



**Community Work & Development  
Education & Training**

**All Ireland Endorsement Body**

*Guidelines for Endorsement of Community Work/  
Development Education and Training  
Programmes*

*Honours degree post-graduate qualification  
(Levels 8 -10)*



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## **BUILDING ON TOWARDS STANDARDS**

### **Professional Endorsement of Education and Training in Irish Community Work**

#### **Background**

Current work on endorsement of community work education and training being undertaken by a working group of practitioners and educators seeks to build on *All Ireland Standards for Community Work*, published in 2016.

The *All Ireland Standards* clearly outlines the knowledge, skills and practice principles for quality community work and seeks to recognise and underpin community work and its ethos in promoting change. Its purpose is to provide a framework for community work in the context of economic, social and cultural developments in Irish society and to capture the richness and multidimensionality of community work in an increasingly diverse Ireland.

#### **Introduction**

The objective of the current work is to build an inclusive framework for endorsement of community work education and training at all levels in order to ensure the principles for quality community work as laid out in the *All Ireland Standards*.

Moves towards certification and professional endorsement processes in parallel disciplines e.g. youth and social work and evolving national and European qualifications frameworks, as well as professional concerns and government cut backs give both a timeliness and urgency to our discussions.

An increased number of individuals, agencies, and institutions now offer community development or associated training and education at various levels and standards, with little coherency in terms of who teaches, what gets taught, what duration, what cost, and what underpinning values. In addition, many of those in community development management have no background in the field.

#### **Starting points**

Complex skills and competences as well as values and practice principles are required to do community work well, although as an open profession committed to ensuring access for participants in community initiatives, prior qualifications are not mandatory to securing a community work position.

Communities need to be able to trust the worker and those using community approaches in ways that protect rather than exploit them. Values and practice principles, such as those in the *All Ireland Standards*, are essential for an ethical practice and the process of developing the community work discipline. In addition, community work education and training programmes, properly delivered and endorsed are an important way of benchmarking quality.

Key concerns are the maintenance, protection and enhancement of high standards through;

- finding routes from individual consciousness-raising to professional activity through access and progression routes
- developing a framework which finds ways to acknowledge and include community workers currently working without qualifications
- ensuring participation in education and training by people from marginalised groups and communities who are the target of community work interventions
- setting the norm for qualifications to do the complex jobs involved at the highest possible level while at the same time creating accessible and inclusive routes
- including education programmes at all levels and length in the framework for certification and
- attempting to generate a process which is peer led, inclusive of all stakeholders, robust and at the same time mindful of the need to avoid being too time consuming and expensive in a supportive manner.

### **All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work and Development Education & Training (AIEB)**

The membership of the AIEB draws on the full range of relevant stakeholders from across the field of community work and education and teaching for community work in Ireland, North and South. This includes qualified and experienced practitioners, qualified and experienced expert(s), employers of community workers, funders of community development, education providers to include universities, third level institutions and independent providers.

## **Endorsement process**

The endorsement process sets and assesses professional standards in relation to the content and quality of a community work programme in preparing students to work effectively as community workers in a range of contexts. In order for endorsement processes to operate effectively and credibly for professional education, the standards must be closely related to agreed occupational standards of professional practice. Endorsement is concerned with setting and monitoring criteria in relation to the following among others:

1. Selection and assessment of participants and contributors
2. Content of education and training
3. Process of education and training
4. Achievement of professional standards of practice

### **1. Key stages**

AIEB will endorse a specific community work education and training programme not the provider as a whole. There will be six stages in the proposed process from initial inquiry to final decision.

1. *Initial steps.* Programme organisers approach the AIEB through the Secretariat re endorsement. Following initial consultation and advice to proceed (or not) programme organisers download an endorsement application information from the website.
2. *Submission.* Organisers compile submission which is returned to the Secretariat for initial checking and consideration. At this point, it may be apparent that the programme may not or does not meet the criteria for endorsement. In this case, the provider may be encouraged to defer the application and given some ideas about how to develop it.
3. *Submission review.* If fully completed, completed submission is reviewed by the Secretariat and a member of the AIEB who assess the application against the criteria and make a report based on the guidelines highlighting areas for further exploration by the peer reviewers.
4. *Review visit.* Three peer reviewers drawn from across the spectrum of members of the AIEB carry out a programme visit and meet with programme stakeholders e.g. staff, students, employers, fieldwork supervisors. Reviewers make a final report with a recommendation which is returned to the AIEB.

5. *Decision.* AIEB convenes to approve the peer review report and proposed decision with associated conditions and recommendations.
6. *Feedback.* The Secretariat informs the provider of the decision. If conditions or recommendations are attached, they must be submitted to the AIEB by an agreed date.
7. *Right of Appeal.* The provider has a right of appeal against the process and outcome; an appeals panel will be convened on receipt of a written appeal citing the nature of the appeal.
8. *Monitoring.* Monitoring reports should be submitted by the provider and reviewed by the endorsement body the mid-point of the endorsement period.
9. *Any subsequent modifications* to programmes endorsed as part of the pilot process will need to submit new documentation based on any changes relating to endorsement criteria, but it is proposed that they should not have to re-submit all documentation.

