

Diploma in Geology. Using and Customising the Self- evaluation Tools for a practical and field-based Continuing Education Programme.

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The Diploma in Geology programme team, in University College Cork, have welcomed the new QACEP evaluation tools. These tools were presented as a 'carrot' and not a 'stick'. That is, we had to clearly state the benefits of using these tools, to persuade the team members that the additional work initially required would help to improve the programme and enhance the student learning experience. The team found that the QACEP tools provided a very detailed checklist of most aspects of the programme, including some that had previously been assumed or neglected. They go much deeper in their investigation of areas of course design

and development. The tools have highlighted one particular area where attention is needed, and that is in the distance learning element of the programme. Already, thanks to these tools, new developments leading to quality improvement have emerged. In the coming year on-line resources will be updated and improved for both campus and distance learner cohorts. The tools helped to provide a common language for discussion not only within the programme but with other programme coordinators/teachers within the institution. This will provide a more systematic approach to programme evaluation within the institution. The tools

In University College Cork, the 2-year Diploma in Geology continuing education programme has been running for 21 years. This programme consists of four 15 E.C.T.S. modules, and attracts students who are interested in career change and career enhancement. It also attracts a large number of students who have an amateur interest and wish to increase their understanding of the world around them, and play their part as citizens. This programme is at level 7 in the Irish National Qualification Framework. Between 20 and 30 students participate each year. A small number of students choose the Distance Learning option. The programme team routinely request student feedback for evaluation purposes. This year, the pilot QACEP self-evaluation was carried out mid-cycle. In customising the self-evaluation tool some questions will be added to take account of feedback from distance learning students.

are providing metrics and qualitative information for prospective students and other external stakeholders, as well as for the institutional review process. Their use is making institutional processes and data transparent. This will assist planning and ease transitions caused by changes in administrative or academic staff. We have found that not all of the questions are relevant to the Diploma in Geology programme, and the tools are being customised for our own purposes in the coming years.

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