

# **Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning**

**Evaluation report on the pilot projects**  
**April 2003 to March 2004**

August 2004





© 2004 National Institute of  
Adult Continuing Education (England and Wales)

21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester  
LE1 7GE  
Company registration no. 2603322  
Charity registration no. 1002775

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without the written permission of the publishers, save in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any license permitting copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

NIACE has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training, particularly for those who do not have easy access because of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient financial resources.

You can find NIACE online at [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A CIP record of this title is available from the British Library

Designed and typeset by Kerrypress Ltd, Luton  
Printed and bound in the UK by Newnorth Print Ltd, Bedford

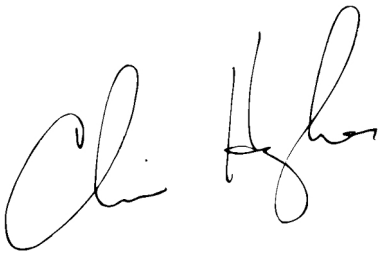
# Foreword

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has been working since 2002 to establish an appropriate way of recognising and recording the progress and achievement of learners on provision that does not lead to a qualification or external certificate. This is the provision that is described as non-accredited provision. The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) have developed a theoretical model called the Staged Process that establishes a way of recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited provision.

This report is about the research that tested out whether the Staged Process could be implemented in practice. It describes and analyses the work of a range of providers across the learning and skills sector in testing out the usefulness and appropriateness of the model to their particular type of non-accredited provision. LSDA and NIACE are grateful to colleagues in many organisations who have helped to translate the model into a practical tool that will be useful to a range of different types of provider and learner.

The research identified important messages of which the most significant is that learners have benefited from the process, saying that it helped them to achieve their goals. Implementing the Staged Process has also acted as a catalyst for change in many institutions enabling them to review their quality systems and develop a more coherent quality assurance system within their organisation.

The work undertaken through the project and recorded in this report will be of substantial and lasting importance to many providers in the learning and skills sector. Indeed, the focus on individual needs within a structured process that is adaptable to many different types of provider and provision may have application in the future beyond the boundaries of non-accredited provision.



Chris Hughes  
LSDA



Alan Tuckett  
NIACE

# Acknowledgements

LSDA and NIACE would like to thank all those colleagues who took part in the RARPA project. The following people were part of the joint LSDA/NIACE project team:

Di Brooke  
Eddie Burch  
Sarah Grylls  
Rosemary Hawkesley  
Pauline Nashashibi  
Christine Nightingale  
Jane Ward  
Kate Watters

Our thanks too go to Hanako Beeson, Clare Chisholm and Catherine Levett for their support behind the scenes in helping the project to run smoothly, and to Simon Weaver for his help with the statistical analysis for the project.

We would also like to record our thanks to colleagues from the LSC National Office and the Project Advisory Group for their continuing support for the project. Members of the Advisory Group are identified in Annex A to the report. In particular, Alison Rowland from the LSC has been a constant source of useful information and advice to us.

Most of all though our thanks go to colleagues in all the organisations that took part in the testing and evaluation of the RARPA approach in numerous demonstration projects, and to their colleagues in local Learning and Skills Councils who gave them advice and support throughout the project. Although these individuals are too numerous to mention, the organisations involved are listed in Appendices B, C and D.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution to the research made by the late Janet Hill who was a source of inspiration and who developed the early model of the Staged Process piloted in this research.

Maggie Greenwood LSDA  
Peter Wilson NIACE

# Contents

	Page
<b>Preface</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>RARPA</b>	
<b>Background</b>	
<b>The Project brief</b>	
<b>The project</b>	
<b>Context</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Success for All</b>	
<b>Measuring Success</b>	
<b>The Skills Strategy</b>	
<b>Extending Trust</b>	
<b>The funding of non-accredited provision</b>	
<b>The staged process</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>The staged process</b>	
<b>Testing the staged process</b>	
<b>The core group</b>	
<b>The wider development group</b>	
<b>The role of the national LSC and local LSCs</b>	
<b>Parallel RARPA projects</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme: 2001–2004</b>	
<b>Disability Discrimination Act (DDA): taking the work forward</b>	
<b>Sixth Form College Extension</b>	
<b>Achievement in non-accredited learning for adults with learning difficulties</b>	
<b>Related project activity</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Non-accredited basic skills and ESOL</b>	
<b>Implementing the staged process: the impact on institutions</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Quality assurance systems</b>	
<b>Fitness for purpose</b>	
<b>A catalyst for change</b>	
<b>Managing and organising RARPA</b>	
<b>Institutional collaboration</b>	

<b>Implementing the staged process: the impact on staff</b>	<b>35</b>
The response from staff	
The role of tutors	
Curriculum differences	
Bureaucracy and paperwork	
Staff development	
Capacity	
Costs	
Funding	
Curriculum	
<b>Implementing the staged process: the impact on learners</b>	<b>44</b>
A learner-centred approach	
Benefits to learners	
Unanticipated outcomes	
Learner engagement	
Issues for learners	
The use of paper and other methods of recording	
Older learners	
<b>Issues arising from the RARPA projects</b>	<b>52</b>
An alternative perspective	
Organisational context	
Staffing structures	
Full- and part-time staff	
Balancing structure and flexibility	
RARPA and inspection	
The costs of implementing RARPA	
The use of time in applying the staged process	
Further contexts to explore	
Measuring the impact of RARPA on the quality of provision	
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Appendix G</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Appendix H</b>	<b>89</b>

# Preface

This report arises from a research programme on Recognising and Recording Progression and Achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) supported by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The research was funded as part of a grant to the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA)'s strategic programme of research and development and through a memorandum of understanding with National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

The research was commissioned by the LSC to address two issues of concern in the newly established Learning and Skills sector. The first issue concerned the funding of non-accredited provision. If provision was to be funded by the LSC that did not lead to a qualification or externally accredited certificate, how might the achievement element of LSC funding be validly claimed by providers offering non-accredited provision?

The second issue identified the need to improve aspects of the quality assurance systems in non-accredited provision related to the progress and achievements of learners. Early inspection reports in the sector, particularly in adult and community learning provision, identified the recognition and recording of learner progress and achievement as an area of weakness in a range of provision.

In response to these issues the LSC, with advice and support from LSDA and NIACE, agreed to the establishing of a process to address these issues – the RARPA Staged Process – and commissioned this research to test out the application of the staged process in a range of settings across the sector. This report records the outcomes of this research. In all some 71 providers were involved in testing the efficacy, usefulness and ease of implementation of all or part of the staged process. The evaluation found four key messages from the research:

- Using the staged process has brought many benefits to learners that they recognised and appreciated, and has had a positive impact on the achievement of learner goals.
- The staged process is a flexible quality tool that is fit for purpose and could be applied to all or most of the programmes delivered across a wide range of institutions.
- Implementing the staged process has been a positive catalyst for the review, revision and redesign of quality assurance and quality improvement systems.
- Development of the RARPA approach has raised the profile of non-accredited learning in the sector and the staged process has had an impact on a wider range of provision than the adult and community learning programmes that were the original focus for the development of the approach.

During the lifetime of the project, from April 2003 to July 2004, a number of significant changes occurred or were signalled in relation to both LSC funding and its role in relation to the quality assurance of provision. These changes continue, and the initial rationale for the development of the RARPA approach has shifted significantly from the first of the above issues – a concern about funding – to the second – a concern to improve quality. Notwithstanding these changes in the context of the project, both LSDA and NIACE remain committed to the further development of the RARPA approach across all relevant provision in the Learning and Skills sector.

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

### RARPA

The RARPA approach consists of the application of an explicit and common **staged process** to the recognition and recording of progress and achievement, together with the **validation** of this process through a range of judgements about its consistent and effective application.

### Background

Both LSDA and NIACE were involved in preparatory work on developing the RARPA approach with LSC from 2002 onwards. This report focuses on a phase of continuing work aimed at testing the application of the RARPA approach in a variety of contexts.

### The project brief

The overall vision for the project envisages a learner-focused system of recognising and recording learning outcomes from non-accredited programmes, supported by robust and fit-for-purpose quality systems that meet each learner's needs. Providers will use RARPA as a tool for quality improvement and for increasing recognition of learner achievement.

### The project

The project focused on the practical application of the RARPA staged process across a range of contexts in the Learning and Skills sector. The project sought to locate the views of people involved in applying the staged process within the broader development of emerging government initiatives on recognising and measuring learner achievement.

## Context

### Success for All

The RARPA approach has an important role to play in supporting the delivery of the Success for All (S4A) strategy. In particular RARPA will be an important part of the comprehensive range of success measures that the DfES is committed to introduce across all aspects of provision in the Learning and Skills sector from September 2005 onwards.

### Measuring Success

Although at present the final range of success measures arising from the joint DfES/LSC/Ofsted/ALI consultation exercise on *Measuring Success* has yet to be published, it is clear that the RARPA approach will form one of the key measures of success to be used in the

future across relevant provision in the Learning and Skills sector. This will be important in securing equal esteem for non-accredited provision with other types of provision in the sector.

## The Skills Strategy

RARPA also has an important role to play in supporting the delivery of the Skills Strategy. The July 2003 White Paper *21st Century Skills: Realising our potential* identifies the continuing importance of non-accredited provision in supporting the development of skills necessary for both employability and social inclusion.

## Extending Trust

The development of the RARPA approach takes explicit account of the work of the Bureaucracy Task Force and the Bureaucracy Review Group. The final report of the Task Force – *Extending Trust* – makes some recommendations on reducing the burden of bureaucracy on both learners and providers that have had a direct impact on the work of the RARPA project.

## The funding of non-accredited provision

During the lifetime of the project significant changes were introduced or signalled in the funding of non-accredited provision. These changes continue to be introduced and the initial context within which the RARPA project was initiated has also changed significantly. Nevertheless, the more explicit connection between quality and funding, and the importance of measuring learner success as a key feature of quality systems, means that the RARPA approach will continue to be important to the process of securing LSC funds to support non-accredited provision.

## The staged process

### The staged process

The five elements of the staged process are linked explicitly to key parts of the Common Inspection Framework. These five elements are:

- **Aims** appropriate to an individual learner or group of learners.
- **Initial assessment** to establish the learner's starting point.
- **Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives:** initial, renegotiated and revised.
- **Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment):** tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews.
- **End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement.** This will be in relation to appropriately challenging learning objectives identified at the beginning/ during the programme. It may include recognition of learning outcomes not specified during the programme.

## **Testing the staged process**

LSDA and NIACE together identified a range of providers able and willing to take forward the testing of the staged process in a variety of contexts, and set up systems to support and advise these projects in their work on the application of RARPA.

## **The core group**

Two groups of projects were identified. A core group would test out the implementation of the full staged process, with consultant support. A total of 22 projects were identified for the core group. These included ACL providers (both direct and contracted out services); COVEs; **learnirect** hubs; E2E providers; voluntary organisations; Neighbourhood Renewal schemes; work-based learning providers; and specialist colleges. The core group projects were given six months to test the staged process and were then asked to produce an evaluation report and a case study reflecting their experiences.

## **The wider development group**

In addition to the core group, over 40 providers (including some partnerships of providers) became part of the RARPA wider development group. These providers received support from both local and national LSC in monitoring the development of the core projects and, in many instances, testing out elements of the staged process in their own provision. Several of the wider development group projects produced evaluation reports, and these have been considered in producing the final project report.

## **The role of the national LSC and local LSCs**

The Quality and Standards Division of the national LSC was responsible for managing the overall RARPA programme of work in 2003–04. National LSC officers offer a range of support to both core and wider development group projects. In addition, local LSC officers gave support to local projects in both groups, and in some instances facilitated local and regional networks of providers involved in some aspects of RARPA activity.

# **Parallel RARPA projects**

## **The Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme: 2001–2004**

LSDA is supporting a range of projects taking forward aspects of the Citizenship Programme, in collaboration with QCA. From these projects, five were selected to take part in the RARPA project. Again the five projects were drawn from a variety of post-16 providers and, between November 2003 and March 2004 were invited to test out aspects of the RARPA approach in their work on citizenship. The outcomes of this work have also informed the final report on the project.

## **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA): taking the work forward**

Another strand of LSDA's work also contributed to the RARPA project. Providers offering learning opportunities within the context of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) were also invited to test out the staged process in their work and a number of FE college and adult learning providers have been using the RARPA approach in their work on the DDA.

## **Sixth form college extension**

LSDA also undertook a short piece of work with sixth form colleges during the RARPA project. These colleges were surveyed and asked to comment on the potential application of the staged process to their work on enrichment or extension studies. Although these colleges did not test out the staged process, their views have once again informed the final report on the RARPA project.

## **Achievement in non-accredited learning for adults with learning difficulties**

NIACE also undertook a parallel project designed to support the main activities of the RARPA projects. A literature search and survey was undertaken with providers of learning opportunities for adults with learning difficulties during 2003–04 and this work has again contributed to the overall work of the RARPA project.

## **Related project activity**

Recording and validating learning outcomes and achievements in non-accredited basic skills and ESOL

In addition to these parallel projects the RARPA project team has also made reference to the previous work of LSDA undertaken on behalf of ABSSU to identify good practice in the recognition and recording of achievements for learners of basic skills and ESOL on non-accredited programmes.

## **Implementing the staged process: the impact on institutions**

### **Quality assurance systems**

The overwhelming response from providers involved in the RARPA projects has been positive and there is widespread support for the implementation of the staged process. The process itself supports quality improvement and promotes good practice and consistency across provision. The match to the Common Inspection Framework was seen as a particular strength of the RARPA approach.

### **Fitness for purpose**

The majority of respondents stated that the staged process was fit for the purpose for which it was designed and could be applied to all or most of the programmes delivered across a wide range of institutions. Providers were aware that there was a need to ensure that the staged process was applied sensitively and there were numerous examples of the process being adapted to suit particular types of provision.

### **A catalyst for change**

One key impact of implementing the staged process was that it acted as a catalyst for the review and re-design of quality assurance and quality improvement systems. Some

providers saw RARPA as an opportunity to review a number of processes operating across the institution.

### **Managing and organising RARPA**

Where the RARPA approach was successfully implemented, the staged process was owned and led at a senior level within the institution. In addition to identified senior staff the involvement of curriculum leaders or staff with responsibility for a curriculum area was also crucial to successful implementation of the process. The reports confirm that there is nothing inherently problematic with the implementation of the RARPA approach, providing that it is well prepared and well-managed by all concerned.

### **Institutional collaboration**

Difficulties arose in the implementation of the staged process where different quality assurance cultures existed between providers and contracting organisations. Questions were raised as to who owned the staged process and the records that supported it. These are not insurmountable problems, and evaluation reports also illustrate positive examples of collaboration between providers in implementing the staged process.

## **Implementing the staged process: the impact on staff**

### **The response from staff**

The project has demonstrated that a wide range of staff – managers, curriculum leaders, support staff and administrators – are involved in the implementation of the RARPA approach. In most projects staff were enthusiastic about the benefits of RARPA, though some staff showed less enthusiasm for the staged process. There is a connection in most instances between the attitudes of staff towards the staged process and the support they received from their senior managers in its implementation.

### **The role of tutors**

Tutors played a key role in implementing the staged process and it worked best when it was presented to learners as an integral part of the process of teaching and learning. The great majority of tutors involved in the projects were enthusiastic about the benefits of the RARPA approach to their learners. The project also revealed that newly appointed staff were generally more enthusiastic about RARPA than more experienced tutors.

### **Curriculum differences**

There is no evidence from the reports from providers of a curriculum area where the staged process cannot be applied successfully. However staff working in certain curriculum areas experienced more difficulties in implementing the RARPA approach than others. So for example, staff involved in swimming, keep fit and line-dancing programmes revealed more misgivings about the application of the staged process than those in other areas. There was evidence from some reports that staff misinterpreted the intentions of the RARPA process in these areas. Although the evaluation reports also included positive examples of the application of the staged process in these activity-based curriculum areas,

advice and guidance on RARPA for staff involved in applying RARPA in these areas will be needed in the future.

### **Bureaucracy and paperwork**

There was a general concern across most providers that the staged process could generate increased bureaucracy if it became over-dependent on paper-based methods of recording progress and achievement. However, in most instances staff were content that a proper balance between learning activities and the recording of progress and achievement had been established. More work needs to be done to develop and share creative examples of alternative approaches to paper-based recording of progress and achievement as RARPA is rolled out nationally.

### **Staff development**

All providers involved in the core projects had established a staff development programme of some kind to support the implementation of the staged process. The time devoted to these activities varied considerably across different types of provider and provision, but most focused on improving aspects of existing quality systems rather than introducing radical changes. Where local or regional networks of staff were established these functioned effectively to support staff development for RARPA.

### **Capacity**

There were concerns from some providers about the potential costs and time involved in implementing the staged process, especially where institutions employed large numbers of part-time staff. There is no doubt that the implementation of RARPA takes time to manage, prepare and implement. Nevertheless, most providers seemed to be managing this time effectively.

### **Costs**

In some reports the costs of implementing the staged process and the costs of managing the RARPA project were difficult to separate. Although the costs of staff development were mentioned by a number of respondents it was generally recognised that these would diminish over time. In general those providers identifying significant costs in implementing RARPA were those where existing quality systems were relatively less well developed.

