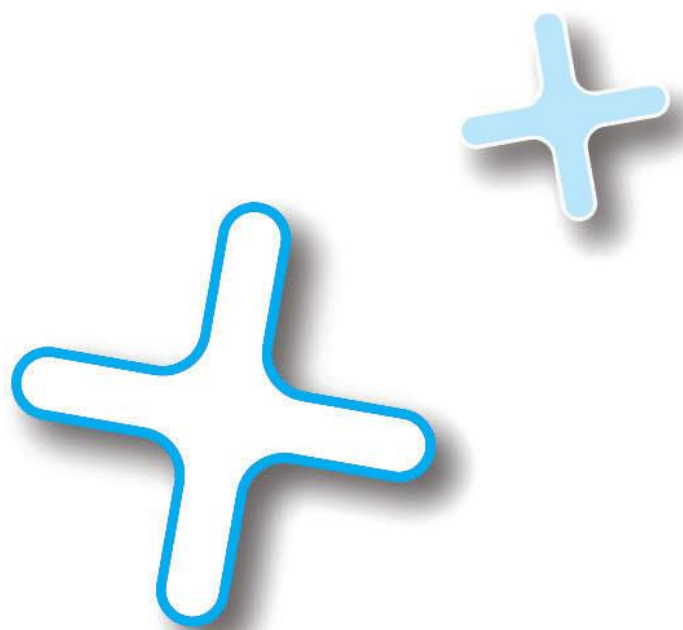


Getting your training accredited

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An introduction for mentoring and befriending projects



Getting your training accredited

An introduction to accreditation options for getting your mentor and befriender training accredited with links to awarding bodies and further information.

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What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the formal recognition of an individual's achievements and is linked to an internal or external standard. Getting your volunteer training programme accredited may be something that would be of benefit to your organisation and your volunteers. You also need to take into account the time and cost that might be involved.

What are the benefits?

The main benefits for mentors and befrienders are:

- Motivation and challenge
- Increased skills
- Evidence that may help access to education, training & employment
- Personal development
- Recognition of their contribution

The main benefits for the organisation are:

- Volunteers more effective and skilled
- Improved retention
- Easier recruitment of volunteers
- Improved service

Types of accreditation

You can choose from either internal or external accreditation – pick the most appropriate method for your organisation:

- **Internal accreditation**

This is where you offer your own award to your volunteers. You will set standards to judge against and work out the evidence you need from volunteers to demonstrate that they have achieved them. Volunteers are then given a certificate. This is a cheaper alternative to external accreditation and achieves many of the benefits above without



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the costs, but it may lack external credibility which may make it less suited to volunteers who are looking for career development.

- **External accreditation**

This involves using an externally recognised awarding body to assess your volunteers. This guarantees that the standards you use have been defined and that the assessment of skills and competence is rigorous. It has more status for the volunteer and is more likely to impress potential employers than an internal accreditation scheme. It may, however, be less focused on the needs of the organisation and is more costly than internal accreditation. Externally accredited courses or training tend to focus on the assessment of learning achievement rather than competence in the role.

- **NVQs**

NVQs are designed to assess competence in the workplace. Because of their flexibility and their focus on the demonstration of knowledge and skills gained through work experience, they are equally suitable for volunteers. Although there is no specific NVQ for volunteering or mentoring/befriending, much of the practical experience undertaken by volunteer mentors/befrienders could count towards NVQs in Advice and Guidance or Counselling.

- **Customised Awards**

This involves approaching an awarding body that is willing to accredit your training programme. A number of the awarding bodies listed on the pages below offer this service. The benefits of this are that it provides local accreditation based on the specific training requirements of your organisation. It can, however, be an expensive option and the qualification may only be recognisable and transferable within the awarding body's own award structure. With customised awards, however, there may be the opportunity to franchise the award to other organisations.

- **Award Schemes**

Award schemes are a popular alternative to recognising the achievements of volunteers. Examples of award schemes which focus on voluntary groups include the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service which recognises groups of two or more people and the Diana Award for young people which gives recognition to individuals or groups for their contribution to youth work and volunteering. Award schemes by their very nature require you to nominate volunteers, therefore some volunteers may feel left out. Many award schemes are organised locally and regionally.



