

TalentPool

Quality Assurance Handbook Human Resources Policies and Procedures



QAI AWARD

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Contents

Responsibility for Human Resources	3
Staff Recruitment	3
Key Steps in Recruiting Staff	3
TP Advertises positions	4
Statement of Required Qualifications - Trainer	4
Subject Knowledge	5
Experience and Skills	5
Continuing Professional Development (CPD).....	5
Programme-Specific Requirements.....	5
Additional Requirements (if applicable)	5
Use of Contracted Trainers	6
Induction, Training and Continuous Professional Development	6
Key Steps.....	7
Staff and Trainer Induction	8
Staff Management and Communication.....	8
Quality Assuring and Managing Trainer Performance	9
Monitoring Performance	10
Under performance.....	11
Guidance on Disciplinary Procedures	11
Informal counselling	11
Stage 1-Verbal warning	12
Stage 2-First Written Warning	13
Stage 3-Second Written Warning.....	13
Stage 4-Final Written Warning.....	14
Stage 5-Dismissal or action short of dismissal	14
Gross or serious misconduct.....	14

Policy

TP ensures all members of staff; employees and contractors have the required qualifications and expertise to provide programmes and services to learners to high standard and to meet the training and development needs of the sectors serves. TP provides appropriate support and further training to continually develop staff to ensure they are competent to design, deliver, support, evaluate and assess training programmes and assure the quality of programmes and processes. TP seeks to ensure fair and equal opportunities for all members of staff. The full spectrum of HR policies and procedures is detailed in TP Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual. This policy applies to all staff associated with TP Training Unit including contracted trainers acting on behalf of TP.

Responsibility for Human Resources

The Director of Human Resources is responsible for staffing

The Manager of the Training Unit evaluates the need for staffing in relation to the Training Unit and advises the Director of Human Resources accordingly.

Staff Recruitment

- In recruiting staff this Policies and Procedures Manual and guidance within must be adhered to.
- Statement of Required Qualifications for Trainers which is programme-specific must be applied appropriately in the recruitment of staff.
- TalentPools priority is to attract and employ the best possible and most suitable candidates for designated roles.

Key Steps in Recruiting Staff

The Manager of the Training Unit identifies the knowledge, skills and competences required for individual roles based on the Training Unit strategic plan, programme needs and learner profile.

The Manager of the Training Unit draw up or review existing job description/person specification/detailed selection criteria.

TP Advertises positions

- ✓ Review CVs and cover letters
- ✓ Invites suitable candidates to interview
- ✓ Selects candidates

HR short-lists applicants based on applications suitability to criteria set out in the job description/person specification and Statement of Required Qualifications for Trainers and invite shortlisted candidates for interview.

HR constitutes an interview panel with minimum of two interviewers. The Manager of the Training Unit and/or Principal Officer is involved in the interview and selection process.

Suitable candidates are selected based on:

- ✓ Training/qualifications (trainers recruited must have qualifications and experience appropriate to TP agreed scope of provision)
- ✓ Experience
- ✓ Suitability to role
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Ability to work as part of a team.

HR will:

- ✓ Keeps records of the interview process, interview notes and maintain recruitment records for a period of 12 months.
- ✓ Makes arrangements to vet candidates if required prior to making an appointment (e.g. Garda vetting).
- ✓ Contacts two referees (one must be the most recent employer) and get references.
- ✓ Contacts unsuccessful candidates to advise outcome of the interview process.
- ✓ Ensures relevant employment contracts are agreed and signed
- ✓ Evidence of all recruitment and selection policies and procedures are retained by HR

Statement of Required Qualifications - Trainer

TP define a trainer as the person who delivers more than 10% of the programme content. Persons delivering less than 10% are regarded as guest speakers and are supervised by the

Programme Leader. Trainers must be capable of delivering the programme specified in the relevant Programme Descriptor and have appropriate technical and andragogical qualifications. It is trainers' responsibility to submit copies of all relevant, current award certificates and evidence of their pedagogical and professional qualifications and update annually if required.

