

Straight route to competence

It couldn't be more straightforward to make sure you're competent as a substance misuse worker – or to help your workforce demonstrate the DANOS competence required by NTA targets, says Simon Shepherd.

The NTA qualification targets require most workers – apart from those qualified to practise as health and social care professionals (nurses, doctors etc) – to demonstrate evidence of their competence in four 'core units' from DANOS and at least four other units relevant to their jobs.

While health and social care professionals are assumed to be competent in the 'core units', they too are still required to demonstrate their competence in at least four other DANOS units.

One way for 'non-professionals' to meet these targets is through the NVQ in Health and Social Care, while those who are already professionally qualified can take a four unit 'development award' based on DANOS.

While many other qualifications claim to provide evidence of DANOS competence, most in fact do not – either because they do not include an assessment of workplace competence or because any assessment of competence they do include does not relate directly to the DANOS standards.

FDAP's Drug and Alcohol Professional Accreditation scheme has been designed to provide a way for people with other relevant qualifications to have these recognised as evidence of DANOS-competence, where they include a work-based assessment either directly against the DANOS standards or against other competence frameworks which map sufficiently closely to DANOS to provide at least indirect evidence of DANOS-competence.

It is relevant to workers across the field –

including those who are already qualified to practise as a health and social care professional (as their qualifications are recognised as evidence towards Accreditation) – and is widely recognised as providing the externally validated evidence of DANOS competence required in the NTA targets.

Our Professional Certification Advisory Panel (PCAP) is responsible for identifying those qualifications which provide at least indirect (complementary) evidence of DANOS-competence, and against which specific units. To be Accredited under the scheme practitioners need to provide evidence of their competence against each of ten DANOS units (including the four 'core units') through one or more qualifications recognised by the PCAP – and where the qualifications concerned provide only 'complementary' (ie indirect) evidence of DANOS competence they need to be backed up by an internal workplace assessment directly against the specific units concerned.

Two examples of qualifications recognised as providing complementary evidence of DANOS competence covering all ten units required for Accreditation are Addaction's Core Competence Framework qualification (awarded by the Open College Network) and Clouds' Foundation Degree in Addictions Counselling (awarded by Bath University).

The Open University's suite of DANOS-related 'professional awards', developed jointly with FDAP, are based on a direct workplace assessment of DANOS competence and are recognised as

evidence towards FDAP Accreditation in their own right. The ten unit 'Professional Award for Drug and Alcohol Practitioners' provides all the evidence required for FDAP Accreditation. While the smaller 'Professional Development Awards' cover individual units and a number of specified 'clusters', and can be used as 'top-ups' towards FDAP Accreditation, as well as for demonstrating ongoing professional development.

Workers who do not have all the evidence required for FDAP Accreditation can be Registered as a Drug and Alcohol Professional if they are able to provide at least a workplace assessment demonstrating their competence against the relevant DANOS units. Because it does not require these assessments to be backed up by qualifications, registration does not provide externally-validated evidence of competence. However, it does provide supporting evidence of competence, and is widely-recognised as a valuable first step towards demonstrating DANOS competence.

Almost 200 people have so far been Registered or Accredited by FDAP – and more than 50 have signed up for one of the suite of Open University awards. For more information about FDAP Accreditation and the Open University awards see under 'professional qualifications' at www.fdap.org.uk.

Simon Shepherd is chief executive of The Federation of Drug and Alcohol Professionals (FDAP).

Robert Clasper Todd, Head of Training and Development at Addaction

When DANOS was launched we already had our own competence framework at Addaction and a qualification linked to it which met our needs very well. We wanted to keep our scheme while also ensuring we complied fully with the NTA's targets – and FDAP's Accreditation scheme provided us with a way to do this. Otherwise we would have had to rip up what we had and start again. Instead, we

worked with FDAP to develop our qualification to ensure that it provided complementary evidence against the ten units in their scheme – and incorporated line manager appraisals directly against the units themselves to provide the additional bridge FDAP required between our competence framework and the DANOS standards.

We are really pleased with how it has worked out – as are our staff, who now not only get a qualification from the Open College Network when they complete our training, but also get recognition as an Accredited Drug and Alcohol Professional too.

Mike Wheatley, Area Drug Co-ordinator, Prison Service High Security Estate

The Prison Service High Security Directorate covers eight prison-based drug teams and we have decided to base our workforce development strategy around the FDAP Professional Certification scheme. Our training and appraisal programme is being developed to ensure that all our staff become competent in at least the ten units in FDAP's scheme. From there, staff are being asked to work towards

Registration as a Drug and Alcohol Professional, as a first step in demonstrating their DANOS competence. In the longer term, we want them all to become Accredited by FDAP – getting the qualifications they require (either covering all ten units or 'topping up' existing qualifications), through the Open University suite of professional awards.

Our staff have embraced our plans enthusiastically, and see them as an opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge, and demonstrate their professional competence to the wider world.