



ADSO

A GUIDE TO THE PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Foreword

This is a guide to the proposed new Professional Diploma in Local Democracy. With a lot of hard work and support from the Open University, Skills4Justice, various Employers Organisations, the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO), the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Inlogov, the diploma has been drafted and is in the last stages of the approvals process.

This will be a different qualification to the Certificate and would normally attract a more experienced Democracy Support Officer. Consequently the qualification will hopefully be offered at a level 6, on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. This will be equivalent to a Bachelors degree.

This diploma will allow a specialism to be a key feature of the qualification and proposes different pathways to enable detailed research to be carried out in those pathways (Executive and Committee based Governance, Overview and Scrutiny, Member Development/ Support, Ethical Framework, Regulatory Framework and Civic Support).

This qualification has again been developed through the national Democratic Services Standards and Qualifications Group (the co-ordinating group set up to oversee and advise on the national occupational standards for Democratic Services and monitor current and future qualifications for the sector). It seems appropriate to name and thank the representatives on that Group without whom there would be no qualification.

The practitioner representatives are as follows: James Doble (Cherwell District Council, Nick de la Taste (Leeds City Council), Phil O'Brien (Derby City Council/ NACO), Clive Parker (Buckinghamshire CC, Lorraine Hurst (replaced by Laura Latham – both Blackpool Council) and John Austin (London Borough of Enfield). The Open University has been represented by both Keith Stafford and Michael Coulson and Fiona Turton (SkillsPlus) has been the valued link with the Employers Organisations and Sector Skills Council. On behalf of ADSO we would both wish to thank the Group and also Lesley Dunlop and Andrea Brookes from Skills4Justice who have been very supportive in advising the group on the necessary approvals.

This Guide sets out a detailed summary of how the diploma is proposed to operate and the final page of the guide sets out how potential learners and specialist Regional Advisers can get involved.

We are very excited about this diploma and this will hopefully build on the success of the Certificate which now has 60 learners undertaking that qualification, across the country. We hope you find the guide useful.



Mark Towers - Chairman of the Democratic Standards and Qualifications Group



Sue Keogh - Centre Co-ordinator ADSO Qualifications and Development Centre

Professional Diploma in Local Democracy - Overview

It is proposed that the Professional Diploma will have 3 stages

- **Foundation Stage** – this part is a mandatory part and will comprise 3 modules from the Certificate in Democratic Services Practice and a fourth module regarding the implementation of legislation, in a local democracy.
- **Pathway Stage** – at this stage the learner selects a desired pathway. The learner would then complete a mandatory 'Research Skills' module and then undertake a project based research paper on a particular specialism (Executive and Committee Based Governance, Overview and Scrutiny, Regulatory Framework, Member Development and Support, Ethical Framework and Civic Support). On completion of the project the learner would have a professional discussion with their Specialist Adviser on the outcome of the project.
- **Reflection Stage** – this stage enables the learner to reflect on their learning outcomes from the project and assess and evaluate their recommendations and conclusions.

Stage by Stage

Learners will first have to complete the foundation stage, by undertaking a written assignment for each of the four modules (3 of the modules are also in the Certificate, so if a learner has already passed these, then they do not need to retake them). On completion, the 4 assignments will be submitted to the ADSO Centre who will 'mark' these and the Centre will then arrange for a professional discussion to be undertaken with the learner, on these assignments. The professional discussion will test the understanding of the knowledge gained. The modules in each stage and pathway area will be written to be 'future proof' and also applicable, as far as possible in different sectors and also different UK countries.

On successful completion of this stage, the learner will then be assigned a specialist Regional Adviser, who the learner will work with on their chosen path area.