Subject Knowledge

- ✓ Third-level qualification in the subject matter area (minimum Level 7 on the NFQ or equivalent).
- ✓ Recognised training qualification (minimum Level 6 on NFQ or equivalent).

Experience and Skills

- ✓ A minimum of three years' experience of training/instructing adult learners.
- ✓ A minimum of three years working in the subject field/ relevant occupational experience.
- ✓ Ability to draw from practical work experience to enhance training/instruction. •
- ✓ Excellent facilitation, presentation, interpersonal and communication skills.
- ✓ Experience of delivering training under an agreed quality assurance system (desirable but not essential)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Willing to avail of, and engage in, CPD activities.

Programme-Specific Requirements

There may be additional programme specific requirements for some programmes e.g. GDPR. In this case these are added to the statement when recruiting for the programme (Ref: Statement of Specific Requirements – GDPR).

Additional Requirements (if applicable)

Trainers who work with learners aged 18 or under are required to undergo vetting by the National Vetting Bureau, the vetting unit of An Garda Síochána and must undertake safeguarding training.

Use of Contracted Trainers

- TP contracts the services of suitably qualified and experienced trainers to augment its own training capacity if required.
- TP uses a tendering process via the e-Tenders website to recruit these trainers.
- Applicants are invited to complete a pre-qualification questionnaire and a panel is established from qualified applicants usually for a 3-year period. Trainers are appointed from this panel. Contracted trainers must meet the requirements set out in Statement of Required Qualifications. Contracted trainers are viewed as full members of the programme teams and updated on programme related issues.
- They are invited to attend programme team meetings and to input to programme development and review processes (this is set out in the Trainer Role Description).
- Having a panel of suitably qualified trainers panel enables the appointment of replacement if a trainer is unavailable at short notice.
- Currently TP trainers are required to let the Quality Officer know at the earliest possible opportunity if they think they might be delayed or absent from a training session. The Quality Officer selects a suitably qualified trainer from the panel and asks them to cover for the absence.
- TP cancels, postpones or reschedules a programme or makes a change to the timetable in exceptional circumstances only.
- The objective is to conduct all programmes without interruption and avoid causing inconvenience to learners.

Contract for engagement of contracted tutors must be issued and signed by tutor (See templates and forms.

Induction, Training and Continuous Professional Development

TP has integrated its performance management system, Managing Performance and Developing Potential (MPDP), in all aspects of its work. MPDP allows individual, team and divisional work plans to be developed, and directly fed into the annual work programme. It also allows TP to identify training and development needs and to ensure staff has the skills

and knowledge to meet both organisational and personal development needs. The MPDP system places a strong emphasis on continuing learning and development and motivates staff to continue their professional and personal development. TP endeavours at all times to identify, prioritise and meet the training development and support needs of staff.

TP promotes and encourages the upskilling and development of the administrative staff and trainers to meet changing needs of programmes and learners and the sectors supported.

Key Steps

- ✓ Management and core staff are developed through supported attendance at relevant events and training programmes.
- ✓ The Manager of the Training Unit hosts occasional lunch and learning events where staff members and outsiders are asked to present on a specific topic in an informal and engaging manner. The Manager invites contracted trainers to attend these events. *#See Lunch and Learn Guidelines*
- ✓ TP encourage all members of staff to engage in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and allocates an annual budget for staff CPD.
- ✓ While TP make it clear through the recruitment process that contracted trainers are responsible for their own CPD, the Manager of the Training Unit invites them to attend organised training events when relevant and appropriate and encourage them to apply for support for CPD activities if there is evidence these activities benefit programmes and/or learners.
- ✓ TP training staff are members of relevant professional bodies.
- ✓ TP reviews each staff member's performance annually, discusses personal development plans on a one-to-one basis and collates feedback on completed training and development events.
- ✓ HR records CPD activities on a CPD register. Contracted trainers are required to submit evidence of CPD activities on an annual basis.
- ✓ The Quality Officer reviews certification reports to check if there is a need for training for trainers in relation to assessment, particularly marking and grading.