### **Funding**

Some providers were concerned that funding available to them in the future from LSC would not enable them to maintain investment in an effective staged process. These concerns were raised particularly by small voluntary organisations, though the same issue was also raised by some sixth form colleges.

### **Curriculum**

The staged process was tested in a wide range of curriculum areas and successful examples of its implementation can be found in each of the areas tested. There is some evidence that the RARPA approach is of particular benefit to skills-based programmes, while the difficulties of applying RARPA in activity-based provision have been referred to

above. To date RARPA has had little impact on curriculum design, though there is evidence of future intention by providers to review course documentation based on learner feedback through the application of the staged process.

## **Implementing the staged process: the impact on learners**

### **A learner-centred approach**

A large number of learners were involved in the RARPA project, either through the core group or the wider development group. The projects have clearly demonstrated that raising the learners awareness of the learning process is beneficial to the learner, to staff and to the providing institution. These benefits were maximised where learners experienced the staged process as an integral part of the 'normal' teaching and learning on their programme.

### **Benefits to learners**

Many providers reported enthusiasm from learners about setting goals and following progress towards them. Benefits identified by learners included better motivation, faster progress and better engagement in learning. The process seems to be a major benefit to learners with previously negative experiences of learning, where gains in self-confidence and positive attitudes to learning were reported.

### **Unanticipated outcomes**

Several projects reported positively on the facility afforded by the RARPA approach to report on the unanticipated outcomes of learning. Sometimes these outcomes needed reinforcement by tutors in order to be fully valued by learners. However this process is not without some issues of concern – some providers felt that these unanticipated outcomes were confidential to the learner in many instances and should not be recorded by tutors as part of the RARPA approach.

### **Learner engagement**

There was evidence from a number of projects that the introduction of the staged process led to an increased level of engagement by learners in their learning. In some cases this engagement was transferred to other activities outside the learning institution. In some instances it took time for both tutors and learners to become engaged in the staged process, and it seems there was most engagement by learners where staff were enthusiastic about the RARPA approach.

### **Issues for learners**

Despite this generally positive feedback from projects about the involvement of learners, some providers voiced concerns about the negative impact on learners if the staged process was not applied sensitively. Some providers questioned whether the individualised approach to the staged process was appropriate in all cases. Other providers found it difficult to identify clear learning objectives for some groups of learners (eg. basic skills learners or homeless people).

## **The use of paper and other methods of recording**

There were several references in evaluation reports to the negative consequences of introducing paper-based methods of recording progress and achievement into learning contexts where these had not previously been used. More work needs to be done in confirming to providers that the application of the staged process does not need to be based on paper methods of recording. There are a number of positive examples of alternative methods being used by providers, but more concrete reassurance is needed from both LSC and the Inspectorates that these are acceptable methods of recording and presenting evidence of learner progress and achievement.

### **Older learners**

In general the staged process was successfully applied across provision offered to learners of all ages. However, some projects reported that older learners found the introduction of the staged process uncomfortable or irrelevant to their needs. The future application of the staged process therefore needs to take account of learners ages as a variable in designing implementation strategies that are fit for purpose.

## **Issues arising from the RARPA projects**

### **An alternative perspective**

Below the surface of some of the evaluation reports it has been possible to interpret some responses to create an alternative perspective on some aspects of the application of the staged process. It has also been interesting to read the reports from project consultants on the different experiences of providers in approaching their work on RARPA.

### **Organisational context**

It is not possible to identify an organisational blueprint for the effective application of the RARPA approach. Nevertheless, where lines of accountability were clear the experiences of applying the staged process were more positive, even where responsibilities for overall quality assurance of provision were shared between different organisations.

### **Staffing structures**

It was also clear from the reports that some staff were working in unsupported or even isolated conditions in applying the staged process. In some instances this isolation was a result of the particular organisational structure of the provider (eg. a small voluntary organisation operating from a network of centres using self-employed staff). In other cases it was the fact that the provision itself did not lead to a qualification that seemed to be a cause of isolation from the mainstream quality assurance procedures of an institution geared towards the delivery of programmes leading to qualifications.

### **Full- and part-time staff**

There is an interesting correlation between the involvement of full-time staff in the application of the staged process and the positive experiences of RARPA in the evaluation reports. Although there are examples in the reports of part-time staff being actively

involved in the staged process, where full-time staff are also involved (either alone or working alongside part-time staff) there are more examples of positive feedback.

### **Balancing structure and flexibility**

It seems that a balance needs to be struck between structure and flexibility in the application of the staged process. Where there was a great deal of flexibility for individual staff to develop their own approaches to RARPA, problems arose in ensuring comparability of learner experience of the staged process. Conversely, where a single approach and documentation was applied across a very wide range of provision, problems arose in the application of the process to certain types of provision. A balance based on fitness for purpose is required and providers will need guidance on an appropriate weighting of these factors in different circumstances.

### **RARPA and inspection**

Some providers underwent an ALI inspection either during or immediately before their RARPA project. Some providers saw this as a positive opportunity to use the staged process to produce evidence for inspection. Others viewed the inspection process as a complete distraction from their RARPA project. It seems in general that those providers with a positive experience of RARPA also had a positive experience of inspection.

### **The costs of implementing RARPA**

The costs and benefits of applying the staged process are considered in detail elsewhere in this report. However, it is worth noting that there was no evident correlation between the actual costs reported of implementing the staged process and the providers perception of these costs. In other words providers reporting low actual costs also reported that costs were high, and vice versa. We should be wary of drawing any firm conclusions about the long-term costs of implementing RARPA from these reports.

### **The use of time in applying the staged process**

Most providers implementing the staged process had integrated it effectively into the normal processes of teaching and learning. However, there were other approaches to the use of time in the application of the staged process. One provider added time to the normal length of courses in order to apply the staged process effectively. Another reported that the application of the staged process saved time because expensive one-to-one reviews of progress now needed to be undertaken less frequently. In general, although the time taken for effective application of the staged process was an issue, most providers reported positively that the RARPA approach could be implemented without significant additional time spent by staff or learners.

### **Further contexts to explore**

More work needs to be undertaken in the application of the staged process to areas either unrepresented or underrepresented in the current project in relation to the totality of provision and types of provider in the Learning and Skills sector. We refer in other parts of this report to the need to follow up initial findings in the work of sixth form colleges. It is also

true that work-based learning providers have been thinly represented in the project, while there are still areas of work in general FE colleges that merit further attention before attempting to introduce the RARPA approach.

### **Measuring the impact of RARPA on the quality of provision**

There are a number of comments scattered throughout the reports from individual projects that the staged process is having some impact on the overall quality of provision. As these will only be some of a wider range of influences on the overall quality of provision it will be difficult to identify precisely the long-term impact of RARPA on overall improvements in quality across the Learning and Skills sector. However it seems that we can be confident that the application of the staged process will have a positive impact on the quality of provision, even if its precise influence is impossible to measure.

# Recommendations

## The scope of the RARPA approach

- The plans for future implementation of the RARPA approach should encompass all types of provider and all areas of provision in the Learning and Skills sector where no qualification or externally accredited certificate is offered to learners.
- The staged process is introduced within the context of an overall set of effective quality assurance procedures to be operated by a provider.
- The staged process is used as a positive catalyst for overall change and improvement in the future design and delivery of learning opportunities relevant to the RARPA approach.
- Guidance should be produced for small voluntary and community-based organisations on the implementation of RARPA within the LSC's *Working Together* strategy.

## Quality systems

- The staged process should be introduced within the context of an overall set of effective quality assurance procedures to be operated by a provider. The staged process is used as a positive catalyst for overall change and improvement in the future design and delivery of learning opportunities relevant to the RARPA approach.
- Further guidance is produced for providers to emphasise the importance of adapting the particular approach to implementation of the staged process to the characteristics of both the provision and the types of learner involved.
- Advice and support is made available for providers to illustrate the interconnect- edness between the different elements of the staged process, and the possibili- ties that elements may be combined or re-ordered in certain instances.

## Different types of provision

- Advice and support is made available for providers that recognises the particular difficulties that may be experienced in implementing the staged process in some areas of provision and with some types of learner.
- Explicit and specialist guidance should be given on the application of the staged process to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Staff development

- The particular needs of part-time staff, especially peripatetic staff, in relation to the staged process are recognised in future advice and support available to providers on the RARPA approach.
- The needs of more experienced staff are also reflected explicitly in such advice and support.
- Briefing and advice on RARPA is an integral part of all induction and staff development programmes for new staff entering the sector.
- The effective application of the staged process should be recognised as an integral part of the responsibilities of staff with an explicit quality assurance remit for relevant provision, and that this responsibility is reflected in job descriptions and work schedules for these staff.

- Support for the development of local and/or regional staff development networks should be made available through RARPA champions, focused on the continuous improvement of the RARPA approach.

### **Standards and qualifications**

- The implementation of the RARPA approach should become part of the expected responsibilities of leaders and managers of non-accredited provision across the Learning and Skills sector and is reflected in revised standards and qualifications for leadership, and through the work of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership.
- The particular responsibilities of tutors, support staff and administrative staff in applying the staged process should be reflected in future standards and qualifications for these staff across all types of non-accredited provision in the Learning and Skills sector.
- These responsibilities should be reflected in the future development of initial teacher education (ITE) targeted at new recruits to teaching in the sector, and should be reflected in the future work of the DfES Standards Unit in ITE.

### **Support for providers**

- Clear information and advice should be made available to providers about the need for careful long-term planning in the introduction of the staged process in their institution, and for phasing in the RARPA approach during 2005–06.
- Support for providers should be made available on the development of creative recording techniques for initial, formative and summative assessment based on media other than paper.
- Advice and support is made available to providers that clearly separates out summative assessment from course evaluation and review processes.
- Providers should be encouraged to develop explicit strategies for learner engagement in the staged process.
- Advice and support should be made available to staff involved in curriculum development activities that highlights the particular features of provision that will support effective implementation of the RARPA approach.

# Introduction

## RARPA

The Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) describes a particular approach to a significant part of the quality assurance systems of providers in the post-school sector for non-accredited provision.

The term 'non-accredited' in this context describes all provision in the Learning and Skills sector that does not lead to a qualification or to an externally-accredited certificate. 'Externally accredited' means that the certificate is awarded by an organisation independent of the provider of the programme.

The RARPA approach consists of two interlinked processes:

- The application of an explicit and common staged process to the recognition and recording of progress and achievement.
- The validation of the consistent and effective application of this staged process through a range of judgements about the application of the staged process.

We refer to these two aspects of the RARPA approach in this report through the shorthand terms 'staged process' and 'National Validation System (NVS)'. However it should be emphasised here that the evaluation activities reported on here focus exclusively on the staged process. Occasional reference to the NVS is made in the text of the report, but recommendations to the LSC on the NVS fall outside the scope of this report.

## Background

In 2001/2002, LSDA was asked by the LSC to devise a method to recognise and record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning, in the absence of formal assessment. In addition, NIACE looked at the views and perceptions of learners on approaches to identifying and evaluating learning outcomes. This is the latest publication in a long line of publications and research on identifying learning outcomes in non-accredited work produced by NIACE and LSDA. As a result the LSC set up a project to extend the development work and test a method of recognising and recording progress and achievement. This report evaluates this phase of developing the RARPA approach.

The approach that has been developed by LSDA, NIACE and the LSC's Quality and Standards directorate acknowledges the paramount importance of the diverse needs, purposes and interests of learners. It seeks to address the requirements and interests of other stakeholders, particularly providers and the Council and local LSCs. In addition, the RARPA approach takes account of the wider needs of communities, employers in relation to workforce development and the imperative to attract potential learners i.e. those not currently participating in learning.

## The project brief

The LSC wishes to develop a means of improving the quality of learning and achievements in non-accredited provision through:

- extending good practice in the setting and reviewing of learning objectives for learners and in collecting feedback from learners (the 'staged process');
- introducing a national system to ensure that providers have robust systems in place for the implementation of the core elements of the staged process in their wider quality assurance arrangements.

The overall vision for the project envisages:

*a learner-focused system of recognising both anticipated and unanticipated learning outcomes arising from non-accredited programmes. Quality systems in relation to RARPA will be robust, fit for purpose and meet each learner's needs. Providers will use the approach as a tool for quality improvement and to increase recognition of learner achievement.*

The vision for learners is that there will be a system for recognising progress and achievement which:

- is learner-focussed, flexible and fit for purpose;
- enables learners to celebrate their own achievements;
- provides a means of demonstrating achievement which facilitates progression;
- drives up the quality of provision by linking planning of learning processes or experiences to achievement;
- spreads good practice in all contexts learner/tutor negotiation and dialogue about learning;
- is applicable to non-formal learning, where goals can be revisited and adjusted according to the needs and experience of the learner(s).

The system will meet providers' needs by:

- ensuring that they are meeting individual and group learning needs;
- providing a tool for continuous improvement;
- raising the quality of learning processes or experiences to achievement by closely linking objectives and the assessment process;
- promoting parity of esteem between accredited and non-accredited provision;
- providing a system for recording progress and achievement which helps to meet the demands of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF);
- clarifying their mission as providers of learning experiences through enhanced awareness of learners' achievements;
- have in place pathways to accredited and/or further non-accredited learning where appropriate for many and varied groups of learners, including groups traditionally under-represented in further education;
- enabling the planning of programme development in the light of learner feedback;
- facilitating the evaluation of the suitability of learning and teaching through qualitative or quantitative methods.

When the approach is in place, policy makers and government will:

- be confident that they are funding non-accredited provision which is of a high standard and has been modelled to fit learners' needs;
- have developed systems which are attractive to non-traditional learners and so contribute to the government's aim to widen and broaden participation;
- have a tool for use in supporting providers where the quality of provision is not satisfactory;
- contribute to strategic planning and development by local LSCs and providers of high quality provision for learners and potential learners.

### **The project**

The LSC commissioned LSDA and NIACE to undertake this further stage of development of the RARPA approach on its behalf. It should be noted at this stage that the RARPA project was not set up as an evaluation of the efficacy of the staged process as a mechanism for recognising and reporting on progress and achievement. As the LSC Position Statement (available on the LSC website) makes clear, the RARPA approach is accepted in principle by the Council as the method through which this aspect of the quality assurance procedures of providers in the Learning and Skills sector will be measured and evaluated.

However, the project did set out to test the application of the RARPA approach in a range of contexts. The project therefore focused very much on issues arising from the application of the staged process in the field, and on the experiences and views of both staff and learners across the sector in applying this process.

Notwithstanding this pragmatic focus for much of the work of the RARPA project, it is necessary to locate this within the unfolding context of government policy and its manifestation through a number of current strategy initiatives that continue to have an important impact on the development of the RARPA approach.

These different strands of policy are identified below and are referred back to within the body of the report on a number of occasions.

# Context

## Success for All

In November 2002 the Government published a key strategy paper entitled *Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training (S4A)*. This sets out the government's intentions to take forward its manifesto commitments in 2002 through a structured programme of interventions in the Learning and Skills sector. It should be noted here that the establishing of the RARPA approach (though not its manifestation through the LSC Position Paper) pre-dates the publication of S4A. Nevertheless, the S4A strategy provides the key policy context within which the RARPA approach needs to be viewed.

The concept of *Success for All* is itself important for RARPA. The strategy commits the Government to developing a comprehensive set of measures of learner success that can be applied to all provision within the Learning and Skills sector. Where this learning does not lead to a qualification or externally recognised certificate, there is still an expectation within the strategy that the successes of learners will be measured in some way and recorded.

The responsibility for taking forward the particular commitment to develop the RARPA approach within the S4A strategy falls within the remit of LSC under Theme 4 of S4A, developing a framework for quality and success. We may therefore note two aspects of the further development of RARPA within the S4A strategy:

- In developing its arrangements for the application of the RARPA approach to all non-accredited provision from September 2005, LSC is acting in accordance with its responsibilities under S4A;
- The RARPA approach is part of a strategy of quality improvement, not a strategy about funding or re-structuring provision.

## Measuring Success

One of the key aspects of the development of the S4A strategy across both the LSC and DfES has been the Measuring Success initiative. Again RARPA falls clearly and explicitly within this initiative. The DfES and the LSC, together with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) established in 2002 the Measuring Success Steering Group (MSSG).

Through a series of consultative meetings and workshops, supported by technical documents on a variety of optional success measures, the MSSG produced a *Measuring Success* document in December 2003 that was circulated widely for consultation across the sector. The outcomes of this consultation process were published in April 2004 and are available on the LSC website. In developing the application of the RARPA staged process through the project, providers have been encouraged to take note of the *Measuring Success* initiative.

In addition, LSDA and NIACE have sought to use the outcomes of the *Measuring Success* consultation as part of the process of evaluating the potential transferability of the lessons learned from RARPA to a future Learning and Skills sector. In doing so we have been mindful of the possibility that the RARPA approach may have applicability to accredited as well as non-accredited learning.

## **The Skills Strategy**

Soon after the beginning of work on the RARPA project, in July 2003, the Government published its Skills Strategy White Paper *21st Century Skills: Realising our potential*. Within the overall Skills Strategy, the White Paper includes a clear commitment to protect and value non-accredited learning. This commitment is important as Government focuses on other aspects of the Strategy (eg. the development of an adult credit framework or the entitlement to a Level Two qualification) and the impending spending review opens up the possibility of competition for resources to support different parts of the strategy.

