

Qualifications in youth work – FAQ

April 2010

Introduction

The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) receives lots of enquiries from people who are thinking about undertaking training and qualifications in youth work to help improve their skills, knowledge and confidence in working with young people. We have set out to answer the most common questions we receive from people who work or volunteer in the voluntary and community youth sector. If your question has not been answered here or you need further clarification then email the workforce development officer at mail@ncvys.org.uk.

Do I need a qualification in order to work with young people?

No, there is no legal requirement to have a qualification. Increasingly though employers are asking for applicants to have particular youth work qualifications when they apply for jobs. NCVYS has been informed by one of its members that it is becoming much harder to work without a recognised qualification as schools and statutory bodies are increasingly asking for evidence of qualifications e.g. to allow youth workers access to work on school premises.

Every worker or volunteer should expect to have an induction and training covering the basics of working with young people, which includes child protection, risk assessment and first aid. However, the most important thing is that you are able to relate to young people and that you first gain some experience working with them.

What are the benefits if I decide to gain a qualification?

Young people deserve to have the best possible services provided to them and therefore need skilled and knowledgeable staff and volunteers to deliver these. To be really effective in your role you need to have a good mix of experience and training/qualifications. It is the latter which provides you with the tools and knowledge, which can then be applied to your work.

Some people decide to train and/or gain qualifications to improve their confidence whilst others do it to improve their career prospects. Although pay should reflect duties, some employers do pay higher salaries to staff that have youth work qualifications.

What qualification should I aim for?

The qualification you aim for should be appropriate to the role you are undertaking in your work or volunteer placement. To help you select the most appropriate qualification, a progressions route diagram and table have been created – see Appendix One and Two.

Is there an apprenticeship in youth work available?

Yes at levels 2 and 3. Anyone living in England over the age of 16 and not in full time education can apply for an apprenticeship. More information available from www.apprenticeships.org.uk, which includes an apprenticeship vacancy searching facility. It is advisable to obtain careers advice to talk through if an apprenticeship is suitable for you. Details of career advice services is available at www.ncvys.org.uk >> [training](#) >> [careers and volunteering](#). Employers interested in offering apprenticeships from the voluntary and community youth sector should contact Fair Train at www.fairtrain.org

Are there any programmes to help young people who are unemployed who are interested in a career in youth work and gaining a qualification?

If you are a young person aged 16 – 25 then Youth Steps, a Prince's Trust managed project, run in partnership with The National Youth Agency, YMCA and Wiltshire Youth Development Service may be for you. It is aimed at young people who have faced barriers and benefited in the past from personal development programmes and are now interested in becoming youth leaders. The programme provides experience and a qualification (ABC Level 1 Certificate in an Introduction to Youth Work). Call 0800 842 842 to find out more or visit the web site http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/need_help/courses/youth_steps.aspx.

How do I find a suitable course locally?

There are various ways of finding a course locally. If you work or volunteer for a national voluntary youth organisation then find out what in-house training programmes are available – organisations such as St. John Ambulance, offer these. Some organisations are also offering conditional bursary schemes to both their paid staff and volunteers towards the cost of youth work qualifications and provide course information e.g. YMCA England and the Salvation Army.

Many local youth networks provide introductory courses to working with young people or work in partnership with the local authority youth service to provide courses. To find out if there is a network near you please email mail@ncvys.org.uk

Lifelong Learning UK can provide advice and information about course provision.
Telephone 0300 303 1877 or email advice@lluk.org

Youth work qualifications at levels 1-3 are accredited by awarding bodies. You can contact the awarding bodies direct and they can advise which course providers are located near you:

City and Guilds (youth work qualifications levels 2-3) www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
or telephone 020 7294 2800

ABC Awards (youth work qualifications levels 1-3) www.abcawards.co.uk or telephone 01823 365436

National Open College Network (youth work qualification level 3) www.nocn.org.uk
or telephone 01332 268080

The level 4 Certificate Working with Young People is offered by the **Open University**
www.openuniversity.co.uk/cys or telephone 0845 300 60 90.

A list of universities and institutions offering **higher education youth work qualifications (JNC)** is available on the National Youth Agency's website at www.nya.org.uk >> [workforce and training](#)

What is the JNC?

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Youth and Community Workers is the body that sets the national framework used to grade and pay youth work jobs. The function of the JNC is to agree the salary scales and other terms of conditions of service.

The second function of the JNC is to endorse youth and community workers' qualifications, which have been professionally approved by the Education and Training Standards (ETS) Committee of the National Youth Agency (NYA). By selecting a course recognised by the JNC you ensure that the course is fit for purpose. For more information about the JNC, go to www.ncvys.org.uk >> [workforce](#) >> [JNC](#).