- ✓ The Quality Officer organises CPD/topic-specific workshops for training and assessors if there is an identified need. These workshops are designed to build positive relationships and share learning. They also ensure relevant information is presented in a uniform fashion to all trainers. Examples include
 - 📌 Marking and Grading Workshop
 - 📌 Implementing the QA System – The Trainers Role
 - 📌 Implementing Assessment Procedures

Staff and Trainer Induction

New staff and trainers are given a comprehensive induction at a face-to-face meeting with the Manager of the Training Unit, the Programme Leader, the Principal Officer and./or the Quality Officer depending on the nature and location of the role. HR reviews the Induction programme annually and updates, if necessary, to take account of new developments.

The staff member/ trainer is briefed on:

- TP organisation and structure
- TP SD Unit background, aims, ethos and values, structure and organisation.
- Roles and responsibilities of SD Unit staff.
- The SD Unit QA system and the staff member/trainer's role in implementing it.
- Academic and administrative procedures and regulations, including introductory training on information systems.
- Specific roles, responsibilities and requirements of the role.
- General terms and conditions of employment.
- HR and staff development policies, procedures and regulations

Staff Management and Communication

TP have systems in place to communicate with, manage and monitor staff performance to ensure all staff members are able to perform their duties to a high standard, to identify areas of best practice and areas needing improvement.

Key Steps

There are regular staff and programme team meetings with (informal and formal) where staff are encouraged to give feedback and views on an ongoing basis. This data is considered as part of the ongoing monitoring and review processes

- ✓ The Manager of the Training Unit issues a weekly Manager's Report detailing workload for the week ahead, activities completed during the week and external meetings undertaken.
- ✓ TP hold annual programme review meetings.
- ✓ TP have an annual performance appraisal and provide structured feedback to staff members on their strengths and areas in need of improvement. TP monitor the areas identified as needing improvement. The performance of contracted trainers is monitored by the Programme Leader as part of the monitoring and evaluation processes.
- ✓ Training Administrators are primarily responsible for day-to-day communication with trainers about all aspects of programmes and all learner issues. They do this by maintaining a high level of personal contact (face-to-face, telephone or through email) with trainers at all stages of programme delivery.
- ✓ All members of staff have access to Staff Manual and QA Manual. The Quality Officer communicate updates to the quality system annually and throughout the year if necessary.
- ✓ All programme-specific information is available to trainers in print copy and via a shared online folder in advance of programme delivery. This includes timetables, assessment plan, assessment briefs, marking guidelines. This ensures consistency and clarity of information across all trainers and programmes.

Quality Assuring and Managing Trainer Performance

TP have procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the performance of contracted trainers.

- Contracted trainers must meet the requirements set out in the Statement of Required Qualifications – Trainer.

- All new trainers must provide a copy of their award certificates /parchment and/or transcript and TP reserves the right to take steps to validate the authenticity of all documentation.
- TP provide all trainers with a Trainer Handbook which provides a comprehensive overview and details of training operation.
- Trainers are required to read the Handbook in advance of induction. Induction involves a meeting and discussion with the Training Manager/ Principal Officer/Programme Leader and Quality Officer.
- At the end of the induction session, the trainer is required to confirm they have read the Trainer Handbook and understand and agree with the content.
- TP operate a buddy system for newly appointed trainers whereby initially they work alongside an experienced trainer.

Monitoring Performance

- The Programme Leader occasionally sit in on a training session to observe the trainer.
- The aim of these observations is to provide formative feedback on performance, to note examples of best practice, to ensure trainers are delivering training to required standards and to provide opportunity for trainer feedback.
- Following the observation, the Programme Leader completes a Training Observation Form which is made available to the trainer and the Quality Officer and the Manager of the SD Unit.
- Issues of concern raised and/or recommendations for improvements made by the Internal Verifier and/or the External Authenticator and agreed by the Results Approval Panel and discussed with trainers at one-to-one meetings with the Quality Officer/Principal Officer. TP expects trainers to be reflective, assess their own performance and development needs, to work together to share best practice and support each other's development and the development of the programmes.
- TP monitors trainer performance and effectiveness using learner feedback and the trainers' own feedback and evaluation of their performance, feedback from external authenticators and stakeholder feedback.