## 2. Endorsement Panel Decisions

Consistent with the model of the North South Education and Training Standards Body for Youth Work (NSETS)<sup>1</sup> and England Standards Board for community work (ESB)<sup>2</sup>, It is proposed that the AIEB make one of three decisions outlined below:

1. Five (5) year *full endorsement* of a programme; maybe with some recommendations requiring a response from the provider or suggestions for areas that could be developed.
2. *Conditional endorsement* which means that there will be some conditions to be met before the 5 - year endorsement is granted; these conditions will be spelt out by the panel based on the information provided by the peer reviewers. Once the provider has taken steps to meet these (usually by providing additional information, but it can involve another visit by a reviewer), the panel will look at the submission again and decide if the conditions have been met and the 5 year endorsement will be granted.
3. *Conditional endorsement* for 1 year; this normally applied to a new course which has met the criteria on paper but where there are no participants and or fieldwork supervisors to meet and talk to; a visit will be made by a reviewer during the first time the course runs and following consideration of the information gathered then the panel will make a decision and can award the 5 year endorsement.

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<sup>1</sup> All Ireland Youth Work Endorsement Body

<sup>2</sup> UK Endorsement Body for Community Development Education and Training

### **3. Appeals Process**

3.1 If the AIEB has not approved an education programme, the education provider may submit a written appeal to the Chair(s) of the AIEB. The appeal must be lodged within the 28 days following receipt of the written report and clearly state the grounds on which it is based.

3.2 An Appeal Panel will then be convened. It will usually include two members of the AIEB, one of whom will act as a Chair and neither of whom will have had any previous detailed involvement with the case under consideration. In addition, an external member will be recruited and will act as Co-ordinator to the Appeal Panel.

3.3 Should the Appeal Panel agree that there is a substantive issue to be addressed, the education provider may be invited to provide further written evidence and will be given an opportunity to present a case personally.

3.4 The Appeals Panel will have the power to:

- accept the appeal;
- accept the appeal subject to specified conditions; or
- reject the appeal.

The Appeal Panel will determine its own procedure within these Guidelines. It will convey its decision in writing to the education provider and to the AIEB and give reasons for its decision.

3.5 The Appeal Panel's decision is final.

## **4. Information for Education Providers**

### **4.1 The Submission**

While preparing for the endorsement event, education providers should ensure that the documentation submitted:

- Demonstrates that the education programme/course is consistent with community work and development values and as outlined in the All Ireland Standards and NOS (as appropriate).
- Demonstrates and illustrates how to undertake community work and development & use community work and development approaches which recognise the
  - needs of the community,
  - the needs of the employers,
  - the role of other agencies and professionals.
- Demonstrates methods for the recognition of prior learning and experiential learning.
- Demonstrates the relationship between theory and practice within both institution and practice based elements.

*The AIEB is concerned to eliminate duplication, building on rather than repeating where possible, frameworks and endorsement processes already in place, e.g. through NSETS and ESB. In this regard, documentation already prepared for parallel processes in community work and development or associated disciplines may be used where appropriate and with due reference to unique dimensions of the programme.*

### **4.2 The Approval visit**

All programmes will be subject to a review visit by a Review Panel appointed by the AIEB.

The approval visit involves a group of peers, from the AIEB, meeting over one day at the education institution/organisation seeking approval. At this meeting the group, having previously read and considered the programme documentation, will discuss its contents with members of the programme team. It is normal for the review group to meet with staff delivering the course, students and fieldwork practitioners supervising placements, and other stakeholders.



At the conclusion of the approval visit, the panel gives a decision on whether the education programme has been approved. This may include suggestions, recommendations or conditions which are points of development for the programme team.

The process is based on dialogical and developmental discussion with the aim of enhancing the quality overall of community work and development education and training and attempts to avoid the feeling of an inspection.