Timescales

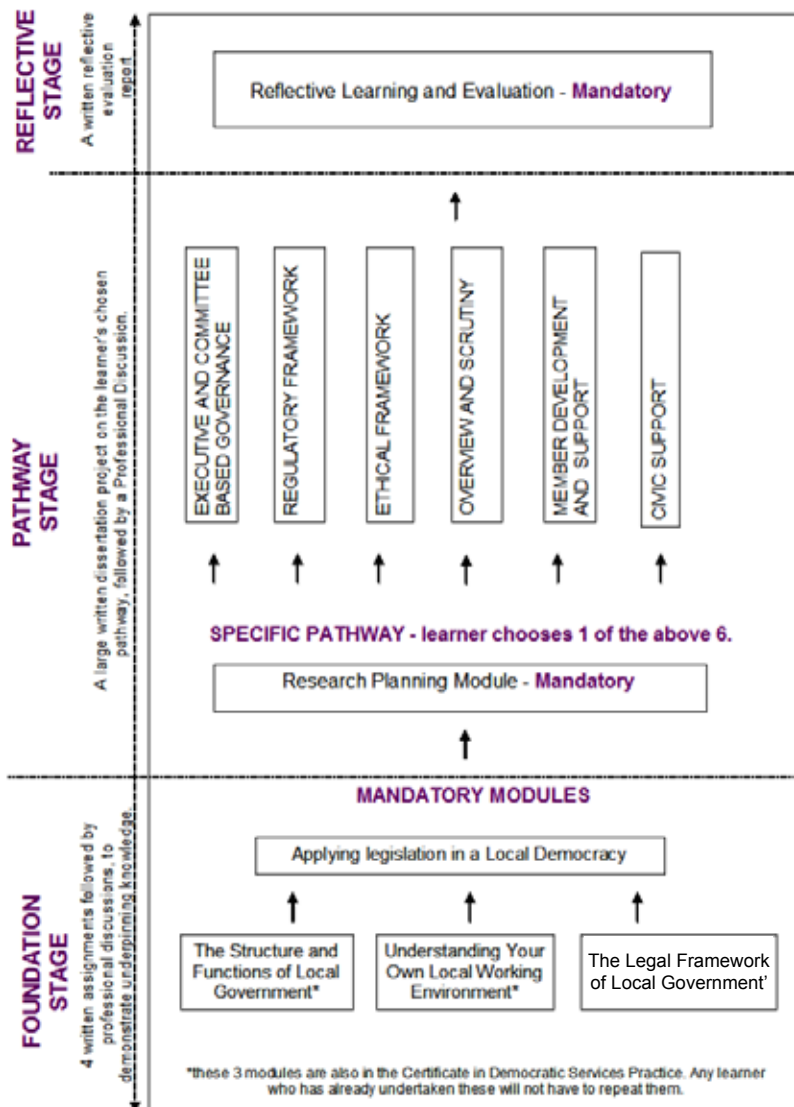
It is anticipated that on average a learner, with the necessary support, will be able to complete the diploma in approximately 18 months to 2 years. A learner undertaking the diploma would ideally possess an in depth knowledge of the main democratic functions, with relevant democratic experience.

Cost

ADSO Members: £975 per year for 2 years or £1,825 for a one off payment.

Non ADSO Members: £1,050 per year for 2 years, or £2,000 a one off payment.

OUTLINE OF PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY



The Proposed Foundation Stage

The three modules listed below are part of the Certificate in Democratic Services Practice and any learner who has not previously undertaken these would need to complete these first. A 4th module would then need to be undertaken to finish this foundation stage.

Module F1 - The Structure and Functions of Local Government

The learner will be asked to demonstrate an understanding of local government and its relationship with central government. They will also need to demonstrate an understanding and analyse the differences between them. The learner will also be called upon to explain the relationship between different Local Authorities in the UK.

Module F2 – The Legal Framework of Local Government

The learner will be asked to show an understanding of the key pieces of legislation that establish the decision making framework. The learner will also be asked to demonstrate knowledge of the key principles of decision making law and the consequential effect of case law.

Module F3 - Understanding Your Own Local Working Environment

The learner will be asked to show an understanding of the key features of their local working area, including its geographic, environmental, economic, social and political makeup. They will also be asked to demonstrate an understanding of the governance and representational arrangements in their own organisation and assess the relationship between local and national elected representatives.

It is proposed the module below should be undertaken after the assignments for the other modules in this stage have been written. Knowledge gained from modules F1, F2 and F3 will assist in undertaking this module.

Module F4 – Applying Legislation in a Local Democracy

The learner will be asked to show an understanding of the implementation of legislation in a local democracy. The learner will be asked to demonstrate how new legislation and changes to existing legislation, would affect the work of a democracy support function and also to understand how the role of political parties both local and national can affect that section's work.

As indicated it is proposed that each of these foundation modules will be the subject of an assignment and a professional discussion. These would then be marked by the ADSO Centre and on successful completion, the learner will be assigned a Specialist Adviser, to work with on the Pathway stage.

The Proposed Pathway Stage

On completion of the foundation stage, the learner will be assigned a 'Specialist Regional Adviser' who has detailed knowledge of the chosen pathway. The Specialist Adviser will then work with the learner in preparing the Research Skills module, by doing this a plan will be developed to enable the learner to undertake the dissertation project.