Is it true that from 2010 all youth workers have to have a degree?

No, this is not true! From September 2010, the minimum qualification, which provides you with professional status as a youth worker (and right to call yourself a 'Youth Work Professional') is an honours degree in a youth and community work subject (recognised by the JNC). This means that youth work has become a graduate profession.

It is a personal choice if you want to study at this level and to gain professional recognition. People who want to work as youth service managers, youth work trainers or as senior youth workers may be interested in obtaining a youth and community work degree or higher (JNC recognised).

The reason for youth work becoming a degree-level profession was to put the sector's status on a par with teaching and social work and to raise standards.

It is very important that any higher education course you select (in a youth and community work subject) is recognised by the JNC. You are therefore ensuring that the course is fit for purpose and that you will be awarded the recognised professional status as a youth worker.

I do not have a degree but a Dip HE or Foundation Degree in youth and community work – do I have to do more study from 2010?

If these courses provided you with JNC professional status as a youth worker before September 2010, then you maintain your professional status – no need for further study. However, continuous professional development is always recommended to keep up to date with your practice!

I have a degree but not in a youth and community work subject, what course should I study if I want to be a professionally qualified youth worker?

If you have an honours degree in a related subject such as social sciences, then it is advisable to consider the postgraduate options i.e. Master of Arts, Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma in a youth and community work subject. It is recommended that you select a course which is JNC recognised. Please obtain further advice from the admissions department of the Higher Education Institution.

A list of courses is available from the National Youth Agency's website at www.nya.org.uk >> [workforce and training](#). A workforce adviser from the National Youth Agency is also available to answer any further questions about youth work qualifications – contact details are also on the website.

I would like to know if there is any funding available to pay for qualifications?

NCVYS in conjunction with NAVCA has created a Funding Guide to Workforce Development and within it there is a section aimed at individuals looking for funding to pay for qualifications. Please download the latest version at www.ncvys.org.uk >> [workforce](#) >> [funding](#)

I have looked and there is no local university offering youth work degrees, so what are my options?

Open distance learning courses (degrees and post-graduate courses) are an option and a full list of institutions providing these can be found on the National Youth Agency's website at www.nya.org.uk >> [workforce and training](#). They are listed within the same list of universities and institutions offering higher education youth work qualifications. Alternatively, visit www.ncvys.org.uk >> [training](#) >> [open distance learning](#).

I have heard that a review of youth work qualifications is taking place can you tell me more?

The National Youth Agency is leading a project to provide new and updated youth work sector vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3. The new qualifications will sit on the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

All new qualifications on the QCF will be made up of smaller units of learning and every unit has a credit value. There will be three sizes of qualifications on the QCF:

Award (1 to 12 credits)

Certificate (13 to 36 credits)

Diploma (37 credits or more)

The qualification name represents the size of a qualification, not how difficult it is. Levels will still be used, so for example a Youth Work Certificate Level 3 may be developed (which is equivalent to A- levels).

There are lots of new benefits to the new qualifications, including allowing learners to build up all their learning towards units and qualifications, and avoid repeating what they've already learnt. Learners can complete units at a pace and in a way that fits around their home and work lives. More information about the QCF is available from www.qcda.gov.uk and more information about the review of youth work qualifications from the National Youth Agency at www.nya.org.uk >> [workforce and training](#).

The qualifications listed in Appendix One and Two are still recognised by employers and will continue to be even when the new qualifications come in to place.

I have heard of a new qualification called the Award in Working with Vulnerable Young People – should I be looking at doing this qualification rather than a youth work one?

A youth work qualification provides a good foundation of knowledge for anyone interested in working with young people. The Award or Certificate in Working with Vulnerable Young People at Levels 3 or 4 are specialist qualifications, and of real interest to people who work or volunteer in the voluntary and community youth sector. It is a good qualification to progress on to after undertaking youth work training.

It is a personal choice, but you need not complete the full award or certificate either, you can just complete units relevant to your work. For example, if you work with young people with mental health problems then there is a specific unit about this. There are units covering a range of issues faced by vulnerable young people, such as those who are in care or leaving care, who have disabilities, who are pregnant or who are homeless etc.

ABC Awards (www.abcawards.co.uk) is working with training providers to offer this qualification and the Open University (email vq-awards@open.ac.uk) will be offering it too.

What is Youth Professional Status – is it a qualification?

Youth Professional Status (YPS) is not a qualification and not a role. It is a status awarded to individuals who can demonstrate they are leaders of practice in their field of work connected to working with young people in the delivery of Integrated Youth Support Services. It will be regarded as a significant step in an individual's professional development.