The application of the RARPA approach to non-accredited provision therefore also needs to be located within the framework of developing the Skills Strategy. Providers will need to demonstrate that they have in place robust procedures for recognising and recording learner progress and achievement if they are to maintain eligibility for funding for non-accredited provision as part of the overall future funding arrangements for the Learning and Skills sector. It is within this context that the application of the RARPA staged process to a variety of different types of provider needs to be viewed. Again we have sought to highlight within this report those elements of the RARPA approach that are relevant the broader development of the Skills Strategy.

## **Extending Trust**

In May 2004 the LSC's Bureaucracy Task Force published its final report, *Extending Trust*. The Task Force was set up in 2002 and published two interim reports entitled *Building Trust* and *Trust in the Future*. The three reports in the Trust series have also had an impact on the development of the RARPA project. It has become increasingly clear during the life of the project that any implementation of the RARPA approach that resulted in an increase in bureaucracy would be seriously at odds with the thrust of development in other parts of the sector.

Those providers working with LSDA and NIACE on the RARPA project have been well aware of this 'bureaucracy-busting' agenda within LSC and this is reflected in many of the individual accounts of their work on the staged process. LSDA and NIACE have also used the key messages in *Extending Trust* and its predecessors in evaluating the messages emerging from the field in relation to the staged process. In doing so we have not equated 'bureaucracy' with 'paperwork' but have sought to identify the unnecessary or counter-productive intrusion of paper-based or electronic devices into systems of recording and recognising progress and achievement that are fit for purpose.

One of the particular principles put forward in *Extending Trust* is that of 'single validation'. We have sought to build on this principle in our recommendations to the LSC on the application of the staged process. Clearly this same principle has relevance to our separate proposals on an NVS for RARPA. The work of the Bureaucracy Task Force and its successor Bureaucracy Review Group also has much relevance to the development of a National Validation Scheme for RARPA. This, however, falls outside the scope of this report.

## **The funding of non-accredited provision**

During the life of the project some significant changes have taken place in the development of the LSC's funding methodology, and we anticipate further changes in the funding of some parts of non-accredited provision in response to both the Skills Strategy commitment, the outcomes of the Measuring Success initiative, and the work of the Bureaucracy Review Group. It is now clear that the introduction of a Plan-led Funding regime by LSC will

obviate the necessity for non-accredited provision to demonstrate measurable learning outcomes for individual learners in order to trigger payment of the 'achievement element' of funding in the LSC's formula.

This does not mean that the recognition and recording of progress and achievement is no longer necessary. It is clear from the initial proposals from the Measuring Success initiative that the application of the RARPA approach will continue to be an important factor in measuring the quality of non-accredited provision, and it is clear that in future there will be a clear connection between the assessed quality of provision and the continuing receipt of LSC funds.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that the commitment to continue funding learning for personal fulfilment in *21st Century Skills* will in future be secured through some form of 'safeguard' arrangements for provision designated under this heading. We may anticipate that the application of the staged process to this type of provision in the future will need to be explicitly 'lighter in touch' than provision funded through the standard LSC formula.

The report anticipates this particular change in its concerns about the application of the staged process to certain areas of provision and its continuing emphasis throughout this report on the need to ensure that the application of the RARPA approach is adapted to be fit for purpose in relation to the type of provision to which it is applied.

# The staged process

## The staged process

The staged process is best described in the following extract from the LSC Position Paper:

*It is proposed that all providers in receipt of Council funding for non-accredited learning adopt a Staged Process of essential or 'core' elements, with associated evidence requirements. The adoption of such a Staged Process, consistent with the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), will enable providers to make sound judgements as to the effectiveness of their arrangements for and practice in recognising and recording learners' progress and achievements through rigorous self-assessment. It will support providers in identifying areas for improvement and contribute to the raising of standards and an enhanced experience for learners.*

The elements of the staged process are set out below. Providers' internal systems should also make specific provision for learners' evaluation of their learning experience, and feedback from learners which contributes to and informs providers' judgements during self-assessment, three-year Development Plans and their strategies for continuous improvement, including programme design.

The staged process has been designed to:

- focus on and promote the needs and interests of learners;
- take account of learners' diverse and sometimes multiple purposes in learning;
- allow for negotiation of the content and outcomes of learning programmes;
- encourage learners to reflect on and recognise their own progress and achievement, thus increasing their confidence;
- promote and support informed learner self-assessment, peer assessment and dialogue about learning and achievement between learners and tutors/trainers;
- enable both the achievement of planned learning objectives and learning outcomes not specified at the outset to be recognised and valued;
- promote good practice in teaching, learning and assessment;
- enhance providers' quality assurance and improvement practices.

Providers will also be expected to ensure that learners' views are taken into account in the planning of future provision.

The staged process will also:

- be open to flexibility in interpretation and application, to take account of local needs and circumstances and the particular features of the learning programme;
- require the minimum level of formal documentation in line with the Council's commitments to avoid increasing bureaucracy;
- operate alongside and support the implementation of the CIF;
- be compatible with the Council's funding arrangements;
- provide a nationally consistent and responsive approach to recognising and recording progress and achievement in ACL.

**The elements of the staged process**

Element	Evidence
<p>1. <b>Aim(s)</b> appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners (CIF Q1 and Q5)</p>	<p>Clearly stated aim(s) for all programmes  <i>[Could include aims which do not specifically mention a learning aspiration, for example, in some informal and community based non-accredited learning]</i></p>
<p>2. <b>Initial assessment</b> to establish the learner's starting point (CIF Q4, 1 and 2)</p>	<p>Record of outcomes of process of establishing learners' starting points  <i>[Process and level of detail will vary according to the nature and duration of the learning programme. Records may include learners' self-assessment of prior learning and/or learning and support needs]</i></p>
<p>3. <b>Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives:</b> initial, renegotiated and revised (CIF Q2, Q4 and Q5)</p>	<p>Clearly stated suitably challenging objectives for all programmes and, wherever feasible, for each learner  <i>[The level of challenge which is appropriate will vary according to initial assessment of learners' needs, aspirations and starting points. Learning objectives may be amended during the learning programme, for example, as a result of formative assessment]</i></p>
<p>4. <b>Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment):</b> tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews (CIF Q1 and Q4)</p>	<p>Records of learner self-assessment; group and peer assessment; tutor records of assessment activities and individual/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  <i>[Research indicates that learners prefer the term 'feedback' and that learners' capacity for reflection and informed self-assessment would be enhanced by more dialogue with tutors and the sharing of criteria and norms used to evaluate progress and achievement]</i></p>

Element	Evidence
<p><b>5. End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of overall progress and achievement.</b> This will be in relation to appropriately challenging learning objectives identified at the beginning/during the programme. It may include recognition of learning outcomes not specified during the programme (CIF Q1 and Q4)</p>	<p>Records of learner self-assessment, group and peer assessment; tutor records of assessment activities and individual/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  <i>[Evidence is likely to comprise qualitative and quantitative information and to demonstrate planned learning outcomes and learning gains identified subsequently]</i></p>

### Testing the staged process

Following the development of the staged process, the first task was to set up a series of core pilot projects to test it. In the LSC position paper this core group of projects are described as 'testing out the staged process in a range of contexts'.

The working assumptions developed by LSDA and NIACE for the research were that most providers:

- would have in place some form or some elements of the staged process;
- would be implementing processes with varying degrees of consistency in a least some areas of their provision;
- would have some documentation supporting their processes e.g. recording parts of the process;
- would have some quality assurance/control in place.

The research did not expect core projects to make significant changes to their current practices. The objectives were:

- to understand how providers are recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning and to ascertain the extent to which they have or can put the elements of the staged process in place;
- to understand the arrangements providers have in place to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment practices in enabling learners to enjoy their learning, make progress and achieve;
- to support the provider in reviewing current arrangements to deliver all elements of the staged process;
- to support the provider to review their quality assurance arrangements in place or necessary to support the implementation of the staged process;
- to work with the providers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their practices with respect to the staged process;
- to develop processes that are fit for the context in which they are operating i.e. fit for purpose.

It should be emphasised that the RARPA project brief did not require providers to adopt any particular paperwork, format or procedure for recognising and recording progress and achievement. Nor was there any comparative analysis in the evaluation of the projects of the efficacy of the various documents and procedures used in individual projects.

### **The core group**

The research was set up with two groups of providers:

- a core group, which would test and pilot all elements of the staged process, with consultant support;
- a wider development group that would either test the full staged process or elements of it and report on how well it could be implemented.

A number of ACL and LEA providers of non-accredited adult learning were selected to test out the staged approach. Institutions were initially asked to 'opt in' to test the staged process; of those interested, selection was made on the basis of:

- types of provider;
- types of provision.

The following types of provider were identified as part of the core group:

- LEA providers securing provision in a range of ways – direct, contracted, mixed (Counties and unitary authorities, urban and rural provision);
- Providers at different stages of development of the staged process;
- Some non-LEA providers e.g. designated institutions, free-standing community and voluntary providers, adult residential colleges.

The following areas of provision were also identified:

- Range of subject and skills areas/ areas of learning;
- Range of levels and purposes of provision/ learner and community needs;
- Provision of different length volume;
- Provision delivered through different modes/methods.

In addition to the ACL providers, the project also requested offers from Centres of Vocational Excellence, Ufi hubs, E2E providers and work-based training providers. Managers from LSDA and the LSC provided advice on providers likely to be appropriate for the research. From expressions of interest selection was made on the following basis:

- The provider delivers non-accredited programmes which are appropriate for the research project;
- There is a vocational and level spread in provision;
- The provider is not already involved in other research projects.

In all, a total of 22 providers (see Appendix B) were selected to participate in the pilot phase to test out the staged process. Each provider received funding to support project activity and evaluate the staged process. They also received three days of dedicated consultancy support from LSDA or NIACE. The local LSC offices also supported the projects and the appropriate local LSC representative also attended meetings with providers, for the most part.

The core group projects were given six months to test the staged process and write a report. They were asked to evaluate the implementation of the staged process on a standard pro-forma (See Appendix E) and provide a case study of one area of their work where they had tested the staged process. The consultants were also asked to write a commentary on the projects they supported.

## **The Wider Development Group**

In addition to these core projects the LSC ran a Wider Development Group (WDG). The purpose of the WDG was to:

- involve a wider range of providers in communication, consultation and prototyping of models of RARPA to ensure that early issues and significant risks to the potential roll-out of RARPA can be clearly identified and managed;
- ensure that the evaluation of the development work on implementing the staged process included the views of a wide range of providers with some or no experience of introducing or developing RARPA systems;
- provide the LSC with an indication of how RARPA systems could be developed or introduced by providers with the support of local LSCs but without additional dedicated funding or specialist consultancy support.

Evidence from the WDG was invaluable in measuring the impact of RARPA on small providers, those who were new to working on learning outcomes and those in contexts not included in the core group of demonstration projects. For example, the criteria for selecting core projects in ACL for the core group specifically excluded the work of FE colleges involved in non-accredited outreach provision, but the WDG did not. Membership of the WDG is included as Appendix C to this report.

In order to solicit the views of participants in the WDG, a small number of meetings were arranged during the lifetime of the project to which both core and WDG projects were invited. This provided the participants with opportunities to:

- comment on their experiences of using RARPA systems;
- network with other members of the WDG to share experiences and emerging good practice;
- address emerging issues and flag up particular questions which were routed to NIACE via LSC National Office.

Participants in the WDG were asked to undertake an evaluation of their activity, using the same pro-forma as the core group. Support for the WDG came from local LSCs and LSC National Office. NIACE also answered some 'technical' queries from the WDG (channelled via LSC National Office) in the form of FAQs on their website. Issues from the WDG are included in this report alongside those from the core group of projects.

## **The role of national LSC and local LSCs**

The Quality and Standards division of the national LSC was responsible for managing the entire RARPA programme, commissioning the research to NIACE and LSDA and appointing the Steering and Advisory groups (see Appendix A). In addition, the LSC NO supported the wider development group, developed a RARPA website (<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/Quality/default.htm>) and produced regular e-bulletins for RARPA.

Local LSCs have an important role to play in supporting providers who are taking part in the development work on RARPA. The LSC National Office ensured that where providers were participating in either core or WDG projects local LSCs supported this development activity.

A paper to the Quality and Standards Programme Board in December 2002 outlined the potential role of local LSCs in supporting RARPA development work. The paper suggested that one or more of the following potential activities could be undertaken by local LSCs:

- communicating the policy and the approach to providers selected for demonstration projects;
- assisting with consultation on the policy and the approach;
- assessing the capacity of providers to engage in the trialling/demonstration projects, including some already well ahead in this work;
- supporting selected providers;
- assessing the extent of provision already with good standards in the approach;
- trialling and demonstrating quality assurance arrangements that give us confidence that there is sufficient consistency and rigour;
- links to the adult learning plan.

The main focus of local LSC involvement in the project was to support selected providers. This support included:

- visiting projects, both with and without NIACE/LSDA appointed consultants;
- being a point of contact for queries relating to RARPA and involvement in the core projects (though NIACE and/or LSDA remained the first point of contact for the core group);
- contributing to the collection of evaluation materials organised by NIACE;
- helping to facilitate networking and support across projects, particularly where there are a number of both core and WDG projects within the same geographical area.

In all the above activities, NIACE and LSDA led activities through their consultants and ensured that local LSC representatives were fully involved. This included communicating with local LSCs about the progress of projects in their area. This communication was also channelled through LSC National Office.

# Parallel RARPA projects

## The Post-16 Citizenship Development Programme: 2001–2004

A link was established between QCA, the Citizenship Programme and the national RARPA project to see how the principles of the RARPA staged process might be utilised by some pilot Citizenship projects. It was thought worthwhile to provide a complementary strand, related to learners involved with post-16 Citizenship, to the national project to establish systematic arrangements for the purpose of recognising and recording learner progress and achievement in non-accredited learning.

From the existing Round 1 and 2 LSDA Post-16 Citizenship Development Projects (see [www.citizenshippost-16.LSDA.org.uk](http://www.citizenshippost-16.LSDA.org.uk)), five were identified and invited to take part in the RARPA project. The five covered a range of settings:

- Camden Jobtrain (a training provider, focusing on a group of E2E learners);
- Merton College (an FE college with significant numbers of students at both Levels 2 and 3 involved in citizenship);
- Sir Bernard Lovell School (a large sixth-form college, with significant numbers of Curriculum 2000 students involved in citizenship as enrichment);
- Bath & NE Somerset – Democratic Action for B&NES Youth Project (provision by the youth service);
- Dorset County Council (provision made by an employer for Advanced Modern Apprenticeships).

The work took place between November 2003 and March 2004. Each project was asked at the beginning to identify which three citizenship learning objectives they would focus on. The following findings from these projects are summarized below and related to each of the five elements of the staged process.

### ***Stage One – aim and purpose***

- Projects reported some overlap with Stage 3, identifying learning objectives, and tended to elide the two Stages.
- All projects felt that the “forced” attention or focus on defining aim/purpose/objectives was very beneficial. In particular, it helped to ensure that attention was paid to the development of citizenship knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes that could be applied to other issues than the one under immediate consideration.
- Learners appreciated explicitness about aims and purpose. This appreciation was even more marked where they were involved in negotiating/planning aims/purposes/objectives.

### ***Stage Two – initial assessment***

- Experience in the project with this Stage turned out to be very interesting, as it was an area to which most practitioners had given little previous thought.
- Issues of manageability and time loomed large. Given the amount of time allocated to citizenship, it was not thought feasible to include initial assessment in respect of each learning activity. However, it was thought possible to do so at the outset of the overall learning programme.

- Informal, light-touch, “fun” initial assessment activities were thought to be the way forward; although recording at the individual level was felt to be problematic by teachers because of the numbers involved, the limited time available, and because it could militate against those desirable characteristics.

### ***Stage Three – learning objectives***

- All projects thought this Stage was desirable and operationally useful. This was true whether or not learners were involved in negotiating and selecting the objectives and whether or not they were informed of the selected objectives.

### ***Stage Four – identification of learning***

- All projects supported the conclusion drawn by one of their number, that “Discussion with learners at frequent intervals helps them understand their objectives and how they are getting on in relation to them”.

### ***Stage Five – review and recording***

- Some projects successfully reused their initial assessment activity to demonstrate that learning had taken place and that learners had “moved” as a result of their involvement in the project.
- There was not always sufficient understanding of the need to distinguish between evidence and recording, and where the latter might be useful.
- Issues of manageability, workload and administrative time were inevitably raised, including the question “*Why would we spend any time on recording unless it contributed to something adding real value such as certification?*”

A number of key issues were identified during the project:

- Is the staged process a quality assurance process that could be applied generally to non-accredited programmes, or is it only about assessment?
- Is the staged process a reinforcement of what should be good teaching/learning practice or does it add something additional to that?
- Do the various settings impact differentially on the staged process and vice versa and, if so, what are the consequences of these differences?
- Are all the various Stages to be applied to particular learning activities or only to overall programmes? What are the implications in the context of post-16 citizenship delivery?
- Are the QCA Guidance learning objectives for post-16 Citizenship, as selected by participating projects, appropriate and manageable?

Further information about the citizenship programmes for each project is available in the case studies, part of QCA’s post-16 citizenship guidance ([www.qca.org.uk/citizenship/post16](http://www.qca.org.uk/citizenship/post16)).

