified;
- 3) A range of stakeholders (may include people who use services, carers, candidates, employers, academic institutions) are/will be actively involved at the appropriate stage in the design, delivery and evaluation of the programme;
- 4) The provision meets any relevant policy requirements, Rules and Standards;
- 5) The provision must reflect a minimum of 100 notional effort hours and must meet a minimum of one Professional Requirement<sup>1</sup>;
- 6) There is an entry requirement that applicants are able to undertake work and study at M level;
- 7) There are arrangements in place for accreditation of prior learning (APL);
- 8) There must be an external contribution to the assessment process;
- 9) The assessment process must include assessment by a registered social worker and an academic perspective;
- 10) There is an internal quality assurance system that will ensure the maintenance of standards and adherence to requirements;
- 11) There are complaints, appeals and termination procedures in place. These should fit with parallel employer arrangements and, where applicable, higher education arrangements.
- 12) Account is taken of the NISCC Codes of Practice for Employers and Social Care Workers.
- 13) There is accessible information to Candidates and Employers that includes detail of time commitments.

<sup>1</sup>Effort hours include teaching input, tutorials, study time, practice and assessment.

## APPENDIX FOUR

### NI PQ Framework Links to Academic Framework

1. The NI PQ Framework is a Professional Development Framework providing for 3 Professional Awards, all of which are at M level. This provides the opportunity for flexibility in academic arrangements.
2. The NI PQ Framework seeks to provide for progression throughout the professional social work career. All achievement reflects progression whether or not full awards are achieved.
3. Programmes providers may wish to consider providing access to Academic Credits and Academic Awards. The following may therefore be considered:
  - a. Where Academic Validation applies, how many Academic Credits does each module attract?
  - b. Where Academic Validation applies, which Academic Award at M level does the programme attract?
  - c. Where Academic Validation applies, which Professional Award and how many Professional Requirements does the programme meet.
  - d. When mapping between Academic Awards and Professional Awards, Programmes may want to bear in mind the opportunity to mix up to 3 Professional Requirements across the NI Specialist Award and the NI Leadership and Strategic Award.
4. Flexibility within the NI PQ Framework may be achieved by accumulation of Academic Credits across a range of Modules or Programmes under any of the 3 Professional Awards to build towards an Academic Award.
5. Academic Awards may be achieved in conjunction with, or independently of, the Professional Awards.

<b>Notional Effort Hours and Academic Credits/Awards</b>		
<b>10 Academic Credits = 100 Notional Effort Hours</b>		
<b>Academic Award</b>	<b>Academic Credits</b>	<b>Notional Effort Hours</b>
<b>PG Certificate</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>600</b>
<b>PG Diploma</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>1200</b>
<b>Masters</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>1800</b>