The Quality Officer collates and analyses all feedback and takes corrective actions as appropriate. The performance of trainers is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Quality Officer with inputs from the Principal Officer or the Programme Leader.

The Quality Officer reports any issues of concern to the Manager of the Training Unit. The Quality Officer reviews certification reports, learner feedback and external evaluator's reports for feedback on trainer performance and makes recommendations for corrective action if necessary.

Under performance

- If a trainer is not performing to the required standards, they are notified of shortcomings by the Programme Leader/Principal Officer who, in general, deals with deficiencies on an informal basis through discussion, counselling and appropriate assistance.
- Notes of these meetings are retained on the MPDP (Managing Potential, Developing Potential) for TP staff. The Programme Leader/Principal Officer continues to monitor the performance of the trainer and progress regarding the remedial action agreed.
- If, following the informal intervention, the trainer continues to fail to meet the required standards TP disciplinary procedure may be invoked.
- The purpose of the disciplinary procedure is to help the trainer make the necessary improvements and prevent any recurrence of poor performance.

Guidance on Disciplinary Procedures

Informal counselling

The pre-disciplinary procedure informal counselling should be carried out to ensure the employee knows the standards expected, and should be carried out by a supervisor/manager.

The employee should be

1. Told what needs improvement (eg timekeeping, attendance, conduct, work standards)
2. Given the opportunity to explain
3. Given an action plan to bring about the required improvement
4. Given a written note, signed by both supervisor/manager and employee, of the agreed action to be taken.

If this informal counselling does not bring about the required improvement the formal disciplinary procedure will be invoked.

Stage 1-Verbal warning

- Generally an employee should receive a verbal warning for a first transgression.
- Even though the employer is “only” giving a verbal warning, it is still part of a formal disciplinary process and the principles of natural justice, fair procedures, and equity/fairness would apply at all times.
- This would involve a meeting with the employee at which the employee could bring a colleague or other representative. There is no right to bring a legal representative, unless the employer agrees.
- This may be a trade union representative, even though the employer may not formally recognise or engage with the union. His role will be as a minute taker and witness, not an advocate or spokesperson.
- At the meeting the employee should be advised of what the problem is and invited to respond and explain his actions.
- There should be no rush to judgement by the employer as the meeting is investigatory.
- **Following the meeting a confirmatory letter should be given to the employee. This letter confirms that the employee has been given a verbal/oral warning.** It should also contain the improvements required of the employee in respect of the behaviour which led to the warning and the timeframe within which the improvement must be made.
- This letter should also state that failure to improve will lead to the 2nd stage of the disciplinary procedure and ultimately dismissal.

- It should also state the time period for which it will remain on the employee’s file, after which it will be removed. 3 months would be a reasonable period for this 1st verbal warning to stay on file, but it could remain for 6 months.
- If an employee was suspended with pay pending an investigation it is vital that he knows how long the suspension is to last and the investigation must be held within a reasonable time frame. “Justice delayed is justice denied”.

- Once this disciplinary procedure has started the employer should assist the employee to improve conduct or performance, whichever was the source of the problem in the 1st place.
- **The employer should record the details of this 3 month monitoring period and retraining or relocation should be considered, if possible and reasonable.**
- However, if the employee fails to improve or there is a repeat of the activity that caused the oral warning in the 1st place the employer can then issue a first written warning.

Stage 2-First Written Warning

- The 1st written warning can be issued within the period of time advised for monitoring after the verbal warning, provided there is no improvement in conduct or performance.
- Before issuing it the employee should be invited to another meeting, told of the transgression, and given the opportunity to respond.
- The written warning will then be issued and last for another 3 months. This warning should also clearly set out the nature of the problem, suggest solutions such as retraining, and advise of the possible sanctions (including dismissal) if no improvement is observed within the 3 months.
- The employer should again afford all reasonable assistance to the employee to help him improve conduct and/or performance. However the employer must be mindful of his duty of care to other employees also.

