# CLD Developmental Approval Standards 2025

## Foreword

The Approval Committee of the Community Learning and Development Standards Council is responsible for the approval of CLD learning programmes, whether delivered by universities, FE colleges or other learning providers, in a range of settings. Approval is a form of quality assurance; approved programmes have been judged by their peers to be providing learning that equips practitioners with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver effective, responsive CLD practice.

We are keen to support the responsive and creative learning programmes being developed for and by the sector. Part of our support is the introduction of the Standards Council Approvals Suite, made up of the Developmental route, Professional route, and the Standards Council Standards Mark.

The Approval Suite has been created by the Standards Council in collaboration with the field to address the demand for quality assurance at all levels of learning.

- the Developmental route is for providers offering learning opportunities below degree level that have already been verified by an awarding body such as the SQA. The process is via an application supported by evidence from the applicant; the submission is shared with the panel electronically and discussed via an online or in person meeting with the applicant.
- the Professional route is for providers offering learning opportunities at degree and post graduate level. The process involves a significant written submission followed by a panel visit to the provider.
- the Standards Council Standards Mark has been developed to recognise the quality of CLD learning opportunities provided within CLD sector. The Standards Mark looks at the whole range of learning opportunities offered, not one specific programme, as well as the learning culture of the organisation.

These Standards are for the Developmental route. They are appropriate for courses such as the HNC Working with Communities, Professional Development Awards or Micro Qualifications from institutions. To proceed with this route, the course must have some form of validation from an awarding body; this process then looks for the CLD specific elements of the learning.

It is my pleasure to recommend these Standards to you.

Graeme McMeekin
Chair
CLD Standards Council Approval Committee

# Contents

# The CLD Standards Council Scotland

The CLD Standards Council Scotland is the professional body for people who work and volunteer in community learning and development. Registered members of the Standards Council include people such as community development, adult learning, and youth workers. Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident, and committed to equality, empowerment, and life-wide learning for all. Using CLD principles and values we work with our partners to raise standards, increase public satisfaction, and achieve sustainable progress.

The development of a national body for CLD was a commitment made in the Scottish Executive's report Empowered to Practice (2003) which considered the future of CLD learning in Scotland. In June 2004, a short-life task group was convened to consider the development of a practitioner-led body. It recommended that the CLD Standards Council be established, and this was agreed by Ministers. The full report, Strengthening Standards: Improving the Quality of Community Learning and Development Service Delivery (2007), is on our [website](#).

The CLD Standards Council is a membership organisation responsible for:-

- supporting, promoting, and developing career-wide professional learning
- maintaining the membership register for CLD professionals in Scotland
- quality assurance and approval of CLD qualifications and learning

The CLD Standards Council has been in existence since 2008, with an ever increasing number of registered and associate members.

Over 50 people from the sector are actively involved in the committees and work of the Council. Details, including profiles of our committee members, are available on  the [CLD Standards Council website](#).

# The Competence Framework for Community Learning and Development



All submissions presented for Developmental Approval must include mapping of the programme content to the CLD Competence Framework. This will show how participants are prepared for practice in this field of work at the appropriate level. Please note that at this level of programme it should be the headline topics that should be evidenced not the individual indicator levels. At this level of learning it is a raising awareness of competences that is expected with a steer to developing these in the future.

# The Developmental approval process

The Developmental approval process has been designed for programmes that have already been validated by an awarding body such as the SQA or a University Court where the programme does not lead to a professional qualification, or where the provider of a programme has been granted status as an Approved Centre by the SQA devolved authority scheme.

- an example of a suitable programme is the HNC Working with Communities.
- an example of a member of the devolved authority scheme is a College/University or where the qualification is a micro credential and does not lead to a professional qualification.

The Developmental approval process allows providers to use the evidence that they have prepared and presented to the awarding body to support their application to the CLD Standards Council thus avoiding duplication of time and effort. The Developmental approval process focuses specifically on the CLD aspects of the programme and ensures that practice is demonstrated at the appropriate level.

The first step for the process is contacting the CLD Standards Council Development Officer to discuss if  Developmental Approval is the best route for the provider. If it is, the Officer will ask the applicant to obtain a copy of the awarding body report and the Officer will then match it against the CLD Standards Council criteria. If it matches, the provider will then be asked to provide written evidence of the CLD aspects of the programme.

The written evidence submitted will be considered by a panel of peers from the CLD field. There may on occasion need to be a face to face meeting with the panel and provider but as standard, the process will be a desk-based exercise supported by an online video call or in person meeting where required or requested.