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Awarding bodies:

AQA offers a Unit Award Scheme which provides students with the opportunity to achieve in short units of work. The Scheme is used in educational establishments and can be used with students of any ability and age but it isn't a qualification. A learner gains a certificate for each unit achieved and at the end of the programme gains a learning certificate listing the units achieved. The scheme is one possible route for the recognition of peer mentoring in schools and colleges.

Fees: There is a charge per student per year of involvement, regardless of the number of units achieved. For details of current fees see the AQA website.

Further information available at <http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/uas.php>

ASDAN offer a range of ways of accrediting your training depending on size, degree of independence from existing provision and status of accreditation required. Most of the accreditation offered is in the category of personal, social and key skills development. Options range from:

- Using an off-the-shelf package (an Award or short course)
- Writing your own, or collaborative writing of modules (these may then provide credits towards ASDAN existing awards or qualifications)
- Collaborative short course with certification
- External accreditation

Fees: The Award programmes include fees per student for tutor guidance, candidate registration fee (per student) and Resources (optional). For a full breakdown of costs see their website.

Further information and full breakdown of costs at www.asdan.org.uk

MBF has worked with ASDAN to offer **accredited short course awards for peer mentors** and scheme co-ordinators suitable for peer mentoring programmes in both schools and colleges – see www.mandbf.org.uk for further details.

City & Guilds provides accreditation for your own in-house training programme. They aim to ensure that all of your training is necessary and relevant to your business and that it meets the highest standards. Contact the City & Guilds Business Unit at business_unit@cityandguilds.com to find out how accreditation can help you or see their website at www.cityandguilds.com



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National Open College Network has local officers who will work with you to get your programme accredited by offering advice and guidance at all stages. It is the UK's foremost provider of accreditation services for adult learning and recognises learning achievement rather than competence in a work task. Contact your local OCN for more information about any aspect of the accreditation process including costs – see www.nocn.org.uk or telephone 01322 591071.

NCFE offer two accreditation services for organisations wanting to gain formal accreditation for their own training programmes. Their Customised Awards provide external accreditation for any unique programme of learning that you devise or if you have a number of unique programmes requiring accreditation they can provide an Investing in Quality Licence which allows you to develop, deliver and evaluate an unlimited number of bespoke programmes. More information is available at www.ncfe.org.uk.

Edexcel is another awarding body offering the full range of academic and vocational qualifications. They work with more than 5,000 secondary schools, 450 further education colleges, 70 higher education institutions and more than 700 employers and training providers. For more information see their website at www.edexcel.org.uk

Resourcing Implications:

You need to be prepared for some costs if you are considering introducing accreditation. These may include the following:

- **Awarding body fees** – these have been identified above for particular awarding bodies, but may vary depending on the size of the award. The main fees include candidate registration and certification. Your organisation may also need to become an accredited centre for which there is an annual fee.
- **Tutors fees** – if you go down the external accreditation route you may need to pay for an external tutor to deliver part of your training. This is likely to be cost effective if you go down the customised award route.
- **Materials and resources** – some awarding bodies make a charge per candidate for materials and resources.
- **Set-up costs for customised awards** – the cost of developing a customised award can be in the region of £5-10k. This will usually cover the costs of the awarding body to write and accredit the training. There may, however, be other costs involved in meetings and working groups to develop the award.



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You will also need to set aside time and resources for the following:

- **Candidates** – for accreditation to succeed, the volunteer mentor or befriender must be demonstrating the skills required for assessment. The organisation will also need to keep records of activities which can be used to provide evidence for accreditation. Candidates must also be allowed time for training and to collect the evidence required for assessment.
- **Staff** – one of the biggest issues for organisations considering introducing accreditation is allowing time for staff to be able to manage the award. Key staff will need to be trained in assessment and/or verification work depending on the nature of the award. There is likely to be administration and extra paperwork involved and ongoing development of staff will be required.

Availability of Grants:

For awards that are not on the National Qualifications Framework, there is limited funding available.

Train to Gain which was set up by the Learning and Skills Council helps people to undertake training through their workplace. The scheme was extended to volunteers in Nov 2007 – see www.traintogain.gov.uk.

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