### **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA): taking the work forward**

Research by the LSDA consortium confirmed that provision for disabled learners remains patchy and providers need support to develop provision to meet these learners’ requirements. The consortium recognised the similarity of concerns with the national RARPA project and established a link to see how the projects could be co-ordinated to achieve

greatest value. A proposal was made to run a parallel complementary project within the DDA project suites. The project is described in more detail below. This allowed wider testing of the RARPA approach and a broader evidence base for the evaluation.

There has been longstanding concern about how to recognise and celebrate learners' achievements and progress when there is no formal accreditation of the learning. There is evidence that in some cases learners with learning difficulties and disabilities have been inappropriately placed on accredited programmes that do not match their individual learning needs. In addition, there is a concern to ensure that providers can assure the quality of the processes and demonstrate that learning has taken place and progress has been made, even when very small steps are involved.

The DDA RARPA project was directly relevant to FE colleges and adult community learning providers. It may also be of value to work based learning providers for those elements of their training programmes that are non-accredited. It sought to test out the staged process with learners with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties on a variety of programmes both specially designed for people with learning difficulties and mainstream.

The DDA project aimed to provide a complementary strand to the main RARPA project, related to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, to establish systematic arrangements for recognising and recording learner progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. In particular the DDA project sought to:

- Pilot the staged process to improve the quality of provision through an exploration of time and cost effective, fit for purpose ways of recording and processing information related to learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited learning;
- Set up demonstration projects to implement the approach (See Annex F).

The outcomes of the project will be:

- An evaluative project reports which reports on the demonstration projects which test out the staged process for validating learning;
- A contribution to the good practice guidelines;
- A network of practitioners who can share their experience to support other providers.

### **Sixth Form College Extension**

Many sixth form colleges deliver a significant volume of non-accredited work as part of their enrichment programmes and it was important to test out how far the staged process was able to support this type of activity. LSDA carried out a small-scale survey with about a dozen sixth form colleges (see Appendix F) to establish whether or not the staged process might be used to recognise and record achievement in the non-accredited learning programmes they deliver. The survey was carried out over the two-month period March/April 2004. Responses from this work were fed into the main evaluation of the RARPA project.

### **Achievement in non-accredited learning for adults with learning difficulties**

A further parallel project was run by NIACE on behalf of the DfES during 2003–04 to identify issues for providers and learners in applying the RARPA approach to learners with learning difficulties. In particular, NIACE sought to identify current thinking, knowledge and practice in this area by reviewing relevant literature and conducting a survey of providers and practitioners.

The outcomes of the literature review revealed that, although a number of providers were experimenting with processes for recognizing the achievements of learners with learning difficulties on non-accredited provision, the data collected through these processes was not robust enough to withstand comparative analysis. The review also reveals the concerns of providers that the measuring of outcomes through assessment can become an end in itself and that some of the benefits of flexibility and individual responsiveness on non-accredited provision may be lost in attempting to measure achievements. These concerns reflect similar views emerging from some providers in the main RARPA project.

A total of 87 providers responded to NIACE's invitation to contribute to its survey and the findings of this parallel research were published in May 2004. The following key messages emerge from this work:

- Achievements of adults with learning difficulties were recognized in a variety of ways across the sector, using a number of creative approaches;
- Practitioners feared that pressures of LSC funding (or perceived pressures by managers in their institution) would force this area of provision into inappropriate forms of more formal accreditation;
- Many providers felt that they could have done more to implement the staged process with their learners if they had more time to focus on individual needs;
- Some institutional processes were too inflexible to accommodate the RARPA approach, and there were often barriers to implementation from staff who lacked knowledge of unaccredited provision.

More positively, staff working with adults with learning difficulties identified a number of benefits and opportunities from the application of the RARPA approach:

- The staged process seems to improve the quality of learner-centred approaches to provision;
- Learners had a stronger sense of ownership of their learning;
- There was an improvement in the relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the learner;
- Incorporating individual outcomes into a learning programme led to increased confidence from learners working towards these outcomes;
- Learners were able to progress to appropriate provision, and retention rates improved as more learners achieved their goals.

The full report on *Achievement in non-accredited learning for adults with learning difficulties* is available from NIACE.

# Related project activity

## Recording and validating learning outcomes and achievements non-accredited basic skills and ESOL

This project was undertaken to identify good practice in the recognition and recording of achievement for students of basic skills and ESOL who are undertaking non-accredited programmes. The work was based on case studies, a questionnaire and examples of documentation used by teachers and learners. The findings informed a further project commissioned by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) of the DfES on *Planning and recording achievement*. This project has produced guidance materials for teachers and managers of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL materials to support in-service training.

The key findings of the research were that institutions have put a great deal of time and thought into the creation of systems and documentation to record learners' progress and achievement. Paperwork alone is not the answer; the study demonstrated that the value of process to learners and teachers and the strength of the information on achievement produced by providers depend on:

- The necessary procedures being in place;
- The ownership of the process by both teachers and learners;
- The training and support of teachers on the use of learning objectives and the assessment of achievement in non-accredited learning;
- Effective systems of internal verification;
- Monitoring and support through quality assurance measures;
- The skill, experience and training of tutors.

All these lessons are reported in the evaluation of the current RARPA project in the implementation of the staged process.

# Implementing the staged process: the impact on institutions

## Quality assurance systems

The overwhelming response from the evaluation of the demonstration projects has been positive and there is widespread support for the implementation of the staged process across all providers. Many feel that their current quality assurance systems support the implementation of the RARPA process and consolidate what is already in place:

*Relevant aspects of our QA systems fully support the RARPA staged process.*

The introduction of the staged process also gave institutions confidence in their own procedures and that the RARPA approach would support their own quality assurance developments:

*Senior Managers' confidence that they were already moving in the right direction, and that time allocated to the development of RARPA related processes has been justified, was confirmed.*

*Already there is increased confidence of managers /co-ordinators that systems to which the SP will apply, which are subject to internal and external scrutiny, are or will be more robust than previously.*

The staged process fully supports quality improvement and promotes good practice and consistency in the institution. For example, there has been significant development in the Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes, where the staged process aligns precisely with existing processes.

*The Staged Process is an exact fit to the requirements of the Entry to Employment Programme.*

It is interesting to note that the staged process is particularly successful in these programmes because of the formality with agreed processes and structure in the E2E programmes, the length of the programmes, the staff development support and the funding of these programmes. Here also it has acted as a refining agent and

*. . . a brilliant catalyst for change and improvement.*

The match to existing systems, in particular the CIF, was recognised as a strength of RARPA. Both the core projects and the WDG, including the DDA projects, identified this as a benefit of the staged process.

*The staged process reflects our own evolving Course File documents based on the CIF ... and reinforces many aspects of the CIF.*

*The staged process is very useful in ensuring that tutors and learners focus on the CIF and collect the evidence required for inspection purposes.*

It was also helpful to recognise and acknowledge that systems already developed and piloted were in accord with the requirements set out by the LSC, the Inspectorates and other auditing bodies:

*We are approved to ISO 9000/2000. Systems for the delivery of courses are audited*

*on a regular basis. The staged process could easily be introduced in to the quality system.*

Many providers welcome the development of RARPA as it has a focus on recognition of non-accredited learning and has had unanticipated outcomes in that

*It has heightened a sense of value of achievements in non-accredited work of all types.*

### **Fitness for purpose**

The majority of respondents stated that the staged process was fit for purpose and would suit all or most of the programmes delivered across a wide range of institutions. This was true of all types of provider, including DDA pilots and most sixth form colleges, who for the most part were unfamiliar with RARPA. While it is obviously more challenging to implement RARPA in certain circumstances there was a body of opinion that suggested that the staged process could be applied to any context in non-accredited provision.

*The elements of the staged process provide a logical and cohesive framework for all our non-accredited learning.*

*The SP is very much fit for purpose; the whole process fits in well with current practice and has helped to clarify and improve existing systems whilst highlighting areas for improvement.*

Providers were aware that there was a need to ensure the staged process was implemented sensitively and had made attempts to ensure that the application of the process was adapted to the particular characteristics of the provision:

*The process did fit the nature of our courses perfectly adequately. However, with such short courses (5 hours) the stages cannot be applied with equal thoroughness e.g. Stage 4. However, provided it is done, even as a 5 minute mid-day stock take, this does not reduce the effectiveness of the principle involved.*

Other providers suggested that implementation in specific programmes would be much more challenging:

*It would be difficult to ensue the staged process was applied effectively on short (five-hour) one-day workshops.*

In general though, providers were able to adapt the staged process to apply it in some way to short courses. Discussions on fitness for purpose centred on:

*The extent to which the means of RARPA developed for longer courses were applicable to shorter courses; documentation was adapted to meet the needs of learners on shorter courses.*

*If the evidence requirements are non-bureaucratic and we can devise fit-for-purpose methods that are acceptable – the staged process will have been a very useful quality tool!*

### **A catalyst for change**

The main impact of implementing the staged process has been as a catalyst for the review, revision and re-design of quality assurance and quality improvement systems. All providers reported no difficulty in assimilating it into existing quality mechanisms. Many staff saw the staged process as standard good practice, which ought in any case to be in place to support the quality of provision:

*The staged process is effectively already our policy ... and is normal good practice for the vast majority of courses.*

*We have gained in terms of sharpening our practice and providing clearer procedural guidance to tutors.*

Although not piloting the staged process, all Sixth Form Colleges interviewed saw the process as normal good practice in planning and delivering non-accredited learning. These colleges saw little obstacle to implementing the process, provided funding for training and implementation could be made available.

Some providers saw RARPA as an opportunity to review a number of processes in the organisation:

*RARPA has implications for many of our existing processes – quality monitoring (observation, student surveys, tutor reviews), staff development, administration of record keeping, administration of assessment of achievement, line-management focus and skills etc.*

### **Managing and organising RARPA**

It is clear that in order for RARPA to be implemented successfully the process must be owned and led at a senior level, and therefore be supported with appropriate staff development and being rolled out and monitored in a systematic way. The pilot demonstrated that while the support of heads and senior management of institutions was essential, the nature of this support and type and level of involvement also had an affect on the quality of the development. Where an institution designated a named person to manage and develop RARPA, most progress was made especially where the staff member with the remit to develop RARPA worked closely with the quality manager and within the context of emerging quality systems.

Less progress was made where RARPA was added to workloads that were already weighty. Where staff had to take on the RARPA development role because of staff turnover, this seemed to be the least effective model. The application of the RARPA approach inevitably became one of a number of competing priorities so that hands-on leadership and development work was fairly limited.

In addition to named project leaders, the involvement, engagement and leadership of curriculum leaders or other staff with responsibility for curriculum areas, was also crucial to the success of RARPA. There appeared to be a direct correspondence between the most successful aspects of the pilots and the enthusiasm with which curriculum leaders championed RARPA.

*It is clear that there is a need to have each individual tutor as key to the development and implementation of RARPA. Managers will work with each tutor to explore and develop their enthusiasm for the staged process.*

There is evidence for the pilots that the staged process is implemented best where there are full-time staff managing its implementation, or a mixture of full- and part-time staff. Where the majority of staff is part-time, some institutions managed by appointing specific RARPA staff:

*We were able to appoint a co-ordinator to manage the project and work with tutors.*

### **Institutional collaboration**

Areas of difficulty in implementing RARPA have arisen where different quality assurance cultures exist between providers and contracting organisations. In these cases questions arise as to who owns the process developed, which organisations' process is implemented and who has ownership of records. These are not insurmountable problems and are issues of management and leadership rather than a problem with the staged process itself. There are important issues to be considered for the wider implementation of RARPA in terms of the organisational context in which it can be expected to be successful. Some SFCs commented on the potential link and close relationship between non-accredited learning and the proposals contained in the Tomlinson 14–19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform for wider activities.

The potential benefits of RARPA to work-based learning also emerged from the work of the project:

*There is a huge amount of learning being undertaken and funded by employers. A significant number of the courses are company specific, and although they are delivered to industry standards, they do not directly relate to units or elements of a national qualification. The formal recognition of this type of learning is vitally important in encouraging individuals to continue to develop skills. I hope the RARPA project will start the process of providing a consistent approach to this type of delivery.*

Evidence from the RARPA pilot shows that the staged process itself is capable of application across a wide range of non-accredited provision in different curriculum areas, locations and client groups. However the organisational context in which the process operates will be crucial to its success.

# Implementing the staged process: the impact on staff

## The response from staff

The project has demonstrated that implementing RARPA affects a wide range of staff – managers, curriculum leaders, tutors, and administrators. Despite an occasional reference to the problem of the time required for implementing changes, in general, the response of staff was enthusiastic. Staff familiarity with the staged process was mixed and their approach to implementing it varied widely, from hostility through pragmatic acceptance to enthusiasm:

*A small number of staff involved in the project were resistant or even hostile to most or all parts of the staged process.*

*The staged process is recognised as formalised good practice and essentially nothing new – application is the issue.*

*Most staff are very positive about the benefits of using the staged process and the opportunity to involve the learners in the decision making process and development of individual learning plans.*

*Almost without exception tutors were positive – the staged process is no more than a normal activity for effective teaching and learning.*

Many projects reported on the benefits that staff felt they had received as a result of their involvement in the staged process:

*Staff are supportive and could see benefits for learners; it encourages self-review of practice.*

*Staff welcomed the opportunity to reflect upon the issues around the process and felt they benefited from the discussions.*

In some projects staff reported less enthusiastically on their experiences of RARPA. These concerns are addressed in later sections of this report. However there is a general parallel across returns from projects between the resistance or misgivings of staff in applying RARPA and the level of support they received (or perceived that they received) from senior managers through their project.

## The role of tutors

Tutors were very influential in the effectiveness of the staged process and it worked especially well where they presented it as a positive and integral aspect of the learning process. Many tutors could see the value of RARPA as it fitted with their own perceptions of good practice approaches to teaching and learning.

There were some very interesting examples of how initial perceptions of the staged process had actually changed over the period of the project:

*Most tutors felt it was very inappropriate at the beginning of the project but most are coming round to see its validity.*

*Staff found it more useful than they had expected.*

This change in attitude was particularly interesting in one case where learners had embraced the staged process despite the initial scepticism of their tutor:

*These three learners changed my view completely about the accessibility of the forms I used. Not only did they not mind using them, they positively enjoyed the experience. I live and learn!*

The evaluation also identified an important issue relating to greater acceptance of RARPA and implementing the staged process by recently trained and appointed staff, compared to longer standing staff. This was clearly a problem for a number of providers:

*In general, recently trained tutors have fewer problems with applying the good practice in a manner acceptable to learners than do some who have been tutoring non-accredited subjects for many years.*

*The difference in attitude of tutors was interesting and frustrating. A highly valued tutor of considerable experience and skills was defensive and too ready to assume anything was a personal criticism of practice. A new tutor with virtually no experience has approached the process with an open mind and a lot of enthusiasm.*

Some providers recognised that while the pilot project was successful there are likely to be difficulties when the staged process is moved into the whole institution:

*Although tutors and learners in the sample accepted this initial assessment strategy, it may well be that some tutors and learners will be more resistant to the formalisation of this process.*

*Since we are already doing it in the majority of our courses the impact will largely be on the remainder; we anticipate problems in some subjects and tutor resistance.*

### **Curriculum differences**

There was also more resistance to the implementation of the staged process in certain subject areas than others. Sports or exercise classes with large numbers, such as swimming, yoga and line-dancing presented particular challenges, including staff and learner resistance and logistical considerations.

Even where staff could see the benefits of the staged process, finding systems and processes which did not consume a disproportionate amount of class time caused some difficulties.

*There is some resistance to formal assessment in some subjects e.g. exercise and fitness.*

*A small number of tutors in the project were resistant or even hostile to most or all parts of the staged process – these were almost exclusively from the fitness and keep fit classes.*

*A tiny minority of tutors don't see indepth initial assessment as appropriate to their subjects, such as Reiki, Alexander technique.*

There are still questions as to whether RARPA is appropriate for large sports and activity classes such as yoga and if so what might be an appropriate process to support learning in these activities. However, the evaluation also shows that the staged process has been applied successfully by some providers in these difficult areas.

The responses above also reveal some potential misinterpretations of the intention of the RARPA approach by staff. For example, what lies behind use of the term 'formal assessment'? And initial assessment doesn't need to be 'in depth' to be fit for purpose. Is it

possible that staff on these activity-based programmes are most likely to be operating at a remove from the formal infrastructure of support for tutors offered by these providers?

In general it seems that the staged process is suitable for a very wide range of non-accredited programmes offered in a range of situations, to a range of client groups and across a range of curriculum areas. There are lessons to be learnt from providers that have managed to implement the staged process in activity-based provision.

### **Bureaucracy and paperwork**

One major concern articulated by many providers across all parts of the RARPA project related to the potential for increased bureaucracy if the staged process becomes over-dependent on paper-based processes of recording progress and achievement.

*The system is more bureaucratic than we envisaged and therefore its implementation across the whole curriculum will require considerable modifications.*

It is worth noting however that interesting practice is developing through the work of the National Learning Network (NLN) in relation to the use of new technologies in ACL. It should be possible in the future to link together more explicitly further work on RARPA with projects within the NLN. It is essential for providers to ensure that additional paper work is not required for implementation of the staged process and that further support and development work needs to be undertaken with providers to allay staff fears that RARPA is an inherently bureaucratic exercise:

*We have already lost 20% of our fitness, health and leisure tutors this year, mainly on the grounds of the increased bureaucracy that has been introduced into adult learning in the past few years.*

*We are afraid that we will lose part-time staff who are good teachers unless we can make the system non-bureaucratic.*

In general, tutors were more likely to acknowledge the relevance of RARPA where they were already using similar types of quality systems in accredited courses in the same curriculum area, for instance in ICT. There was most resistance from tutors who had never been exposed to ideas and issues relating to learner achievement. Many tutors in this group were very resistant to change, failing to see merits in the approach and focusing on the increased paper work as a problem. It is worth noting that there was tutor resistance of a similar nature to that experienced in RARPA when the Success for All infrastructure was first introduced, and this has now largely evaporated, although a minority of practitioners remains unconvinced of its value.

