

# Case Study 9

## New Developer Services High Level Qualification for the UK Water Industry

### Background

The UK Government has the aspiration to see some 300,000 new houses built each year. Those new houses require water and other infrastructure. Each water company has a developer services team whose role is to support developers in providing suitable clean, foul and storm water infrastructures.

In recent times Ofwat, the water industry economic regulator, has been facilitating greater competition in the provision of water infrastructure. Developers now have the right to engage Self Lay Organisations (SLO) to provide water infrastructure rather than relying on the incumbent water service company to do so.

This change has encouraged companies to expand their services to encompass a multi-utility service provision. It is a requirement of the SLOs to have highly skilled and competent workforce capable of providing high levels of service to both the developers, but also the water companies who ultimately adopt the infrastructure being constructed. To be registered as an approved SLO a contractor needs to be registered under the Water Industry Registration Scheme (WIRS) after undergoing a comprehensive technical assessment by Lloyd's Register to demonstrate their competency; WIRS for water, GIRS for Gas and NIRS for power.

The provision of competency frameworks in the area of Developer Services exists only at levels below Level 3 and there is a lack of qualification structures for Managers, Engineers, Designers and Graduates.

### Establishing the Need

A team of Learning & Development Associates technical experts, led by an experienced L&DA Project Manager was formed to allow all aspects of the Water design operations to be evaluated.

To develop the Level 5 framework a full review was undertaken of the clients needs and procedures, this included interviews with key stakeholders in the organisation with reference to the future of the regulatory authorities. Once a thorough understanding of the industry's challenges was established a more detailed assessment was made of the regulations and the clients working procedures.

This exercise allowed the L&DA team to understand better the current and likely future skills gaps within the organisation. From this point a draft qualification framework was created. It was recognised that there were many different levels of competency among the technical and operational workforce, from newly recruited Graduates to existing Managers, Designers and Engineers. To benchmark the level of existing knowledge within the client's organisation an Organisational Needs Analysis (ONA) was established and subsequently signed off by the client. Part of that brief was that the new up skilling programme should be based on a nationally recognised Qualification.

Pro-Qual Awarding Body were engaged given their prior experience working with L&DA to accredit other Level 5 and Level 3 water national Qualifications.



## Stages of Design

The ONA allowed the progression to the design phase, which encompassed the following four key stages:

1. The creation of the draft Level 5 Qualification encompassing the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria
2. The draft Lesson Plans derived from the Learning Outcomes
3. The Taught Material
4. The Level 5 Assessments to meet the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Crucial to this process was the engagement of the client and at all stages reviews and approvals were sought by the L&DA Project Manager. This led to the new national Level 5 Qualification entering the OFQUAL Framework in early 2021

## The new Level 5 Qualifications – Award and Certificate

Working with the client, L&DA developed a new and unique Level 5 Qualification to enable those Engineers and Managers working in this field to gain a wider knowledge and to achieve an accredited competency in the provision of Water infrastructure.

The Pro-Qual accredited qualification has two levels; the Level 5 Award and the Level 5 Certificate.

The Award is specifically for those learners who require knowledge of the subject and the Certificate extends that requirement to the demonstration of competence.

Typically Award learners have a technical need and Certificate learners have control of resources.

Both Award and Certificate learners undertake the same training experience together as one group. Award learners proceed with their own assessments and Certificate learners undertake both the knowledge based Award assessment and then proceed to the competency based Certificate assessment.

## Delivery of the new Level 5 Qualifications in Developer Services Management

Delivery has primarily been through Webex due to Covid restrictions however future programmes may return to the classroom.

Courses are typically five or six days in duration, and to give the courses real practical focus a series of operational scenarios were developed to allow the learners to explore and further develop their analytical and problem-solving skills. To date a group of Graduates have progressed through all or part of the programme.

This achievement will allow the client to demonstrate competency in water infrastructure.

## Feedback

Each module was evaluated through both post course evaluation and Academic Review. Course delivery was very well received by the learners who participated enthusiastically. To date (November 2021) a number of learners have achieved the qualification, the first in the UK.

## What were the outcomes?

The client organisation benefited from an independent educational industry expert bringing an external view. A clear matrix of the knowledge areas contained in company procedures was identified and this enabled an approach to be developed that assessed the level of understanding of competence in the workforce.

National qualification based assessment was undertaken that provided assurances against the Learning Outcomes which has identified additional needs and the opportunity for internal process improvement.

Bespoke training in a priority area was developed and delivered. As a result, the organisation were able to achieve and identify:

- Delivery of consistent knowledge through structured accredited learning
- Active assessment of knowledge levels of key areas of Developer Services operations informing both the effectiveness of training delivery and establishing future training requirements
- Transferability of skills for learners



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