

**Executive Summary taken from the
Independent Evaluation Report
of the
Professional Recognition Learning and
Skills Scheme for
Skills for Life Teachers (England)**

For Standards Verification UK

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Executive Summary

The Professional Recognition Learning and Skills (PRLS) scheme provided an opportunity for Skills for Life (SfL) practitioners to demonstrate that their skills, experience and subject specialist knowledge met the new requirements for SfL teachers. The scheme was managed by Standards Verification UK (SVUK). This independent evaluation was commissioned by SVUK as part of their continuous quality improvement approach to the delivery of their services.

The scheme ran from September 2006 to February 2007 with applications being processed through until October 2007. Applicants could apply for Generic professional recognition and/or recognition in the specialist subject areas of Numeracy, Literacy or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

This evaluation looked at the management of the scheme as well as identifying: the drivers for making applications; the factors which impacted on the success of applications; and the impact of success on careers. This report also identifies a number of areas for potential development for any future schemes.

Over 92% of successful applicants described themselves as being pleased they had undertaken the recognition process. In interviews, successful applicants were very happy to have had their experience and competence recognised and had found it to be of great value. A number of examples were given as to how achieving recognition had a positive impact on applicants' careers including promotion, the expansion of teaching portfolios and pay rises.

Online surveys were used to collect information from applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) and people who exhibited interest in making an application but did not do so. Those involved in the decision making process were also surveyed - the adjudicators and panel members. The response rates to the surveys and interviews were extremely high, on average in excess of 67%. This reassures us that the findings are accurate. These surveys were underpinned by interviews with a sample of applicants, adjudicators and panel members.

Many applicants stated their unease with the changes in DfES policy requirements, which resulted in their having to seek additional qualifications or recognition. However, one key finding was that many applicants thought the process was a "*paper exercise*" to get approval and were frequently shocked when they were unsuccessful. There was a fundamental misunderstanding for many that this was a **professional recognition** scheme, which recognised the applicants as professional teachers with the level 4 skills and knowledge needed to meet the DfES regulations. Many simply thought it was a process to recognise their time served as teachers. This view also coloured applicants' expectations of the process - many did not understand the depth of information required in the application, which was needed to make judgements about level 4 performance and competence.

The scheme has been successful in many areas. The target for the scheme was to process 450 applications and this was exceeded with 463 applications processed during the life of the scheme. An excess of 800 SfL teachers

surveyed indicated an interest in still pursuing professional recognition. Adjudicators, panel members and applicants interviewed commented on the quality of information, advice and support provided by the management team in Leeds.

The key motivation stated by applicants for applying for PRLS was to achieve the requirement for SfL teachers, but other motivations included wanting recognition for their abilities and the opportunity to use the process as part of their CPD. Many of those who indicated an interest in the scheme but did not make an application cited key barriers as the time available to them to meet the application deadline, and demands of the process itself.

Adjudicators and panel members identified that there were differences in the quality and likely success of applications, depending on the quality of references and the context in which the applicant was teaching. Practitioners working in isolation or without appropriate management support were less likely to be able to demonstrate that they met the criteria for success.

Future schemes would benefit from a re-development of the documentation, in particular the *Guidance for Applicants*, the referee forms and the application form itself. These changes would improve clarity and ease of use. Future schemes would also benefit from the introduction of an internal quality assurance framework, covering in particular the sampling of application evidence, sampling of application decisions and standardisation of decision making by adjudicators and panel members.

Please note: The findings of this report relate to a specialist subject scheme, and therefore not all of the outcomes are applicable or can be transferred to a scheme that is of a more generic nature.