Successful programmes are approved by the CLD Standards Council for a period of no more than five years, at which point learning providers must submit the programme for re-approval.

During the approval period, providers must complete a midterm review. This involves submitting a report and any other relevant documentation to the Approval Committee. Programmes may then be subject to a review visit, for which a maximum of two months' notice will be given.

### Aims and objectives of Developmental Approval

- to maintain and enhance the quality of existing learning in line with stated standards of competence
- to ensure comparability of learning standards
- to enhance learning provision through co-operation, networking, and collaboration between participating bodies
- to enhance the effectiveness and range of learning opportunities
- to enhance the status of Community Learning and Development

### What are the benefits of Developmental Approval?

There are clear benefits in gaining approval for an learning programme. Approval by the CLD Standards Council can help the provider to:

- promote the learning programme and organisation to a range of learners including practitioners wishing to undertake professional development
- prepare learners for working in the CLD sector;
- demonstrate that the programme clearly aligns with the CLD Competences
- demonstrate clearly your programme aligns to CLD values and principles and the Code of Ethics;
- ensure the learning programme aligns to the relevant national occupational standards; and/or
- raises the profile of CLD in the applicants organisation and learning community.

### The Development Officer

The Officer's role is to support and guide learning providers through the process. They co-ordinate the process and liaise between the learning provider, the panel, and the Approval Committee.

The Officer will be on hand to:

- answer any questions you have
- provide further information and guidance on the process;
- advise on the documents you are required to submit; and
- support the applicant- throughout the Approval process.

### Timescales

The Approval process takes as long as is necessary for the learning provider, in discussion with the Development Officer, to put together the relevant documentation which is then submitted to the panel.

**Mid-term review/questionnaire**

Approved learning programmes will be subject to a mid-term review and/or Questionnaire. Providers must submit a report and supporting documentation in response to a list of questions. Details of the process will be issued to providers after their programme is approved.

**Re-approval**

Programmes retain Developmental Approval for a period of no more than five years, at which point they must re-submit an application. At least six months prior to the end date of the approval period, the learning provider will be notified by the Development Officer of the approval period coming to an end. The provider will then consider how they wish to re-submit the programme.

# The submission process

## Informal expression of interest

The learning provider contacts the Development Officer who will offer advice on the appropriate Approval route.

## Developmental approval request form

The Development Officer will provide a copy of the Developmental approval request form.  This form  commits the learning provider to ensure that all submissions clearly demonstrate a CLD focus and connection to the standards:

- the programme has a suitable amount of practice hours (where required for the programme/award) in a CLD setting
- the content covers the range of contexts within CLD – work with adults, communities and young people.
- the programme is mapped to the CLD Competences, and CLD Code of Ethics is included
- the policies, principles, and values of CLD in Scotland are included
- the programme is staffed by the required number of suitably qualified CLD practitioners
- a commitment to making students aware of the ability to use i-develop to support their CPD
- a commitment to making students aware of the ability to become a member of CLD Standards Council Scotland.

Please note these are the essential criteria and if they cannot be met then the submission will not progress.

The learning provider seeking approval must return a copy of the Developmental approval request form with a copy of the relevant awarding body report for the programme.

## Awarding body report and submission from provider

The Development Officer must see report from the awarding body regarding the programme.

## Proforma

The Development Officer will send the proforma once confident that the programme will meet the essential criteria.

Learning providers must use the pro-forma supplied by the Officer to structure their submission. This will help the team preparing the submission to ensure all necessary content is included. It also provides a consistent approach to help the Approval Panel review the submission.

## The Approval Panel

The Development Officer will convene a panel when both they and the learning provider are satisfied that the submission document is complete.

A member of the Approval Committee will chair the Approval Panel. It will comprise of a minimum of 3 people. Approval panel members will each be sent a copy of the submission and asked to consider whether the programme prepares participants for practice at the appropriate level. The panel then share their initial considerations with the Development Officer, who collates and reviews to decide if an online call or face to face meeting of the panel is required to discuss the submission and decision.

## The Approval Panel decision

At the conclusion of the Approval Panel discussion, a decision will be made on whether the learning programme will be approved. This often includes conditions and recommendations.

- Conditions must be met within agreed timescales
- Recommendations are points of development for the programme team to consider

A full written report will be sent to the learning provider shortly after the Panels report has been presented to the Approval Committee for a decision. It will include one of the following decisions:

- that the programme be approved for a period not exceeding five years
- that the programme be approved for a period not exceeding five years, subject to certain listed conditions being fulfilled within an agreed timescale
- that the programme is not approved for the reasons stated in the report

The panel decision will be presented to the Approval Committee for endorsement.