This concern with bureaucracy was evident in the response by SFCs where some colleges have genuine concerns about the extent to which the staged process would lead to more bureaucracy and over-assessment of non-accredited courses. They voiced concerns that healthy enrichment programmes could become too bureaucratic and possibly lose their vitality and appeal:

*The potential volume of paperwork associated with the staged process has caused some concerns. Balance between recording and teaching must be kept in check so that learning time is not lost.*

*Staff appeared to fully appreciate and understand the benefits of the process but were concerned about the additional paperwork involved for the learner.*

It is necessary to note again here that sixth form colleges were not involved in actually testing out the RARPA staged process through the project. In contrast, some organisations

have taken the opportunity to review their current paperwork and reduce potentially bureaucratic processes:

*The staged process has given the staff opportunities to develop documentation already in place to make it more 'user friendly'.*

Having highlighted these concerns, it should also be noted that there was a group of core projects that found the staged process fit for purpose and either entirely non-bureaucratic or resulting in a minimal increase in paperwork.

*Potentially the paperwork could be seen as an unnecessary and overly bureaucratic intrusion if not handled positively.*

There are providers who have been using RARPA-style processes for some time and in all these cases they have amended and reduced the burden of paperwork to suit the needs of their organisation, staff and learners.

### **Staff development**

Implementation of the staged process has inevitably raised a number of issues with respect to staff development across providers. Even where all five elements of the process were in place at the outset, all organisations have organised a programme of staff development to support the further development of the RARPA approach. The time devoted to these staff development activities varied significantly between different projects, ranging from three hours to 300 hours, but the overall average was 40 person hours per provider. These variations relate less to the organisation's initial position in relation to the staged process than to its perceived importance as a change agent (eg. where modifications to current systems were extensive and those trained included senior staff as well as new members). In general, the aim of staff development activity was to improve quality rather than radically change existing practice:

*All tutors participating had the opportunity to either attend a tutor training on the staged process or have individual briefing. For many they were familiar with many aspects of RARPA but not the terminology.*

Initial staff development focused on awareness raising and setting up the implementation of the staged process. Future training plans suggest how the perceptions of institutions have sharpened in the course of the project. Content will include improving target setting, ensuring systems are consistent and coherent, developing ways of extending and using learner input and maintaining standards achieved during the project.

Providers took different approaches to training tutors involved in the RARPA pilot. The most effective approach was where all tutors, including part time tutors, were contractually obliged to attend termly training events, as it was easy to plan ahead and to make RARPA the focus of this training. The group nature of the experience enabled the organisation to convey a common message to tutors and provided an opportunity for tutors to explore concerns, implications, ideas and methods with peers and colleagues. Where training was not programmed in advance some part time tutors resisted or were unable to attend group training, even where payment was offered. In these circumstances many tutors were briefed on a one-to-one basis by team/curriculum leaders. This was a less effective approach as it was very time consuming, there were higher levels of tutor resistance and no opportunity for them to develop RARPA approaches with colleagues.

Another effective strategy adopted by some provider was to produce clear tutor guidelines on single sheets of paper, which were used following initial training, and were very

accessible to tutors. Staff skills were another important factor in the effective implementation of the staged process. The quality of different approaches and materials related to the ability of staff to grasp the aims and principles of RARPA and translate these into effective practice:

*Implementation of QA systems embracing RARPA is highlighting the tutor qualification issue.*

There were innovative ways of providing staff development either through workshops, integration into teacher training or team training:

*The staged process has been promoted in staff training events and one-to-ones for several years and taken up by most tutors. It is taught as part of the 7407 Teaching Certificate.*

Specific issues arose where those delivering programmes were not teacher trained, were work-based trainers or mentors or were providing expertise for specific purposes. A suggestion from one provider was that:

*. . . all mentors ideally attend the City and Guilds 7307 course; alternatively a week of intensive courses in basic teaching skills covering assessment and evaluation, resources, developing a learning programme and teaching strategies could suffice.*

Local and regional staff support networks were also important in encouraging staff to implement the staged process. In the north west for example a strong provider network was built up and staff gained a great deal of support from participation in this active regional network. The benefits were seen as:

- Valuable to have an opportunity for formative sharing of developing practice;
- Forum for mutual support, assistance, clarifying thinking, problem solving, ideas, compare experiences;
- Good opportunity to check out that developments are 'on the right lines';
- Good opportunity to pick up ideas rather than all working separately to develop something similar;
- Used each other as critical friends;
- Allowed participants to recognise the diversity of provision and practice both within projects and across the region;
- Provided forum for sharing and learning from other activity eg. work on Progress File.

Similar joint activities have been carried out in the south west region:

*In a large, widely dispersed, rural local authority employing part-time tutors, engaging tutors in staff development has been problematic. Tutors brought together to focus on the particular issue of Initial Assessment were enthusiastic and appreciated the opportunity to discuss and exchange practice. The reaction to this process has provided a model for future staff development.*

## **Capacity**

There were concerns from both the core projects and the wider development group over the potential time and cost of implementing the staged process. These are especially significant for institutions with a majority of part-time staff. The issue of time for delivering the staged process was referred to by a number of providers. One concern was about the time needed to get the staged process embedded as part of a quality assurance system:

*Time and training were two key issues with space for planned and pre-agreed input by tutors into a system and timetabled allocation of funded time for development and implementation.*

A longer-term view of the use of time in the implementation of the RARPA approach relates to organisational culture:

*Although the staged process makes sound educational sense in order to embed it, a change of culture will be required in some areas of learning and this takes time to bring about.*

Other providers involved in the project referred to the time taken to manage the implementation of the staged process:

*Programme and line managers will need to take on larger workloads to support tutors.*

*The major drawbacks upon staff have been the time which is needed to go into developing resources to implement the staged process effectively.*

Finally, evaluation reports also reflected on the time taken to implement the staged process with learners:

*Training and teaching is actually a small part of most staff time.*

*The time taken to do the staged process properly is prohibitive for many tutors and students.*

The core projects have documented the time it takes to introduce RARPA into an organisation. There is no doubt that the success of implementing the staged process depends on adequate time for management, preparation and implementation with learners. Nevertheless, many projects seem to be managing this time effectively.

The scope and speed with which the RARPA approach can be implemented by a provider may also be affected and delayed by issues such as staff turnover and restructuring, as well as external factors like inspection. These factors will need to be taken into account when determining the timescale for full implementation.

*The implementation of the SP has taken longer than we expected. It is probably going to be more difficult to roll out and embed the staged process with our casual tutors. The logistics of this will be a challenge.*

### **Costs**

In the evaluation reports from projects four main types of cost have been identified relating to the implementation of the staged process: staff development, administration, evaluation and other overheads. These categories were equally distributed in the responses. In spite of this, most respondents saw high benefits to implementing RARPA.

It should be noted that no comparable baseline of costs was established between the different core projects and that therefore it is not possible to compare actual costs between providers or make accurate predictions of what additional costs (if any) may be incurred in implementing the RARPA approach.

The cost of staff development was a significant factor for some, though it was recognised that after initial training, as the institution absorbed changes, costs were likely to reduce.

*The cost implications will be largely for staff development and budgets in these areas have already been heavily hit with DDA, Health and Safety and now ILT.*

*The capacity of our quality systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning is constantly evolving, but our major capacity issues relate to our reliance on a very high percentage of part-time staff. This poses difficulties in relation to the dissemination of good practice through staff development and the monitoring of the effectiveness on the implementation of RARPA.*

In general, comments on costs of staff development recognised that this was an initial investment that would become less onerous over time. Although development of part-time staff was an issue raised in several reports, some institutions have paid their part-time staff to attend training and have found this cost effective in relation to efficient use of staff time in applying the staged process with learners.

Where providers are planning to implement RARPA and are developing an action plan to do this, there is some concern over the cost of the training required and funding to support this:

*The action plan will certainly incur costs in terms of further staff development on initial assessment and its links to other elements of the staged process.*

A number of providers are looking at ways of reducing the amount of paperwork and recording for their tutors – but again there are concerns about costs associated with this. The staged process had been especially well received in those classes where tutors had devised imaginative means of recording progress and achievement, but this often involves investment in technology:

*We are utilising some non-paper-based means of RARPA eg. digital cameras and other electronic means of recording progress and achievement. This is an area where we would certainly like to develop our managers and our staff, but there are significant capacity/costs implications of this work.*

Although administrative costs were identified by 80% of respondents, this was mentioned infrequently as a concern. It may become a more significant issue for some providers where there are few quality systems already in place:

*We need additional administrative support to create good materials for tutors to use – administrative time and staff with DTP skills to create forms with learning outcomes and initial assessment for different courses.*

## **Funding**

For some providers there are concerns that the funding available to them in the future will not be sufficient to sustain the quality systems necessary for the effective implementation of the RARPA approach. There are particular concerns in the voluntary sector that some smaller voluntary organisations may have difficulty in accessing LSC funding as the process of RARPA will be unmanageable in terms of costs.

Funding concerns were also raised in the sixth form colleges; they wished to see funding for non-accredited learning and particularly enrichment programmes that would enable them to retain a flexibility to plan their programmes. They do not want to see a system that directs what can and cannot be funded in the enrichment curriculum.

## **Curriculum**

The staged process was tested in a wide range of curriculum areas (see Appendix G). Providers were encouraged to test the staged process in areas where they anticipated

difficulty as well as those in which they were more confident that the process could be applied effectively. The majority of pilot activity was concentrated in three curriculum areas:

- Hospitality, sport and leisure (Curriculum area 8);
- Visual and performing arts (Curriculum area 11);
- Foundation programmes (Curriculum area 14).

The staged process was applied effectively in all curriculum areas (though not in every instance). A strong message emerged that different strategies are needed for different curriculum area and types of group. However, within a robust overall quality system, it seems quite feasible to have tools for recording progress and achievement that vary across different curriculum areas and indeed for different types of provision within the same curriculum area. There is no evidence of a curriculum area where the staged process cannot work effectively.

The RARPA approach proved popular and valuable in a range of subjects where learners attended for leisure purposes or as the first stage on progression routes to further learning. In other areas it was more difficult to embed the RARPA approach, particularly activity-based learning. This raises questions as to the nature of learning, the distinction between learning and leisure activities, and what type of activities should count as publicly funded learning activities. Several projects referred to the problems of implementing RARPA in classes that ‘functioned more like a club’:

*I haven't come to learn keep fit. I've come to keep fit.*

Some providers commented that perhaps the staged process is easier to implement in a skill-based area than, for example, in humanities, where a starting point might be more difficult to establish and achievement in non-accredited provision, more difficult to demonstrate. For example, one course of lectures was attended by over 80 people for two hours each week for ten weeks:

*By the end of the final lecture I could identify perhaps 15 learners by name. Although the centre had an individual record for each learner and I had a list of names, the format of the course meant it was impossible to identify each learner individually.*

All the sixth form colleges interviewed in one of the ‘parallel’ projects provided a non-accredited programme. They were proud and enthusiastic about their programmes which were impressive in their variety and offered choice to students. However, there were variable views about what constituted a non-accredited programme.

Most of these colleges described these programmes as part of an enrichment offer to students. These included a wide range of options for students – some offering up to 100 activities – with varying degrees of formality. Non-accredited learning generally has a high status in the SFCs sampled – this reflects the important role attributed to the enrichment programmes offered by these colleges.

To date RARPA seems to have had little effect on curriculum design. It may well be that, as the pilot projects were testing the staged process on existing provision in this phase, curriculum development will follow. Only one provider said that implementing the staged process:

*. . . brought a different, more focused and individual dimension to curriculum design.*

The effect of the staged process on course evaluation, as a quality assurance process, is potentially significant and may therefore bring about curriculum change as an indirect result. Several providers have clarified and rewritten their course aims to better reflect course content, realising that a mismatch at this stage can adversely affect learner and staff expectations.

In many cases development of the staged process has led to a re-working of learner documentation and has enabled objectives to be broken down into smaller components. It also offered insights into the measurement and evaluation of the learning experience and led to changes in assessment. It has highlighted the importance of a properly planned, coherent structure for course delivery.

Another positive benefit of applying the RARPA approach to non-accredited provision was the enhanced esteem in which institutions held the curriculum:

*RARPA has already done much to improve the perception on non-accredited curriculum areas and heighten its attaining parity of esteem with accredited provision.*

# Implementing the staged process: the impact on learners

## A learner-centred approach

The evaluation asked projects to assess the impact of the staged process on learners. Across both core projects, the wider development group and the associated 'parallel' projects a large number of learners have been involved in the staged process. The process has brought many benefits to learners that they recognised and appreciated. The benefits were maximised and problems minimised when the staged process was effectively integrated into the perceived 'normal' teaching and learning activities of a course.

The projects have clearly demonstrated that raising the learner's awareness of the learning process is beneficial to the learner, to staff and to the organisation. For learners, the staged process variously led to better motivation and retention, higher achievement and improved social skills.

The centrality of the learner is a major pedagogic feature of adult learning and it is encouraging to find good evidence that the implementation of the staged process has led to greater learner involvement in the learning process. Several providers report that learners have a better understanding and clearer expectations of their intended course at the outset and so are better fitted to gauge both its appropriateness and their successes on it:

*Learners who are clear about their aims and expected outcomes are more likely to complete within the expected timescale.*

Most providers have no doubt that the staged process has a positive impact on the achievement of learner goals. The majority state that they used learner self-assessment, with tutor/trainer verification, as the means of assessing progress towards final goals. Slightly different methods were used to recognise achievements through summative assessment.

## Benefits to learners

There is no doubt that some learners enjoyed the RARPA approach and felt it really worthwhile that they could measure and record their progress. The following report from a one-day ICT course was typical:

*A complete beginner computer user was asked how he felt about completing two sets of responses during the day and found it a very positive and interesting experience. He enjoyed seeing his own progress mapped onto the sheets and went home filled with enthusiasm after seeing this visual representation of progress.*

Many providers reported an interest in and enthusiasm for setting goals and following progress, even among learners for whom goal setting was a new experience:

*Positive comments came from 92% of the learners in the pilot. They were particularly complimentary about the negotiation of learning outcomes: 'it helped me to clarify goals'; 'helped to see what goals were realistic'; 'I knew where I was going'. They were also aware of how much they had learned: 'I recognised how far I had gone'; 'I could*

*see progress from week 1 to 4 to 8' and how the process was working to show progression.*

It was clear from the evaluation reports that many providers had introduced the staged process into their provision without making this change in approach explicit to learners:

*They were not explicitly aware of the staged process. Implicitly they welcomed well-organised learning and especially feedback from formative assessment.*

*As the staged process was integrated into the existing delivery methods, the learners were unaware that a change in delivery had been implemented.*

The processes of initial and formative assessment have been the main vehicles for increased engagement and several providers have increased the amount of time allotted to these elements of the process. The benefits identified by providers include better motivation, faster progress, more focussed learners and better engagement in learning.

*The staged process structure gave a clear view of what the students could expect and would achieve. Regular reviews helped focus students and assisted in the summative assessment.*

In general, learners seem to have appreciated being involved in and taking control of their learning. This has resulted in improved learner motivation and retention:

*Learners engaged in reflection, self-evaluation, planning self-direction, confidence development and motivation. Despite time restrictions ... they recognised their own potential, specialisms and could be self-motivated.*

*Those learners who completed Stage 2 appreciated the opportunity to think more deeply about what they wanted from the course and then to be able to assess their achievements at the end.*

For some learners, the process of recording outcomes led to more realistic goal setting by learners:

*Learners were encouraged to reflect on their starting points and overall progress and achievement and writing them down enabled articulation of these reflections.*

Recognising achievement was of major benefit to learners with a negative educational history, which was often accompanied by a poor self-image and low confidence in their learning abilities. They gained in personal confidence and developed a sense of themselves as successful learners that changed attitudes towards both learning and their own goals.

There were also some interesting examples of how group learning had successfully taken place:

*Unexpected outcomes fell into the areas of: gaining confidence from working in a group and meeting people with similar problems; sharing information; meeting people from a cross section of organisations; learning from others; being able to help others.*

As learners responded positively, staff were generally enthusiastic and although occasional concerns were voiced about time commitment and additional work, overall the comments show that staff found the benefits to their learners outweighed these concerns:

*By the end of the course we had recognised and recorded a wide range of outcomes: all learners had stated that there were no drawbacks to the process – only benefits; all learners stated they had achieved their learning goals.*

## Unanticipated outcomes

The RARPA process enables both expected and unanticipated outcomes of learning to be recognised and recorded. Several providers reported positively on the value of this aspect of the staged process. The parallel project on adults with learning difficulties also reported positively on the recognising and recording of unanticipated outcomes.