	CONTENT CRITERIA FOR SUBMISSIONS	ADDITIONAL NOTE
<b>A. Values and principles</b>	The submission document should detail how the education provider and programme work to the values and principles of community work and development in design and delivery as outlined in the <i>All Ireland Standards</i> and <i>National Occupational Standards</i> (Please indicate which).	Values can be from but should include a particular focus on community work and development
<b>B. Background information, purpose and rationale</b>	<p>The submission document should detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The organisation or institution providing the education programme and delivery locations, its values and ethos</li> <li>- The context of the education programme including details of partnership in the field</li> <li>- The broad audience for the programme and how that audience was identified, including details of consultation with employers, providers and other stakeholders and any catchment area</li> <li>- The promotional strategy for the programme</li> <li>- Aims and objectives of the education programme, to include the extent of practice-based learning within the programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Fieldwork practice should comprise 40% - 50% of the overall programme for full time degree/ post-graduate programmes.</p> <p>For all participants a placement external to one's own workplace is essential.</p>
<b>C. Participants</b>	<p>The submission document should detail the admission requirements and how applicants are assessed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Admission requirements and selection process, including who is involved in the selection process</li> <li>- What procedures and mechanisms are there for recognising both prior experiential learning and for assessing participant learning ability to undertake the programme?</li> <li>- What support structures are there for learners, in particular those with few or no educational qualifications?</li> <li>- What progression routes are participants made aware of?</li> </ul>	

<p><b>D. Content</b></p>	<p>The submission document should detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how the learning outcomes of the programme relate to the <i>All-Ireland Standards</i> (ROI) and NOS (NI) as appropriate.</li> <li>- the range of theoretical modules covered and a range of methods and techniques*.</li> <li>- the learning and teaching approaches employed</li> </ul> <p>It should also demonstrate how theory and practice are integrated</p>	<p>The programme should reflect and refer to current policies, practice and thinking in community work and development. These should be evident in the academic content. Unit/module materials should be made available for the visit, along with a comprehensive selection of resources/ reading lists/texts used in the programme.</p>
<p><b>E. Structure/Mode</b></p>	<p>The submission document should describe and demonstrate the structure of the education programme and the relationship between units. Where relevant, this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- any choices or options open to participants</li> <li>- the mode of delivery, e.g. full time, part time, outreach</li> <li>- the learning activities, e.g. inputs, personal study, group work, tutorials and fieldwork practice</li> <li>- the balance of contact and non-contact time</li> <li>- the opportunities available to participants to share experiences and practice</li> </ul>	
<p><b>F. Fieldwork</b></p>	<p>The submission document should describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the length and nature of placement requirements</li> <li>- how fieldwork placements are identified, selected and assessed -including the passing and failing of students <sup>3</sup></li> <li>- number of placements visits that will be undertaken by teaching staff (normally at least one fieldwork placement visit per placement, as appropriate to the length of placement)</li> <li>- the guidance provided to fieldwork supervisors regarding provider expectations of the placement and assessment. Fieldwork practice documentation, such as placement contract, should be provided as part of</li> </ul>	<p>Fieldwork Supervisors should have a qualification and experience in the field of community work and development and where possible in fieldwork supervision</p>

<sup>3</sup> All placements must be passed independently for successful completion of programme

	<p>the submission i.e. in appendices.</p> <p><b>For fieldwork staff / supervisors</b> the submission document should detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrangements for recruitment, selection, and appraisal of fieldwork staff</li> <li>- Arrangements for maintaining up to date placement agency profiles</li> <li>- Arrangements for the support and guidance given before, during and after placements to allow fieldwork staff to carry out their roles adequately.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>G. Staff</b></p>	<p><b>For Teaching staff</b> the submission document should detail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrangements for recruitment, selection, and appraisal of staff</li> <li>- The qualifications and experience of staff delivering on the programme, outlining responsibility for key subject areas. Education providers will be required to submit brief CVs of teaching staff</li> <li>- Arrangements for ongoing experience in the field of community work and development</li> <li>- The ratio of learners to teaching staff (as full-time equivalents)</li> </ul>	<p>Staff who are employed by education providers for the prime purpose of delivering community work and development modules should be professionally educated and trained in community work and development and have recent and relevant professional/field commitments and experience.</p>
<p><b>H. Assessment</b></p>	<p>The submission document should outline specific performance criteria, arrangements and procedures for assessments. This should include details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the nature of the evidence required for each module</li> <li>- the weighting placed on assessment</li> <li>- the level of performance to be achieved</li> <li>- the range of feedback strategies that will be used</li> <li>- Appeals Procedures for all elements</li> <li>- the arrangements in place to provide assistance to learners where necessary</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p>There should be no compensation between field-based learning and academic learning</p>

<b>I. Support</b>	<p>The submission document should demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate and appropriate accommodation for the education programme</li> <li>- Access to appropriate levels of technology and media resources</li> <li>- Other services available, e.g. childcare, transport, disability supports</li> <li>- Sufficient administrative and clerical support</li> </ul>	
<b>J. Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<p>The submission document should describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whatever systems you use for quality assurance and whether particular to this learning programme or across the provider's organisation</li> <li>- The internal arrangements for critical appraisal and details of how changes in the programme will be implemented</li> <li>- The procedures for appointing external examiners and/or assessors with knowledge of the theoretical and practical competences required in community work and development</li> <li>- How the views of external examiners and/or external assessors, present and past students, supervisors and other stakeholders, are taken on board</li> </ul>	