## Terminology within the approval process

In the approval process the CLD Standards Council has chosen to make reference to practice placement supervisors or practice placement tutors, supervised practice placement and practice-based learning.

We appreciate that different providers will choose to use different terminology such as fieldwork, fieldwork supervisors, practice learning tutors, however, within the  submission it is critical that you give clear indication of the terminology you use against those used by the CLD Standards Council and mentioned in the paragraph above.

## The Appeals Procedure

If the Approval Committee has not approved a learning programme, the learning provider may submit a written appeal to the Chair of the Approval Committee. The appeal must be lodged within the 28 days following the learning provider's receipt of the written report, and clearly state the grounds on which it is based. Should the Chair of the Approval Committee agree that there is a case to answer, the learning provider will be formally notified of agreement to hear the appeal and invited to provide further written evidence with an opportunity to present a case personally.

An Appeal Panel will then be convened. It will usually include two members of the Approval Committee, one of whom will act as a Chair and neither will have had any previous detailed involvement with the case under consideration. In addition, a member of the Executive Committee will be recruited to act as secretary to the Appeal Panel.

The Appeal Panel will endeavour to meet as soon as possible, but no later than two months following the formal notification of agreement to hear the appeal. The Chair of the original Approval Panel will also be invited to explain the Approval Panel's  actions/decisions to the Appeal Panel.

The Appeal Panel will have the power to:

- allow the appeal
- allow the appeal subject to specified conditions
- dismiss the appeal.

The Appeal Panel will determine its own procedure within these Standards. It will convey its decision in writing to the applicants and to the Approval Committee and give reasons for its decision.

The Appeal Panel's decision is final.

Annex One – the Standard Council Approval example Proforma

Annex Two – Hours Calculations for Placement

The Competences for Community Learning and Development (or on request from CLD Standards Council)

## Application Proforma

### Section One – Learning Providers Details

| 1. Learning Provider Name (this should be the title you wish us to add to any certification we issue) |
|---|

| Insert response here |
|---|

| 2. Exact Title of Course/s (which you would wish to be seen on any certification issued) |
|---|

| Insert response here |
|---|

| 3. Address of Learning Provider |
|---|

| Insert response here |
|---|

| 4. Name of Main and Secondary Contacts |
|---|

| Main:<br><br>Secondary: |
|---|

| 5. Email Addresses of Main and Secondary Contacts |
|---|

Main:

Secondary:

| 6. Telephone numbers of Main and Secondary Contacts |
|---|

| Main:<br><br>Secondary: |
|---|

| 7. Website/Social Media link/s |
|---|

| Insert response here |
|---|

## Application Proforma

**Section Two – Background purpose and rational**

This section is where you can evidence how your course complies with the CLD Standards Council Principles, Values and Ethics. This is divided into sections where you can give your evidence as well as reference supporting documents that demonstrate/support your evidence.

| 8. Please supply an overview/plan of the course/programme you wish to submit for approval |
| --- |

| Insert response here |
| --- |

| 9. What partnerships does your establishment have with other organisations and the wider CLD Community/Profession i.e. Local Authorities, Third Sector, other educational establishments |
| --- |

| Insert response here |
| --- |

| 10. Details of any consultation with employer providers and other stakeholders to identify the audience for this programme |
| --- |

| Insert response here |
| --- |

| 11. Details of the hours of practice-based learning that the programme contains |
| --- |

| Insert response here |
| --- |

| 12. How the design and delivery of the programme reflects the values, ethics, and principles of CLD, and reflects the CLD competencies<br>Competent Practitioner Framework \| CLD Standards Council for Scotland |
| --- |

| Insert response here |
| --- |

| **13.** Detail which National Occupational Standards have been taken into account in the development of this programme. Please be explicit about how and why each one is being used<br>National Occupational Standards \| CLD Standards Council for Scotland |
| --- |

| Insert response here |
| --- |

**Section 3 – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

This section is where you can evidence how your programme encourages applications from diverse communities and how you evidence Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within your organisation and within your programme/s of learning.

14. This section should include:

- how the programme advances equality and diversity through the values, principles, and ethics of CLD

- how the learning materials demonstrate and support diversity in the CLD workplace (learner focussed)

- what learning, development and support the learning provider makes available to staff in the area of equality and diversity? (e.g. policies, training, management skills, recruitment skills)

- how you raise awareness of the programme within diverse communities and how successful this is

Insert response here

**Section 4 - Participants**

This section is where you can evidence how your programme recruits students and learners, that a commitment to the Competent Practitioner framework is understood and accepted and that learners are made aware of progression routes.