*Of the 88% achieving their learning outcomes, all expressed achievement of some unanticipated outcome. The experience and benefits of working and learning as a group cannot be underestimated.*

*All learners were able to identify 'soft outcomes' as a result of attending classes, such as an increase in confidence; all learners had transferred skills they had learnt in the classroom in to their own /their families' lives.*

It seems that unanticipated outcomes may sometimes need reinforcement by tutors in order to be valued by learners. In other instances the opposite process seems to be happening: tutors are made aware of the unanticipated outcomes of learning by learners themselves:

*Perceived benefits appeared to directly relate to the course subject and associated outcomes. Actual benefits from unanticipated outcomes had to be reinforced by tutors.*

*Many of the tutors commented on their surprise at both the level of unanticipated outcomes and the benefits learners articulated they had gained.*

The recognising and recording of unanticipated outcomes was not always straightforward. Some projects reported their concerns with personal and sometimes confidential outcomes reported by learners:

*Unanticipated outcomes were discussed and felt to be an extremely important part of what adult education offered. Tutors felt they did not have the right to record these outcomes, as some of them can be very personal and tutors were uneasy about committing these to paper.*

By contrast, another pilot project reports on the potential benefits of recording just these types of outcome for learners with low confidence about their ability as learners:

*Most of our learners did not think anyone would want to know if the course had improved their confidence. They did not think that we would value ... all of the gains they had made. They became confident enough to say they wanted to do more learning.*

An alternative view of the recording of unanticipated outcomes came from one of the E2E projects. In answer to an evaluation question about what unanticipated outcomes were achieved, the response was:

*None. Reviews are carried out every two-three weeks so any changes in circumstance were captured immediately.*

Although very different from other perceptions of unanticipated outcomes, the legitimacy of this position must be respected. If the staged process provides continuous opportunities for learners to review and update their initial intended learning objectives, then logically no outcomes are 'unanticipated' as they have been anticipated through the staged process itself. These alternative views both need to be respected in the development of future guidance on implementing the RARPA approach.

## Learner engagement

One of the intentions of introducing the RARPA approach is to develop more reflective learners. There was evidence from a number of projects that the introduction of the staged process led to an increased level of engagement by learners in their learning. A further outcome of this increased reflection on their learning was that a number of learners consciously transferred behaviours from their learning activity to their life outside the learning institution:

*Made me think about things eg. being on time, doing things for others, saying things in meetings – not just sitting there eg. Health and Safety, meetings with customers. My appraisal is due so it helped me to think about that and what I have achieved.*

Providers reported on a number of different strategies employed to engage learners in the staged process. It seems that where a provider was conscious of the potential difficulties in engaging some groups of learners in the process, creative approaches were trialled and the results were broadly positive:

*We felt that a group who had not undertaken learning for a long time could possibly just agree to anything we might suggest – a danger when we want them to feel empowered! The tutor used a technique described as ‘sandwiched negotiation’ in the first lesson and asked the group to describe what they wanted out of the course. This consisted of completing registration; providing a general overview – including the welcome to learning/learner agreement; a practical Indian head massage activity; negotiation and completion of the individual learning plan. Students said they agreed what they wanted to do and worked better as a team.*

Another provider asked learners directly for help in getting the implementation of the staged process right:

*We need your help to see how well it works ... If you have any ideas about how this process can work better tell us.*

Another provider devised a version of a SWOT analysis as a means of implementing the staged process. There were initial problems in getting some learners to take part, but overall the approach was considered useful for staff and learners, as the following comment illustrates:

*I think reviewing how you learn can be helpful, especially so if you are out of practice and haven't taken a course for a while.*

The example above is drawn from a learndirect message board. The evidence from the evaluation reports indicates that the RARPA approach can be applied successfully in a virtual learning environment. A further example from the same message board is representative of the views of learners in other pilot projects:

*I probably started this course confident that I knew 20% of it. Completing a review underlined this, but my confidence in my ability to learn again has returned. I would certainly say that my biggest achievement here so far is learning to learn again.*

Another context in which learner engagement with the learning process was enhanced through the staged process were the E2E programmes. Staff working on E2E provision implemented the staged process with enthusiasm and the RARPA project provided the opportunity to scrutinise and change systems to enhance learner involvement in the staged process:

*We feel the project allowed learners to be fully engaged and have an ownership of their own programme. Learner feedback showed 75% enjoyed setting their own targets and reviewing with their key worker.*

In some instances it took time for both tutors and learners to become involved in the staged process. It was encouraging to read of examples where initial negative reactions to the RARPA approach had been overcome as learners became more engaged in the process:

*Learner views were initially, in some cases hostile – (more paperwork, time out from learning etc.) – however, as the classes drew to a conclusion, the majority of the students declared the value of the process, being able to look back and reflect upon what had been learnt and achievements at each stage.*

In all the above examples of positive engagement with learners in the staged process, it seems the following comment reflects a general view expressed by a number of providers:

*Positive tutors received the best results from learners.*

### Issues for learners

Although the overall feedback from projects on the involvement of learners in the RARPA approach was positive, providers also voiced concerns in their reports about the possible negative impact on learners if the staged process was not implemented sensitively and flexibly through a learner-centred approach.

Some learners who had attended the same or similar courses for a number of years were reluctant to accept change and could not identify any benefits in the staged process. These views were reported by tutors who themselves had taught the same course for a number of years. We may speculate that the above comment about 'positive tutors' is also true in its opposite case. In these circumstances it is difficult to generalise about the views of learners as the negative views of some tutors resulted in a failure to develop applications of the staged process that were 'fit for purpose' for their curriculum areas.

In contrast there were some genuine concerns from some providers about the appropriateness of an individualised and interactive approach to the staged process for some groups of learners:

*People felt uncomfortable when learning outcomes were mentioned. They agreed to suggestions quickly rather than negotiate. They felt under pressure. They acquiesced to alleviate the pressure. There are different goals for this kind of learner. Achievement is often their attendance [which of course would then be a legitimate learning goal!].*

A further concern was that the staged process might, if applied without sensitivity, be seen as an implied criticism of the lack of previous achievements by the learner:

*A system requiring the description of progress may imply a deficit model with learners feeling they have shortcomings needing improvement.*

The application of some elements of the staged process seemed to create more difficulties than others. A provider working with a group of learners with basic literacy needs found that it was not always easy to identify clear learning objectives:

*The main difficulty is in helping learners to identify SMART personal aims and objectives, when learners are not clear about what they want to learn and the benefits this will bring.*

A similar comment was made by a provider working with learners with learning difficulties (though in contrast it is interesting that no such comments arose from the work of the 'specialist' providers in either the main RARPA project or the parallel DDA work):

*For those with learning difficulties and disabilities, involvement was weak and the costs of the tutor time involved outweighed the benefits to individual learners.*

A similar concern was expressed by one of the projects focusing on the application of the RARPA approach as part of its Neighbourhood Renewal provision:

*There were problems identifying the benefits [of the process] for some groups of learners, for example, the recovering mentally ill or homeless people.*

In contrast another provider reported a different reaction to the process from a very different group of learners, some of whom were graduates:

*The learners seemed sceptical at first but got involved with the project quite well although some may have found it patronising to their level of intelligence.*

In all the cases above we should emphasise that other evaluation reports included positive examples of learner feedback in similar areas. The above issues are therefore real considerations that need to be taken into account in the application of the staged process, but none of them constitute a convincing case for not pursuing the RARPA approach with all types of learner in all types of provision.

### **The use of paper and other methods of recording**

The principle that the application of the staged process should not increase the burden of bureaucracy on providers is well established and will be a key principle in informing the future development of the RARPA approach. There are several references in a number of reports to the negative influence of introducing paper-based methods of recording progress and achievement into the work of both staff and learners involved in the staged process:

*Learners did not like recording their progress in writing as it took up valuable class time.*

*Within keep fit and yoga for older learners, the tutor felt [the staged process] was not fit for purpose because they took longer to complete the paperwork involved.*

It is clear from these and other similar reports that some providers were working under the mistaken assumption that the application of the staged process requires learners to complete 'paperwork' in order to record their progress and achievement. This is a misconception of the RARPA approach. Understandably in these circumstances there was negative feedback from both tutors and learners to the RARPA approach, and it was identified in some reports as 'not fit for purpose', especially for 'activity-based' courses with no written activity that was integral to the learning process itself.

*Feedback from learners on the range of documentation completed by or in relation to their learning experiences (including personal records and student surveys) revealed that a significant proportion of learners (averaging 35%) felt that such documentation was not at all helpful.*

In other reports there were interesting and creative attempts to use alternatives to paper to record learner progress and achievement. Indeed there are examples of such activity from outside the RARPA projects that may be of value to providers as the staged process is implemented in the future. NIACE's work on assessment within the National Learning Network is producing some interesting examples of electronic means of recording progress and achievement. For example, the outcomes of learners' work on art and design provision in Cornwall is photographed by digital camera and then displayed in an online gallery. Digital cameras are also being successfully used by the Gamelea Countryside Training

Trust in North Derbyshire to record the progress and achievements of learners with moderate learning difficulties. The Hounslow Adult and Community Education service uses web logs to record individual progress through its Blogging for Learning initiative.

This may be one area where staff working in non-accredited provision might learn from examples of practice in qualification-bearing programmes. The concept of 'validity' in assessment, when applied to the staged process, should lead us to reject paper-based methods of recording progress and achievement in some instances on grounds of poor practice rather than time-saving. This is not to suggest that the staged process is simply about assessment, though this was another mistaken assumption revealed through some of the reports:

*Older learners were hacked off with completing the assessment.*

*Both tutors and learners found paper-based assessment irritating and time-wasting.*

In other reports there was an implication that summative assessments were in fact, course evaluations rather than genuine assessments of whether learning objectives had been achieved. One future task for the implementation of the RARPA approach is the development of more advice and support for staff on the conduct of assessment. Having emphasised the need to develop learner-centred processes of recording progress and achievement that sit easily within the processes of teaching and learning, providers do need further guidance on what forms of evidence of this progress and achievement will be deemed as acceptable to both the LSC and the Inspectorates.

Indeed, one of the most inventive projects in this area signals clearly in its report the difference between using electronic methods for collecting evidence from learners, and using these same methods for presenting evidence to inspectors:

*We need further guidance from the ALI and the LSC before we scale down or give up paper-based systems.*

It is clear from many of the returns from projects that more guidance and advice to providers is needed, both on the effective use of paper and other media within the staged process, and on the acceptability of non-paper-based evidence to demonstrate to external bodies that the staged process is being effectively and consistently applied.

We are devising a portfolio of innovative methods of recording progress and achievement for all our tutors. However, we feel very strongly that if we are to promote innovative, fit for purpose methods of recording progress and achievement, we need the endorsement of ALI so that providers and quality managers feel confident to allow deviation from the conventional ways of recording.

### **Older learners**

One issue that has been reported from a number of projects is that many older learners find the staged process intrudes on their expectations of learning. In particular, providers report that many older learners are uncomfortable with the process of identifying and then recording individual learning objectives:

*Elderly learners did not feel comfortable about all the recording, some felt a mistrust by management.*

*Older learners in particular felt they had nothing to prove to anyone and simply wanted to enjoy the course.*

Many older learners were uncomfortable with recording outcomes in writing. Some reports that refer to this also imply that tutors interpret the application of the staged process as requiring learners to complete forms in writing.

*A culture shock for learners, especially older learners, who suddenly had more writing to do than had been the case previously. Writing does not come easily to some learners.*

*Formative assessment in written form has been intrusive for some older learners, but in contrast many are positively taking part in this aspect.*

Clearly, the adaptation of the staged process to take account of the age of learners will be as important as tailoring the process to suit the size and level of the course and the particular curriculum area. This is another area in which more advice and guidance to providers will be needed in the future.

# Issues arising from the RARPA projects

## An alternative perspective

The preceding sections of the report identify findings from the work of the different RARPA projects supported by some quantitative evidence from the work of the core group of projects supported by LSDA and NIACE.

In addition to these reports from individual projects, LSDA and NIACE also employed a team of consultants to support the work of the core project group. Together with the project leaders from LSDA and NIACE, these consultants (seven in total) constituted the RARPA project team.

Each consultant was asked to report back to the project team on the major issues that arose in the particular projects that they supported. This external perspective on the application of the staged process often confirmed that the issues being reported by the pilot projects themselves represented an objective evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the RARPA approach.

In some instances however, the views of the project team constituted an alternative perspective on some of the key issues reported from the pilot projects. It is the view of LSDA and NIACE that these alternative perspectives are worthy of consideration within a report of this nature, and some of these are set out in the following sections.

We have also been wary in taking at face value some of the feedback received from some of the projects that have experienced difficulty in applying the staged process systematically during the life of the project. Inevitably, there has been a variety of organisational commitment and preparation across the 22 separate core projects:

*I know the project is supposed to start in September but we'd very much like to have an initial meeting with you in July so we can plan our work before the beginning of the academic year.*

(E-mail from project co-ordinator to NIACE consultant, June 2003)

*I have recently taken over responsibility for the RARPA project and would welcome a meeting with you so we can plan how to take forward this work.*

(E-mail from project co-ordinator to NIACE consultant, March 2004)

It should be emphasised here that there is insufficient evidence arising from the work of the RARPA projects for LSDA and NIACE to make firm recommendations in the final section of this report on the issues raised below. Nevertheless, there are interesting points raised in some of the projects that warrant our attention at this juncture, and in some instances point to further work needed in the future.

## Organisational context

The RARPA core projects were deliberately selected in order to include a wide range of different types of providing organisations. Although the wider project group was self-selecting, there were again a similar variety of providers represented. In producing this report we have also taken account of some 'parallel' projects that extended this range still further.

In some contexts responsibility for the application of the staged process sat very clearly with the responsibilities of the providing organisation. So, for example, in both the E2E providers there were clear and single points of accountability for the funding of the programme, its delivery to learners, and the application of the RARPA approach.

Where an LEA made direct provision of its ACL service to learners lines of accountability were also clear. Although overall responsibility for the staged process might rest with an LEA officer, there were structures in place to ensure a consistent and effective application of this process across all providers within the service.

In other instances LEAs contracted out their ACL provision to other providers (eg. FE colleges) and there were indications in some of the reports that the lines of accountability were not sufficiently clear and that there was potential for different perceptions of responsibility to arise between providers and contracting LEAs over application of the staged process.

Even within voluntary sector providers there were differences of approach. In one instance, the organisation receiving LSC funding took clear responsibility for establishing and monitoring the application of the staged process across a number of different providing centres. In another, this responsibility was devolved to each individual provider in the network.

It is not possible to identify an organisational blueprint for the effective application of the RARPA approach. Nevertheless, there were obvious differences between organisations in the implementation of the staged process. Where lines of accountability and responsibility were clear the experiences of applying the staged process were more positive.

### **Staffing structures**

In a similar vein, there were clear differences between providers in the position of staff involved in the application of the staged process. In some instances it was clear that staff were working in a positive and supportive environment. In other cases those responsible for the application of the staged process felt unsupported and isolated. In some instances this was clearly a feature of the particular organisational structure:

*We employ staff on a contract to deliver each individual course. It is simply not feasible to meet with each individual involved in the delivery of these courses*  
(Voluntary organisation referring to its programme of one-day and half-day courses)

In other instances it seems that the status of a non-accredited programme in itself created difficulties for staff in organisations focused primarily on the delivery of qualification-bearing courses. The application of the staged process was seen as the responsibility of the individual tutor rather than as part of the overall quality assurance arrangements for the institution.

Other examples arose from the complex nature of the provision to which the staged process was applied. In one COVE a local network of work-based placements in different organisations created problems for the training mentor in applying the RARPA approach within workplaces that had no education or training infrastructure to support this process.

Conversely there are several positive reports about well-structured staff development and support programmes for those involved in the staged process. These came from a range of different types of provider. With the possible exception of small organisations with 'lean' management and staff development infrastructures, it seems that there is no correlation between a particular type of organisation and the support offered to staff involved in the

RARPA approach. There are examples of both positive and negative staff experiences of RARPA in all types of providing organisation. Nevertheless, where an organisation has organised a dedicated programme of development and support for staff involved in applying the staged process, there are (unsurprisingly) more positive experiences of RARPA reported by these staff. There was also much positive feedback from staff on the regional networks that developed to support the implementation of the staged process across institutional boundaries.

### **Full- and part-time staff**

There is an interesting correlation between the involvement of full-time staff in the application of the staged process and the positive experiences reported from projects. In some instances full-time staff took on the primary responsibility for developing the RARPA approach. In other instances, both full- and part-time staff were involved. It seems that those projects that reported most difficulties in applying the staged process were more often those in which only part-time staff were involved in the RARPA approach.

We should be wary of drawing too much of a distinction here, as the definition of 'part-time' may vary considerably between different organisations. We are also aware that some projects deliberately focused their RARPA work around experienced full-time (or substantial part-time) staff in order to create a cadre of experienced practitioners who could then support further work on the staged process with newer staff on less substantial contracts in the future. Just as those organisations with a clear commitment from senior managers to the implementation of the staged process seem to produce the most positive responses from field staff to the RARPA approach, so the involvement of full-time staff in RARPA also seems to have a positive influence on these experiences.

### **Balancing structure and flexibility**

There was an interesting range of approaches to the application of the staged process between different providers. Some organisations developed common approaches and documentation that were applied in all instances. Others devolved more responsibility to individual centres or tutors to develop these 'RARPA tools'.