Stage 3-Second Written Warning

- If the required improvement is not forthcoming within the 3 month period after the 1st written warning then a 2nd written warning may be issued. This is entirely a matter for the employer and it is common for many employers to only issue a 1st and final written warning.
- This warning is done in a similar fashion to the other 2 warnings referred to above but you would consider giving a 6 month monitoring period to allow improvement.

Stage 4-Final Written Warning

- If the required improvement is not happening then a final written warning would be issued with a 12 month monitoring period.
- The letter confirming this warning will advise that if there is no improvement or if the bad behaviour/performance is repeated then dismissal will occur.
- This warning letter will be the final one prior to dismissal so it is important that it is well drafted as it will be scrutinised closely by the employee and probably his legal advisor.
- This letter should only refer to the matters which have been the subject of the disciplinary procedure to date, not other matters which have never been put to the employee.

Stage 5-Dismissal or action short of dismissal

- If there is no improvement after the final written warning then dismissal is the likely outcome. A meeting should be called and the employee and his representative invited.
- The employer should remind the employee of the behaviour/conduct that has led to this point, the repeated transgressions/failure to improve performance sufficiently, and that the dismissal is in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.
- The employee should be given the opportunity to appeal within 14 days. He should also be given a letter confirming the dismissal and the right to appeal, the time period for appeal, and who to appeal to.

Gross or serious misconduct

Gross or serious misconduct will be normally dealt with under the final stage- stage 4 or stage 5, depending on how many stages you use in your procedure.

There is no legal definition of “gross misconduct” but it would generally include

- Criminal acts
- Theft

- Intentional damage to property
- Assault
- Dereliction of duty
- Serious breach of health and safety procedure
- Fraudulent behaviour
- Falsification of records
- Abuse of company policies/procedures
- Abuse of trust
- Serious sexual harassment, harassment, bullying
- Serious breaches of internet/email policy
- Serious breaches of data protection policy
- Violent behaviour

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other acts which could be considered to be serious misconduct within the context of a particular job or industry.

Serious/gross misconduct should be dealt with as follows:

1. Notify the employee of the allegation without delay

This would involve, firstly, a preliminary gathering of the facts and, secondly, an invite to the employee to attend a meeting to lay the allegation. The employee should be told he can bring a work colleague or union representative to this meeting.

It is important that strict confidentiality is maintained as the employee is innocent until proven otherwise and is entitled to the protection of his good name.

2. Investigation

An investigation will be carried out and the employee may be suspended with pay pending the outcome of this investigation.

It should be carried out as quickly as possible by a party/parties with the necessary expertise, agreeable to employer and employee, and in accordance with the terms of reference for the

investigation. The terms of reference should set out the timescale of the investigation and the scope of the investigation, that is, deciding whether or not the allegation has been upheld.

- ❖ A written record of all meetings should be kept and confidentiality maintained.

The investigator should be able to interview any employee who may be able to assist the investigation.

The employee against whom the allegation has been made should be given copies of all written notes prior to and during the investigation, eg witness statements, details of the alleged misconduct, notes. He should also be allowed representation at any meetings during the investigation process.

Once the investigation has completed a written report setting out the investigator's decision, based on the balance of probabilities, will be given to senior management and the employee.

If the allegation has been upheld a further disciplinary meeting will be held with the employee.

3. Disciplinary hearing

The employee should be advised of the disciplinary meeting in writing and told

- It is a formal disciplinary meeting under Stage 4 or 5 of the disciplinary procedure
- The purpose of the meeting is to hear representations on behalf of the employee and to decide whether a disciplinary sanction is appropriate
- The possible outcome of the hearing
- The right to be accompanied

Once representations have been made, and the hearing is not to look into the allegations again, the meeting will then be adjourned to allow the decision maker to decide what action, if any, is to be taken.

The meeting will be reconvened and the decision advised to the employee who will also be told of his right to appeal the decision.

Concluding Note

None of the above will apply to situations of gross misconduct which may lead to instant dismissal.

Also, more serious transgressions of conduct may lead to the procedure being started with a written warning or at a different point in the procedure.