15. This section should include and evidence

- how learners are selected for the programme of learning

- how practice placement supervisors are involved in the selection process where applicable to the programme or award

- progression routes participants are made aware of

- support participants receive in connection to undertaking practice based learning (before, during and after)

Insert response here

**Section 5 – Content/Structure/Mode**

This section is where you can evidence how your programme introduces the learners to CLD theories and practice approaches.

**NB As an approved learning provider you are required to commit to the CLD Standards Council Scotland providing an input to students on membership and ethical practice**.

16. This section should include, and evidence practice based learning on:

- how the programme reflects and refers to current policies and all CLD practice contexts. This should include references to theoretical models/approaches both current and historical

- how the programme raises awareness of improvement through self-evaluation using available frameworks i.e. How good is our community learning and development?

- how the programme offers a balance between contact and non-contact time, promotion of self-management, and embeds critical reflection on/in all aspects of learning and practice.

Insert response here

17. This section should include, and evidence practice based learning elements where applicable to the programme on:

- how practice placements are identified and supported

- use of all relevant documentation including, but not restricted to - appropriate health & safety, public protection, and public liability insurances

- confirm that Practice Placement Standards documentation is in use. Professional [Practice Placement Standards | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

- how the required placement hours will be achieved as part of this programme (where applicable)

- how practice placements will be quality assured

Insert response here

**Section 6 – Staff & Placement Supervisors**

Staff and Placement Supervisors who are delivering or supporting this programme must have the relevant skills and experience of Community Learning and Development to deliver/support this programme to learners at the relevant level. Staff are expected to be registered or associate members of the CLD Standards Council.

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18. For Teaching Staff – please include and evidence

- the qualifications and CLD experience (including research papers if applicable) of staff delivering on the programme

- arrangements for on-going Professional Learning (CPD) and the support provided to enable the teaching staff to carry out their role

- the ratio of learners to teaching staff (as full-time equivalents)

- the support given to  teaching staff by way of admin/clerical support.

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Insert response here

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19. For Practice Placement – please include and evidence (where applicable to

the programme/award)

- how suitably qualified (to the same level or above) and experienced practice placement supervisors are identified, recruited, and supported (where applicable to the programme ) for delivery

- how, if the supervisors are not suitably qualified to the same level or above the programme being delivered, procedures are in place to mitigate this i.e. mentorship from a CLD qualified practitioner

- the arrangements for on-going Professional Learning (CPD) and the support provided to enable practice placement supervisors to carry out their role

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Insert response here

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**Section 7 – Assessment, Support, Monitoring and Evaluation**

This section is where you can evidence how your course assesses, supports and monitors learners work and placement (where applicable). How learners are supported by staff and supervisors and how the organisation supports both learners and staff/supervisors.

20. Assessment and Support - this section should include and evidence

- an outline of the strategies in place for support where learners are at risk of failing any element of the course requirements

- the involvement of supervisors in the assessment of practice (where applicable)

- the guidance and support provided to supervisors regarding assessing

- candidates and what level of performance is expected from the student/learner

Insert response here

21. Monitoring and Evaluation

- describe how views from all stakeholders are sought and an example of a change/s that have been made as a result of this process. Documentary evidence can be attached if required.

- describe organisational practices for monitoring, reporting, and addressing attendance of learners in both learning and placement settings.

- describe how diversity of the learner population is monitored and reported?

Insert response here

22. Please indicate the which of the following documents you have included with your application, If you require any assistance, please email us at Contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk.

| | |
|---|---|
| SQA Approvals document & SQA External Examiners Report or equivalent governing body report/documents | ☐ |
| Table evidencing the NOS, Competencies, Ethics and Values | ☐ |
| Course Outline | ☐ |
| Teaching Staff List with qualifications and experience | ☐ |
| Placement supervisor contract, reporting/support framework | ☐ |
| Others | ☐ |

If you included other documents not listed above, please detail below.

Insert response here

**For CLD Standards Council Admin Purposes:**

Date of Review (Approx. half way through approval period)

Insert response here

Date of Renewal (5 years from time approval being granted

Insert response here

## Annex 2 – Guidance on practice placement hours

**Guidance document to evidence practice placement within your approval submission for CLD Standards Council**

Where applicable and appropriate to the award – evidence how many practice hours are part of the programme or award being delivered.