Part of the research when undertaking the chosen pathway, it is intended will involve comparing the pathway's specialist area in a UK country, with that in another country in the world.

Module P1 – Research Planning

The learner will be asked to work with the Specialist Adviser in firstly understanding the various types of research methodology and then the learner, supported by the Specialist Adviser will prepare a research plan for the dissertation pathway. The plan will identify methods of research and potential learning outcomes for the learner.

The 6 Proposed Pathway Options

Module P2a – Executive and Committee Based Governance

The learner will have the chance to explore the operation of the organisation's leadership arrangement under an executive arrangement or committee based administration. The dissertation project would look at and assess the Strong Leader option, Elected mayor model and the Committee based system.

Module P2b - Overview and Scrutiny

This module requires the learner to challenge the various aspects of scrutiny and its place in public life. It seeks the learner to demonstrate an understanding of the political context of overview and scrutiny and asks the learner to critically evaluate that area. The learner will then be asked to evaluate the differences between scrutiny at a local level and at a national level.

Module P2c – Regulatory Framework

The learner will need to identify exactly what is meant by the Regulatory Framework and in doing so explain the various regulatory and quasi judicial contexts of local democracy. They will then be asked to critically analyse how this differs between local authorities of different tiers. The role of the public and other stakeholders is also explored.

Module P2d – Ethical Framework

This module will ask the learner to demonstrate an understanding of the ethical standards required from members (both co-opted and elected) and also look at the various protocols and codes of conduct and their significance in the public sector. A learner will have to assess good ethical governance and the various statutory provisions and behaviours which underpin the Framework.

Module P2e – Member Development and Support

The learner will need to demonstrate a depth of understanding of the different learning styles of elected members and how they are supported by officers and organisations in the public sector. It will explore an elected member's numerous roles of representation, advocacy, decision maker and policy maker. It will also ask the learner to assess the different support requirements for elected members from the administration and from opposition parties.

Module P2f – Civic Support

This module will offer the opportunity to explore the history of the civic head and what characteristics have been carried through to the modern society. It will give the learner the opportunity to compare the civic role of the Mayor, with that of an Elected Mayor and also from a similar postholder in another Country.

The Proposed Reflective Stage

This final stage consists of the learner undertaking a final personal reflective report which self evaluates their role in the process. It looks at ways to share the conclusions and evaluations from the report and the learning styles of those involved. Learners will be asked to reflect on their research, to identify areas of further development, both personally and for the organisation.

Do you have:

- **Considerable experience in a field of local democracy?**
- **A good level of legislative knowledge?**
- **Excellent research support skills?**
- **Mentoring and coaching experience?**

If so – we want to hear from you!

The Specialist Regional Adviser Role

The role of Specialist Regional Adviser is key to providing the learner with the necessary support and professional expertise to enable them to complete the pathway stage of the diploma. To support learners across all pathways, experienced local democracy practitioners are being sought nationally.

To undertake the role there is a requirement to demonstrate high level of occupational competency within one of the pathway areas, alongside a good knowledge of the wider context of Local Democracy. You could be a Democratic Services Team Leader / Manager, Senior Support Officer/Adviser, an experienced overview and scrutiny practitioner or have extensive knowledge of the Civic Office or Member Support functions. You could also be working for an organisation supporting the Local Democracy agenda.

The role will be largely 'arms length' with a requirement for supervision style sessions between the learner and Special Regional Adviser during the course of the pathway. The new training and qualifications portal due to be rolled out in early 2011 will enable effective remote learning, with facilities for online work submission, 'live' document updates and message facilities between the learner and regional adviser.

What's in it for me?

Training to A1 Standard will be provided by the ADSO Qualifications and Development Centre (there will be a charge for this) and Specialist Regional Advisers would receive income per learner they work with, either to their Local Authority or as an individual for undertaking the role.

A programme of Continuing Professional Development will be provided by the ADSO Qualifications and Development Centre, alongside opportunities for national and regional networking with colleagues.

The role provides an excellent opportunity to support colleagues across the sector to gain a high level professional qualification through sharing practitioner expertise and experience.

What Next?

If you are interested in becoming a Specialist Regional Adviser and would like to find out more please log on to www.adso.co.uk/sra to complete an expression of interest form. No commitment will be required at this stage.

You will then be contacted by a Regional Coordinator who will discuss the role in more detail.

Please share this information with colleagues across the sector who may be suitable for the role.