It seems that at both ends of this spectrum of approaches there were problems, and that some balance between these extremes offers the most fruitful model for further development.

One project used a structure already developed as the format within which all provision applied the RARPA approach. It is clear from the report from this project that this particular tool was not fit for purpose in all circumstances. It is not clear from the report whether this tool will be amended in the future, or whether it will be used in some rather than all circumstances.

At the other end of the spectrum it seems that the organisation responsible for application of the RARPA process did not even consider the development of shared structures or documentation across its network of providing centres. The result of this was that individual tutors devised their own approaches and related documents to support the application of the staged process.

In both of these examples staff reported negative experiences of applying the staged process. In the first case there was frustration that a format was being imposed that was

not appropriate for the particular type of provision being offered. In the second there were concerns that the costs of applying the staged process were too great in terms of the use of staff time in relation to the scale of the programmes being offered.

Again it is difficult to identify a blueprint for the most effective balance between structure and flexibility – so much depends on the context within which the provider operates. So for example, the highly structured nature of E2E provision makes the development of standardised processes and documents entirely appropriate in this context. Where no shared documents or structures are developed it seems that the providing organisation may not only be putting unnecessary pressures on staff (particularly part-time staff) but will also be creating difficulties in demonstrating to external bodies like LSC or ALI that the staged process is being applied ‘consistently and effectively’ across all aspects of provision.

Between these two extremes there were a number of organisations (with LEA services particularly well represented) that either produced clear guidance for providing centres that could be adapted to local circumstances, or ‘model’ documents that could be varied to meet particular needs. This conscious balancing of shared structures with local responsibility for implementation seems to produce the most positive experiences in applying the staged process across all types of provider.

### **RARPA and inspection**

Several providers underwent the process of ALI inspection either immediately before or during their involvement with the RARPA project. There were some interestingly different perspectives on the relationship between RARPA and the inspection process. In one instance we received a very positive report on the application of the RARPA process almost simultaneously with the release of an ALI report that was critical of the quality assurance arrangements of the same provider. In another instance, the inspection process was seen as a distraction from the work of the RARPA project:

*Unfortunately the process of preparing for and undergoing inspection during this period meant that we were unable to apply the RARPA approach in the way that we had initially anticipated.*

This contrasted interestingly with another project that viewed the experience of inspection in a very different way:

*The fact that we underwent an inspection at this time [ie. at the beginning of the RARPA project] helped us to emphasise to staff the importance of applying the staged process systematically so as to produce evidence for ALI on the effectiveness of our procedures.*

Similarly, another provider inspected shortly before the start of their RARPA project saw the outcomes of inspection as a positive stimulus to the development of the staged process by helping clarify priorities for work on the RARPA project.

Although numbers are small, there does seem to be a correlation between the positive links established between the RARPA project activity, the process of inspection and the nature of the ALI reports on the providers concerned. Although the experience of preparing for and undergoing inspection inevitably becomes a key focus for activity within a provider, it seems that those providers with positive experiences of RARPA also have positive experiences of inspection.

## The costs of implementing RARPA

The section of this report entitled '**Implementing the staged process: the impact on staff**', includes some information about the perceived costs and benefits of the staged process, with a clear majority of projects identifying high benefits, some with high costs and others with low costs.

Further analysis of these sections of different reports reveals that there is no obvious connection between the perception of the costs of applying the RARPA process and the actual figures reported by the same provider in relation to the RARPA project. Thus a report would identify 'high' institutional and/or staff costs in applying the RARPA process and would then report actual costs significantly lower than most other providers. Conversely some providers reported 'low' costs that appeared in fact to be considerably higher than many others.

We draw no concrete conclusion from these figures at this juncture, but note that there are significant variations in the perception of the costs of implementing the staged process and the actual costs incurred by providers in many instances.

## The use of time in applying the staged process

Closely linked to this issue of costs is the use of staff time in applying the staged process. Again there were a number of different approaches to the use of time in various RARPA projects. Previous sections of this report record some of the issues linked to the use of time by both staff and learners.

In more than one case the application of the staged process was seen as a significant burden on staff that detracted from the main purpose of the programme of learning:

*[The staged process]... takes chunks of time out of a short course that could be used for teaching.*

Interestingly in this case the course was 20 hours in length – by no means 'short' in comparison to most others reported, and it was noticeable that time was taken out of 'teaching' rather than 'learning'. Nevertheless another provider reported a similar concern:

*The RARPA process applied to short courses would reduce training time.*

Though in this case the concern was expressed in relation to courses of three or six hours in length, and the provider suggested a solution to this issue in the next line of their report:

*Do a little less but better.*

This approach was mirrored in another report on a much more substantial programme where the introduction of the RARPA process had created a clearer structure for reviewing progress and had therefore allowed individual tutorial time on the programme to be reduced by one third. Another provider had adopted a different solution to the problem of time taken on the staged process:

*All courses [in this particular area of provision] have been increased from 12 to 16 hours to give additional time for the RARPA approach.*

Although in this case the provider involved was very positive about the benefits of the staged process, it would not be feasible to recommend in this report that all courses increased their length by 25% in order to give sufficient time to the staged process. Nor, if the experiences of other providers are taken into account, should this be necessary:

*Staff do not see the staged process as additional to their normal practice.*

This approach was repeated in more than one other centre:

*Learners were not aware of any changes in course structure.*

*The staged process was integrated into the teaching and learning process of each individual course.*

Thus although there have been a number of different approaches to the use of staff time in making the staged process work, it seems that neither 'losing' learning time nor 'adding' RARPA time is necessary to the effective implementation of the staged process. Indeed we may suggest that there is a virtuous connection between the effective use of staff time and the integration of the staged process into the positive experiences of learners on their chosen course of study.

### **Further contexts to explore**

Despite the range of providers involved in the different RARPA projects there are still some areas where further work is needed to establish the most effective ways of applying the staged process in some contexts. So, for example, there were some interesting issues raised by work-based learning providers in relation to the staged process. One project report noted that the objectives of a learners programme were often determined by his or her employer as part of the contractual agreement with the training provider, and that in reality these could not be renegotiated by the learner (whether they were individually challenging or not). These 'employer-based' aims and objectives did not negate the value of the RARPA approach, but the staged process did need to be applied differently in this context.

A further issue is the understanding of 'initial assessment' in the workbased context. For example, a work-based learning provider pointed out that:

*Initial assessment is conducted by the Job Centre prior to the learner's enrolment on the training programme.*

This demonstrates a misunderstanding of initial assessment as being seen only as a guidance process done by others to get a learner onto the right course rather than an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Although in this instance there was strong evidence of good collaborative links between job centre staff and the training provider, a structure within which different agencies or organisations take responsibility for different stages of the RARPA process clearly adds to the complexity of implementation.

Further work is also needed to ensure that the RARPA process is an explicit requirement of non-accredited provision in sixth form colleges. Although one of the parallel strands of work has identified the RARPA approach as highly relevant to such provision, there is no indication at present that sixth form colleges will be required to apply the staged process to their enrichment programmes from 2005.

The place of non-accredited provision in sixth form colleges will be clearly relevant to the proposals for reform of 14–19 qualifications to be published in the autumn by the Tomlinson Committee. It is suggested that further work on the application of the RARPA approach to this type of provision needs to be undertaken following the publication of the Tomlinson Report.

Finally it should be noted that although there were some general FE colleges that participated in the wider development group, there are no clear messages that can be

drawn from this report on the applicability of the staged process more generally to 'other' provision in FE colleges.

### **Measuring the impact of RARPA on the quality of provision**

There are some interesting hints in many reports that the application of the staged process is having an impact on the quality of teaching and learning in non-accredited provision. Of course, the sample of provision is still very small, but we find the following kinds of comment encouraging:

*The staged process brought a more focused and individual dimension to curriculum design.*

*The RARPA structure helped retention.*

*Progress is more clearly recorded for learners' future use.*

*The staged process will provide greater consistency in our provision.*

*Learners with clear aims are more likely to complete their course.*

*Progression rates for learners are improving.*

*The staged process has encouraged tutors to re-think curriculum design.*

*The RARPA process has a positive effect on self-directed learning.*

*The improved processes for learning objectives and formative assessment seem to have had a positive impact on learner awareness of progress and achievement.*

These types of comment hint at a subtle and long-term positive impact that the application of the staged process may have on a wide range of quality indicators relevant to the learning and skill sector.

We should note however that there are other influences on all these indicators. It may therefore be difficult to measure in the future which aspects of improving quality in a service are directly related to RARPA and which are based on other sources of improvement.

In the long term this is not problematic. The RARPA approach has always been conceived as one part of an overall quality system that focuses on an important, but not the sole, indicator of the quality of provision to learners. It seems we can be confident that the staged process will continue to have a positive impact on the quality of non-accredited provision, even if its precise impact may be impossible to measure.

# **Appendix A: Membership of the Project Advisory Group**

**Adult Learning Inspectorate**

**Association of Colleges**

**Canterbury College**

**Crawley College**

**Department for Education and Skills**

**HOLEX National Office**

**Lancashire College**

**Lifelong Learning Service, London Borough of Waltham Forest**

**LSC National Office**

**LSDA**

**NIACE**

**National Open College Network**

**Office for Standards in Education**

**Staffordshire LSC**

**The Association of National Specialist Colleges**

**Ufi Ltd**

**University of Exeter**



# Appendix B: Core Projects

**Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**

**Bromley Adult Education College**

**Care Connect Learning Ltd**

**Cornwall Adult Education Service**

**Derby City Council – Adult Learning Service**

**Dorset Adult Education**

**Gloucestershire County Council Adult Continuing Education & Training (ACET)**

**Gordano Training**

**Hereford and Worcestershire Hub**

**ITS Training Services, Felixtowe**

**National Star College**

**NETA Training Group**

**Orchard Hill College**

**Rathbone E2E**

**Stockport Continuing Education Service**

**Stockton Riverside College CoVE (Performing Arts)**

**Surrey Community Action**

**The City Lit**

**The Learning Curve**

**Wakefield LEA**

**Workers' Education Association**

**Wolverhampton Adult Education Service**



# Appendix C: Wider Development Group

**Bournemouth Adult Education**  
**Brighton and Hove Learning Partnership**  
**Buckinghamshire Adult Learning**  
**Cambridgeshire LEA**  
**City College Brighton and Hove**  
**County Durham Learning**  
**Coventry Adult Education Service**  
**Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service**  
**Eastleigh College**  
**EETAC, Leicester College**  
**Exeter CVS with Exeter College of FE**  
**Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology**  
**Halton Adult Learning**  
**Hampshire County Council Adult and Community Learning Unit**  
**Hull College**  
**Kent Adult Education Service**  
**Lancashire County Council Adult Education Service**  
**Learning South West**  
**Lincolnshire LEA**  
**Liverpool Community College**  
**New College Durham**  
**Newbury College**  
**North and West Essex Adult Community College**  
**Northern College for Residential Adult Education**  
**Pathways to Work**  
**Peterborough LEA**  
**Portsmouth City Council, Lifelong Learning**  
**Solihull MBC Community Services (Libraries, Arts and Lifelong Learning)**  
**South Leicestershire College, Leicestershire and Leicester City Learning partnership**  
**Sutton College of Learning for Adults**  
**The Mary Ward Centre**  
**Thurrock Adult Community College**  
**Tower Hamlets College**  
**Tresham Institute, Kettering**

**Warrington Collegiate Institute**

**Warwickshire County Council Community Education Service**

**York LEA**

# **Appendix D: Local Learning and Skills Councils involved in the project**

**Berkshire**

**Birmingham and Solihull**

**Black Country**

**Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole**

**Cambridgeshire**

**Cheshire and Warrington**

**County Durham**

**Coventry and Warwickshire**

**Derbyshire**

**Devon and Cornwall**

**Essex**

**Gloucestershire**

**Greater Manchester**

**Greater Merseyside**

**Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

**Hereford and Worcestershire**

**Humberside**

**Kent and Medway**

**Lancashire**

**Leicestershire**

**Lincolnshire**

**London Central**

**London East**

**London South**

**Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Bucks**

**National Contracts Service**

**North Yorkshire**

**Northamptonshire**

**Somerset**

**South Yorkshire**

**Suffolk**

**Surrey**

**Sussex**

**Swindon and Wiltshire**

**Tees Valley**

**Tyne and Wear**

**West of England**

**West Yorkshire**

# Appendix E: Evaluation Pro-forma

Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA)

## Project evaluation pro-forma

### 1. Your institution

Name of provider	
Main contact	
Position	
Type of provider	
Size of institution (no of FTEs)	
Characteristics of provision	

### 2. The scope of your RARPA project

---

---

---

---

#### 2.1 The aim of the project

Describe the overall aim of your project in relation to all the provision included within it:

---

---

---

---

#### 2.2. Details of the overall scope of the project

Number of courses included in scope of project	
Approximate percentage of total provision	
Number of learners involved in above courses	
Approximate percentage of total enrolled learners	

**2.3.** Details of each programme within the scope of the project

For each programme involved in testing the staged process, please supply the following details:

	<i>Curriculum area</i>	<i>Course title</i>	<i>Total hours</i>	<i>Target learner group (where appropriate)</i>	<i>Notional level of programme</i>	<i>Mode of delivery</i>	<i>Site of delivery</i>	<i>Type of curriculum provision</i>	<i>Part-time/full-time staff</i>	<i>Total learners</i>
Programme										
Programme										

**3. Capacity**

**3.1** How far did your existing quality assurance systems align with the RARPA staged process?

Fully	Mostly	Partly	Hardly
-------	--------	--------	--------

**3.2** What elements of the staged process were in place when the project started?

<i>Element</i>	<i>Fully implemented across all provision</i>	<i>Implemented in some provision</i>	<i>Not implemented</i>
Aims			
Initial assessment			
Learning objectives			
Formative assessment			
Summative assessment			

**3.3.** Were the staff involved in the pilot familiar with the Staged Process?

All	Most	Some	None
-----	------	------	------

Was achievement of the aim of the project affected by capacity issues? (please give details)

---



---



---



---

**3.4** Where is your institution in relation to the staged process at the end of the project? Please indicate which elements have been implemented:

<i>Element of the staged process</i>	<i>Fully implemented Across all provision</i>	<i>Implemented in some provision</i>	<i>Not implemented</i>
Aims			
Initial assessment			
Learning objectives			
Formative assessment			
Summative assessment			

#### 4 Staff development

Please indicate the amount and content of staff development carried out for the project and the projected amount required to fully implement the Staged Process where this is not yet achieved:

---



---



---

<i>Hours of staff development provided</i>	<i>No of staff taking part</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>No of further hours required to fully implement staged process</i>	<i>Anticipated content of further staff development</i>

#### 5. Fitness for purpose and flexibility

**5.1** For each programme described in section 2.3 above please comment on how far the Staged Process was felt to be 'fit for purpose'

<i>Programme 1</i>	
<i>Programme 2, etc</i>	

**5.2** How far do you feel the staged process has the flexibility to suit the range of non-accredited learning (including programmes not included in the RARPA project)?

---



---



---

**6. Illustrative Case Study**

For one of the programmes included within the scope of the project, please attach an illustrative case study to this document. The case study should be structured to represent the application of the staged process. Annex A to this document suggests questions to be addressed through the case study.

**7. Process**

Please highlight any other significant issues that arose during the implementation of the staged process not covered by the above headings. Indicate if this issue was particularly significant in any programme or curriculum area.

---



---



---

**8. Support**

Please comment on the support you received during this project:

<i>Source of support</i>	<i>Nature of support</i>	<i>How useful was this support?</i>
From local LSC contacts		
From other local providers involved in RARPA		
From similar types of provider involved in RARPA		
From NIACE/LSDA		
From special interest groups (for the wider development group)		
From consultants and/or trainers with a specific brief to support RARPA		

<i>Source of support</i>	<i>Nature of support</i>	<i>How useful was this support?</i>
From courses or training programmes run by other organisations		
From inspectors, auditors or other quality improvement specialists		
From RARPA web sites, mail groups or other forms of virtual support		
Support from within the institution eg. from senior management, administration etc.		
From colleagues working in other areas of the institution where the RARPA process is not applied		
Any other sources of support		

## 9. Impact

### 9.1. What was the impact of the staged process on learners?

	<i>Comment</i>
What were learners' views and perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of the staged process?	
What was the impact on learners in terms of retention and engagement with the SP	
What was the level of achievement of goals on the programmes included in the project?	
What criteria were used to set these goals?	

What measures were adopted to judge the achievement of these goals?	
Who was involved in this measurement and how did they make judgements about progress and achievements?	
What levels of unanticipated outcomes were achieved on the programmes included in the project?	
What were the perceived and actual benefits of recording the unanticipated outcomes achieved on the programmes included in the project?	

**9.2** What was the impact of the staged process on staff?

What were the views of staff implementing the SP on the benefits or drawbacks of using the SP for learners?	
What were the views of staff implementing the SP on the benefits or drawbacks of using the SP for themselves?	
What were the views of staff implementing the SP on the benefits or drawbacks of using the SP for the institution?	
What difficulties did staff encounter in implementing the chosen criteria and measures of progress and achievement?	

**9.3. What was the impact on the institution as a whole?**

Please comment on the relationship of the SP to existing and evolving QA/QI processes in your institution.	
Please comment on the impact or potential impact of the SP on curriculum design in your institution.	
Please comment on any incidental effects and unanticipated outcomes of the use of the SP on other provision not covered by the demonstration projects or on process within the institution not directly related to provision included in the projects.	