Different institutions/providers will run their programmes in different ways, and this provides a challenge for a panel considering a submission and also for a provider/institution preparing a submission in order to ensure that the Developmental Standards are met and consistent across the CLD field.

Our research has shown some or all of the following options of evidencing practice placement percentages and in some cases a combination of some of these options:

- credits
- hours
- units
- days
- some will even provide evidence/calculations of face to face time

It is for the learning provider to present their calculations, based upon the guidance and give justifications to the panel for their decision.
The discussion will then normally focus around what each institution/provider would consider to be practice.

The CLD Standards Council allowed for flexibility to achieve this standard, wishing to enable  institutions/providers to demonstrate creativity to make their programmes appealing, flexible, adaptable, and accessible. However, the feedback from institutions/providers is that it is increasingly difficult to evidence these standards with a panel and these standards inevitably result in long, hard, and challenging discussions during approval visits.

This document has therefore been designed to give some guidance to providers on the best way for them to evidence these standards within their submission. This document will include:

- samples of how to evidence
- confirmation of what a panel would and would not consider to be practice

## Evidencing hours of practice reference table

| Degree/Programme Type | SCQF LEVEL | SCQF Credit Points (40%) | Notional hours of study | Supervised Practice hours to meet 40% requirement | Hours inbuilt in Qualification as of 2025 (SQA) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NPA – Theory and Approaches to Youth Work | 6 | 14 | 140 | 56 | 0 |
| PDA – Intro to Youth Work | 6 | 28 (11) | 280 | 112 | 10 |
| PDA – Intro to Adult Learning | 6 | 20 (8) | 200 | 80 | ~10? |
| PDA – Intro to Community Development | 6 | 18 (7) | 180 | 72 | ~10? |
| NC - WWC | 6 | 72 (28.8) | 720 | 288 | 60 – based on units |
| HNC - WWC | 7 | 96 (38-48) | 960 | 384 (240 Minimum) | All providers doing between 240 – 384 hours * |
| Diploma None offered | 8 | 240 (96-120) | 2400 | 960-1200 | N/A – No SCQF Level 8 Programme |
| BA | 9 | 360 (144 - 180) | 3600 | 1440 - 1800 | As per Professional Standards |
| BA (Honours) | 10 | 480 (192 – 240) | 4800 | 1440 Minimum | As per Professional Standards |
| PGD | 11 | 120 (48 – 60) | 1200 | 480 | As per Professional Standards |
| Masters | 11 | 180 (72 – 90) | 1800 | 480 | As per Professional Standards |

* The SVQs are not included in the above table as they are vocational qualifications and all Performance Criteria and Knowledge and Understanding Statements are evidenced via practice.

## What is and what is not considered practice?

Is

- face to face work
- working on a plan with a group
- providing coaching
- preparation/research into an activity
- completing an activity
- reflecting on the activity
- observing an activity and providing reflection on it
- working on a specified project with others

Not

- reading about face to face work
- attending a lecture about group work
- a visit with no input or reflection exercise

## Definition of Practice Supervisor - QAA

Within the QAA document Subject Benchmark Statement: Youth and Community Work November 2019 it is stated:

"6.6 For practice-based learning the role of the practice-based supervisor is critical. Assessment of practice is rigorous and undertaken in partnership between the higher education provider and the practice area. Practice-based learning is based on clear contracts with employers. Supervisors and mentors are fully briefed by the higher education providers, and where they are involved in assessment there are clear systems for the moderation of their assessed practice. Practice supervisors for programmes leading to professional qualifications are appropriately professionally qualified."

Full details of this document can be found at:

[Subject Benchmark Statement Youth and Community Work](#)

## Annex 3 – Application flow chart

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                        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │   Applicant Contact  │
                        │    CLD Standards     │
                        │       Council        │
                        └──────────┬───────────┘
                                   ▼
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │         Meeting with Applicant on             │
        │                Suitability                    │
        └──────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

**Applicant Contact CLD Standards Council**

**Meeting with Applicant on Suitability**

**Yes, Application Suitable – Send Developmental Documents**

**No Application Not Suitable – Refer to other Approval Options**

**Applicant works with Development Officer on Application**

**Applicant submits application to Development Officer**

**Development Officer completes first check and provides feedback**

**Application is sent back to applicant for review**

**Application is recommended by officer to proceed to Approvals panel**

**Application is approved by Approvals Committee panel or sent back to applicant to review**

**Application is approved by Approvals Committee**