**10. Project costs**

**10.1** Please indicate the estimated additional costs incurred by your institution in applying the staged process through the project:

	<i>Additional costs incurred (£est.)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Administration		
Staff development		
Evaluation		
Other overheads incurred or anticipated		

**10.2. Operational costs summary**

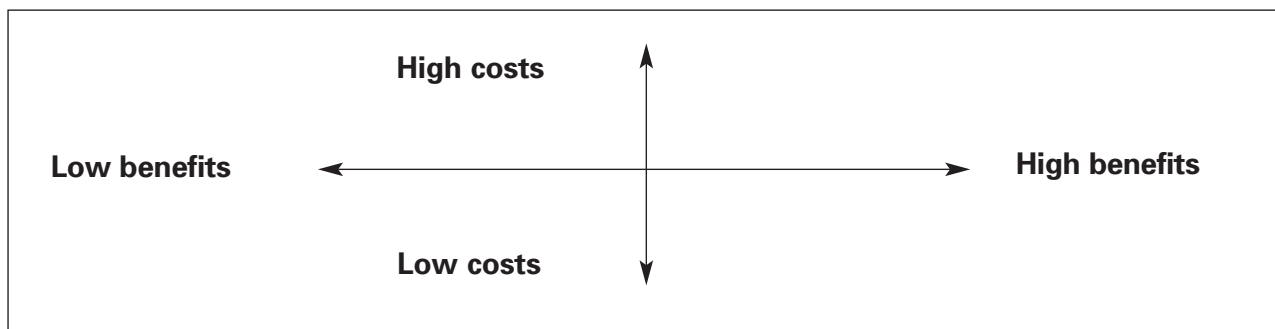
Please place the following marks on the chart below to represent how you feel about the benefits and costs of RARPA for each of the following stakeholders:

Place a 'x' where you would assess the benefits and costs for learners

Place a '◇' where you would assess the benefits and costs for staff

Place a '●' where you would assess the benefits and costs for the institution as a whole

Place a '▽' where you assess the benefits and costs for employers (if applicable for your project).



## 11 Outputs of the project

Please describe where applicable the products of your project:

	<i>Description</i>	<i>Are you willing to share these resources with other providers?</i>	<i>Are these resources available electronically?</i>
		Yes/No	Yes/No
Generic non-paper-based systems and resources used for recording progress and achievement		Yes/No	Yes/No
Generic paper-based systems and resources for recording progress and achievement		Yes/No	Yes/No
Generic software and other technology for RARPA		Yes/No	Yes/No
Contextualised non-paper-based systems (please indicate what programme/curriculum areas these resources are specifically designed for)		Yes/No	Yes/No

	<i>Description</i>	<i>Are you willing to share these resources with other providers?</i>	<i>Are these resources available electronically?</i>
Contextualised paper-based systems and resources (please indicate what programme/curriculum areas these resources are specifically designed for)		Yes/No	Yes/No
Contextualised software and other technology for RARPA (please indicate what programme/curriculum areas these resources are specifically designed for)		Yes/No	Yes/No

## 12 The success of the staged process

Does the staged process support the vision of the project?

	Yes	No	Too early to say
Learner-focused, flexible and fit for purpose			
Enabling learners to celebrate their own achievements			
Demonstrating achievement which facilitates progression			
Improving quality by linking planning of learning processes to achievement			

	Yes	No	Too early to say
Sharing best practice in tutor/learner negotiation and dialogue			
Meeting both individual and group learning needs			
Providing a tool for continuous quality improvement			
Improving quality by linking learning objectives with assessment			
Promoting parity of esteem with accredited learning			
Helping to meet the demands of the CIF			
Clarifying mission by enhancing awareness of learner achievements			
Developing inclusive pathways to further learning for all learners			
Improving programme planning through learner feedback			
Improving evaluation of the suitability of teaching and learning			

### 13. Future work

13.1. How far are the systems introduced sustainable in terms of costs, administration and staff development?

---

13.2 How far are the systems developed non-bureaucratic?

---

To what extent does the implementation of the full SP provide a basis for future quality improvement? (Core group)

---

13.3 What further work is required for each provider to fully implement the SP and what

are the anticipated costs and likely capacity issues implicit in doing so? (Wider development group)

**13.4** Describe how you plan to take forward the implementation of the Staged Process in your institution in the next six months and what further support you would need to take this work forward.

**14. Improvements to the staged process**

If you have suggestions for modifications to the Staged Process, please describe them below.

<i>Element</i>	<i>Suggested improvement</i>	<i>Justification for suggested change</i>
1. Aims		
2. Initial assessment		
3. Learning objectives		
4. Formative assessment		
5. Summative assessment		

**15 Final comments**

Do you have any further comments to make on your experiences of RARPA?

---



---



---



---



# **Appendix F: Participants in the LSDA DDA project**

**Benfield and Heaton Adult Association (ACL)**

**Kingston Maurward College (FE)**

**Milton Keynes Adult Continuing Education (ACL)**

**Morley College (ACL)**

**Southport College (FE)**



# Appendix G: Quantitative data from the core projects

## Evaluation of the core projects

Each of the RARPA projects was asked to undertake an evaluation of their work on the project from September 2003 to March 2004. To capture this evaluation feedback in a standard format an evaluation pro-forma was developed for use by all RARPA projects. This pro-forma is included as Annex x to this report.

Although the pro-forma was circulated to both core and wider groups in the RARPA project, only the 22 core projects were required to complete the pro-forma in full. Although there were some returned pro-formas, both complete and partly complete, from the wider group, the following analysis of returns relates only to the core projects.

The evaluation pro-forma captured both quantitative and qualitative feedback. The qualitative feedback has been used as the key source material for the substantive sections of this report. What follows below is a brief analysis of some of the quantitative data returned from the core projects.

The analysis is based on 21 of the 22 returns from projects. One evaluation pro-forma was received well after the deadline for returns. Of these 21, one omitted certain fields and another completed some sections incorrectly. The analysis is therefore based in different sections on 21, 20 or 19 valid returns.

A complete compilation of all quantitative data received from core projects is included as appendix x to this report.

## The scope of projects within individual providers

Different projects made different decisions about the scope of their RARPA work. In some instances a very small proportion of learners enrolled by the provider were included within the scope of the project. In others returns suggested a high proportion of involvement in a division or section of provision rather than the provider's whole programme.

Nevertheless the averages shown below give a fair approximation of the overall scope of the work undertaken. It will be interesting to see how providers plan to move from these figures of c11 – c13% of learners or provision covered by the project towards the proportions that will need to be applying the staged process from September 2005. In some instances this figure will be 100%.

One consideration for LSC in 2004–05 is what advice it might give to providers not currently implementing the RARPA approach about planning for 2005–06. The figures below suggest that even those providers familiar with the staged process have much work to do during 2004–05 to extend the RARPA approach to all non-accredited provision.

Indicators of scope	Average
1. Number of courses included in scope of project	17.5
2. Approximate percentage of total provision	13.5%
3. Number of learners involved in above courses	237
4. Approximate percentage of total enrolled learners	10.9%

## 1. The range of curriculum areas in the project

It was the intention of the LSDA/NIACE project team to include as wide a variety of curriculum areas as possible within the scope of the 22 core projects. However this variety was generated through persuasion and occasional advice from project consultants. There was no attempt to compel providers to select particular curriculum areas for project activity.

Nevertheless 10 of the 14 curriculum areas in the ALI classification were represented in some way in the project. Having said this over half of the curriculum areas represented across all projects were in three of these 10 areas.

By combining diversity of types of provider with different target groups and different levels of provision in each curriculum area, the project team was satisfied that the range of contexts within which the staged process was applied through the core projects was wide enough to make valid generalisations in most cases.

	<b>Curriculum Area</b>	<b>Number of RARPA projects offering courses in this area</b>
3	Engineering	1
5	Business Admin, management and professions	2
6	Information & Communications technology	4
7	Retailing, customer service and transport	1
8	Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel	9
9	Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3
10	Health, social care and public services	2
11	Visual & Performing Arts	9
12	English, languages and communications	1
13	Humanities	4
14	Foundation Programmes	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

### Course length

Again it was the intention of the project team that a range of different 'sizes' of courses should be represented within the core projects. In the event there were more short courses represented within the individual projects than we anticipated. It should be noted here that the one missing evaluation report was from a long course.

The main reason for this was so that all aspects of the staged process, including summative assessment, could be tested out by providers. This led to the selection of short courses in the main, with learners finishing them during the lifetime of the project.

It may be necessary to test out further the application of the RARPA approach on a range of longer courses. On the other hand, the projects reporting some difficulties in applying the staged approach were predominantly in the 0–9 and 10–19 hour ranges. In ACL provision in particular the spread of course sizes represented in the various projects probably reflects a fair median size across this type of course.

<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Number of RARPA projects offering courses of the following lengths</b>
0–9 hours	6
10–19 hours	11
20–40 hours	5
Over 40 hours	6

## Level

Another variable we tried to build in to the range of provision within the project was the level of provision. The project team is wary of precise figures in these areas. It regards 'level' as a concept to be applied to achievements rather than courses, and recognises that the RARPA approach positively encourages the identification of individual achievements within a single course.

We are also wary of the application of the concept of 'level' outside the formal structure of qualifications (from where the labels applied in the table below originate). Often the level of a course is based on the subjective judgement of the provider rather than the application of objective criteria.

Notwithstanding the above we did ask projects to identify a notional level for the provision included within their RARPA work. Although there is a spread of levels represented across the different core projects, there was a sizeable majority of provision at Entry Level and Level One within most projects.

Again we should not be surprised at this, as statistics from LSC show clearly that non-accredited provision across the sector is concentrated at lower levels of 'achievement'. There is also some correlation between the level of provision across the sector and the length of courses offered (see section 4 above)

Notwithstanding the location of RARPA activity within predictable levels of provision across the sector there may be a need in the future to focus further scrutiny of the staged process at higher levels of achievement.

<b>Notional levels</b>	<b>Number of RARPA projects running courses at the following levels</b>
Entry Level	10
Level One	7
Level Two	6
Level Three	6
Unknown	4

## Full- and part-time staff

We are again slightly wary about the data on involvement of full and part-time staff in provision encompassed by the core projects. In some responses it was unclear whether full-time staff were involved in the delivery of courses or in the monitoring and evaluation of RARPA project activity.

Nevertheless analysis of the responses does seem to indicate that those core projects that involved only part-time staff in the application of the staged approach had more problems in applying the RARPA approach consistently than projects where full-time staff were involved, either exclusively or with part-time staff.

One project consciously limited involvement in the RARPA project to full-time (or substantial part-time) staff, with the intention that they should then act as catalysts for future development of RARPA with their part-time colleagues. This balance between the involvement of full- and part-time staff in the application of the staged process needs to be taken into account in the development of future guidance and training on the implementation of the RARPA process.

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Number of RARPA projects running courses with p/t and f/t staff</b>
Full time staff only	3
Part time staff only	10
A mixture of full and part time staff	6

The preparation of providers for implementing RARPA

Throughout the development of the RARPA approach there has been an acceptance that the application of the staged process needs to be seen as an integral part of the overall quality assurance systems employed by a provider.

Unsurprisingly then, there are clear indications from the work of the core projects that the RARPA approach works most effectively when it is closely integrated into the existing quality systems operated by a provider.

Encouragingly, even those providers without well-developed quality systems found the RARPA approach was not at odds with their existing procedures. We may therefore be confident that, although the staged process presents some problems of implementation to some providers, the RARPA approach fits clearly within the overall direction of development for provider quality systems.

Another aspect of the preparedness of individual providers to implement the staged process that is obscured a little by the collated figures below is that very few providers were fully implementing all parts of the staged process prior to their involvement in the project. As our analysis of individual evaluation reports shows, each of the last four stages of the process formed the focus for further development of existing quality systems in at least one 'RARPA-experienced' provider.

**How far did your existing quality assurance systems support the implementation of the RARPA staged process?**

Fully	7
Mostly	8
Partly	6
Hardly	0

**What elements of the staged process were in place when the project started?**

Element	Implemented across all provision	Implemented in some provision	Not implemented
Aims	15	4	0
Initial assessment	8	11	1
Learning objectives	12	7	1
Formative assessment	7	12	2
Summative assessment	9	10	1

**Were the staff involved in the pilot familiar with the staged process?**

All	8
Most	2
Some	8
None	2

**The wider application of the RARPA approach**

A majority of all the core projects involved were confident that the RARPA approach could be applied across all non-accredited provision that they offered. This group of projects included project activity in 9 of the 10 curriculum areas covered by the core projects.

There was also a strong correlation between this group and those that had quality systems in place that were consistent with the RARPA approach, and were applying some elements of the staged process across all their provision.

Where core projects had reservations about the application of the staged process to some areas of non-accredited provision, these were most often in 'activity-based' curriculum areas (eg. keep-fit, yoga, line-dancing etc.) or in very short courses (ie. one-day or half-day courses).

Having noted this, both activity-based and short-course provision were also included in the range of core projects who reported that they were confident the RARPA approach could be applied to all non-accredited provision. There is also a correlation between the group of providers that felt the staged process could not be applied in some instances and those that assumed the application of the staged process required them to use paper-based recording processes.

There was also a correlation between those providers that suggested the staged approach was applicable to 'some' or 'none' of their provision and those that experienced organisational difficulties in taking forward their work on the RARPA project.

We are confident that, taking particular note of the concerns about the application of the staged process to some areas of non-accredited provision, we can develop guidance and support for all providers that will enable them to apply the RARPA approach effectively and consistently to all areas of non-accredited provision.

**Does the staged process have the flexibility to suit the full range of non-accredited learning delivered at your institution?**

Suit all programmes delivered	11
Suit most programmes delivered	6
Suit some programmes delivered	2
Suit no programmes delivered	1

**Costs and benefits**

Very few providers identified low benefits in introducing RARPA into their systems. Indeed, if we ignore the return from one particular provider, only one other respondent identified low benefits to the institution from the staged process, and none identified low benefits for either learners or staff.

We are particularly interested in the significant numbers of respondents that identified high benefits and low costs to learners in the staged process. However we also need to take note of the number of providers that reported high costs for RARPA, even though benefits were also identified as high.

In general we are confident that, providing we can offer good support and guidance to institutions on the application of the RARPA approach across relevant provision, there is a high level of support across the sector for the benefits of the approach

	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Employers</b>
High costs High benefits	3	7	11	2
High costs Low benefits	1	1	2	
Low costs High benefits	12	7	3	4
Low costs Low benefits	-	-	-	-

**The success of the staged process**

Similarly there was widespread support from providers about the success of the staged process in fulfilling most of the aims of RARPA set out in the LSC Position Paper.

The areas where it seems more work needs to be done in the future is to ensure that the RARPA approach is genuinely inclusive of all types of non-accredited learning, and that the application of the staged process establishes genuine parity of esteem between non-accredited and accredited provision.

LSDA and NIACE can ensure that their future work on RARPA addresses the first of these concerns. The second is a challenge for the LSC itself.

	<b>Fully</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Partly</b>	<b>Hardly</b>
Learner-focused, flexible and fit for purpose	10	5	1	0
Enabling learners to celebrate their own achievements	9	4	4	0
Demonstrating achievement which facilitates progression	9	5	3	0
Improving quality by linking planning of learning processes to achievement	10	3	2	0
Sharing best practice in tutor/learner negotiation and dialogue	7	5	3	0
Meeting both individual and group learning needs	7	5	2	0
Providing a tool for continuous quality improvement	10	4	1	0
Improving quality by linking learning objectives with assessment	9	5	1	0
Promoting parity of esteem with accredited learning	6	3	2	2
Helping to meet the demands of the CIF	11	4	1	0
Clarifying mission by enhancing awareness of learner achievements	9	3	4	0
Developing inclusive pathways to further learning for all learners	5	5	3	1
Improving programme planning through learner feedback	9	2	4	0
Improving evaluation of the suitability of teaching and learning	7	7	1	1



# Appendix H: References

1. *LSC Position Paper on Recognising non-accredited learning*, LSC, January 2003
2. *The Common Inspection Framework for inspecting post-16 education and training*, Adult Learning Inspectorate & Office for Standards in Education, February 2001
3. *Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training*, Department for Education and Skills, November 2002
4. *Measuring Success in the Learning and Skills Sector: A consultation and discussion document on measures of success for further education colleges, work-based learning providers, adult learning providers and school sixth forms from 2005*, DfES, LSC, ALI and OFSTED, December 2003
5. *21st Century Skills: Realising our potential*, Department for Education and Skills, July 2003
6. *Trust in the future: The report of the Bureaucracy Task Force*, LSC, November 2002
7. *Building Trust: A Bureaucracy Task Force report*, LSC, November 2003
8. *Extending Trust: A report of the Bureaucracy Task Force*, LSC, May 2004
9. *Bureaucracy Busting and Accountability: Planning for the future*, Independent Bureaucracy Review Group DfES and LSC, June 2004
10. *Achievement in non-accredited learning for adults with learning difficulties: Report of the scoping study* Maudslay, L. and Nightingale, C., NIACE 2004
11. *Recognising and validating learning outcomes and achievements in non-accredited basic skills and ESOL*, Grief, S. and Windsor, B., LSDA 2003
12. *Working Together: A strategy for the voluntary and community sector and the Learning and Skills Council.*, LSC, May 2004.