Further development work and a pilot is taking place during 2010/11. At the time of writing it is not certain if YPS will be introduced from 2011/12, however employers may use the available YPS Standards as a tool to support continuous professional development of staff and volunteers. More information available from <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/young-peoples-workforce/common-platform-of-skills-and-competences/yps>.

Further information

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) www.ncvys.org.uk – the national network for the voluntary and community youth sector in England. The web page www.ncvys.org.uk >> [training](#) >> [careers and volunteering](#), contains advice on how to find a volunteer placement, where to go for further careers advice, funding to pay for training courses and other sources of information, including the Youth Worker Careers Information Sheet. If you have further queries then please email the workforce development officer at mail@ncvys.org.uk

Thanks

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Equal opportunities

If you require this information in different formats or have any other need, then please contact the NCVYS workforce development officer. Please email mail@ncvys.org.uk or ring 020 7278 1041.

Disclaimer

The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services has made every reasonable effort to ensure that the information contained within this information sheet is accurate. However, the information has been compiled from a variety of sources and there may be errors or omissions. NCVYS cannot accept responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material contained herein. If you are aware of any inaccuracies please email mail@ncvys.org.uk



3rd Floor
Lancaster House
33 Islington High Street
London N1 9LH

T: 020 7278 1041
F: 020 7833 2491
E: mail@ncvys.org.uk
www.ncvys.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1093386
Registered company no. 4385383

The National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS) is the independent voice of the voluntary and community youth sector in England. Our mission is to work with our members from voluntary and community organisations to build thriving communities and sustainable networks that help all young people achieve their potential.

Appendix I:

Youth work qualifications progression routes

Introduction to youth work or working with young people training course

For volunteers or people new to youth work, providing the basic knowledge everyone who works with young people needs to know.

VRQ Level 1 in youth work

Provides accreditation to those starting out in youth work with little or no experience.

VRQ/NVQ Level 2 in youth work (also known as youth support worker qualifications)

Provides a basic understanding of youth work concepts and is suitable for those who are likely to work with supervision e.g. volunteers, sessional staff, trainee youth workers.

VRQ/NVQ Level 3 in youth work (also known as youth support worker qualifications)

Provides more detailed knowledge and understanding of a wide range of youth work concepts. It is for those working with young people with a reasonable amount of autonomy and who require little supervision. These workers are likely to be responsible for developing and planning youth work activities and may manage small teams.

Level 4 Certificate Working with Young People (also known as a youth support worker qualification)

Level 5 – various qualifications e.g. Foundation Degree in Working with Young People

VRQ	Vocationally Related Qualification
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
JNC	Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers

Please note: It is important to receive advice before signing up to do any qualification to ensure you are studying at the right level and you are clear about what the course entails and what is expected of you.

Levels 6-7:

Youth and community work higher education qualifications (should be JNC recognised)

From September 2010, the minimum qualifications which provide professional status are:

- BA Honours Degree
- Post-graduate certificate/diploma
- Master of Arts

YOUTH WORK PROFESSIONAL

Take on one of two roles:-

Role 1: a **youth service manager** responsible for the operational and strategic development of a youth service.

Role 2: due to obtaining advanced level knowledge of youth work concepts they work independently with young people as a **senior youth worker**. Often line manages other youth workers and is highly qualified to also plan and develop youth work activities. Sometimes also gets involved in youth work training delivery.

Appendix 2:

Table – how do youth work qualifications fit in with qualification frameworks?

Youth Work Qualification	National Qualifications Framework (current levels)	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications levels
	8 Specialist professional awards	D (Doctoral) Doctorates
Post Graduate Certificate/ Diploma, Master of Arts (youth and community work subject). If it is a JNC recognised course, then a professionally qualified youth worker status is awarded	7 NVQs, Level 7 Diploma, Level 7 Fellowship, Level 7 Advanced Professional Certificate	M (Masters) Masters Degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas
BA hons Degree (youth and community work subject). If it is a JNC recognised course, then a professionally qualified youth worker status is awarded	6 NVQs, Level 6 Diploma, Level 6 Certificate	H (Honours) Bachelors Degrees, Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
There are various qualifications at this level e.g. Foundation Degrees connected to Working with Young People, but from September 2010 these will not provide JNC professionally qualified youth worker status. There are many benefits of studying these qualifications e.g. a good progression route – please discuss with a course provider or a careers adviser.	5 NVQs, Level 5 Diploma, Level 5 Certificate, Level 5 BTEC Higher National Diploma	I (Intermediate) Diplomas of Higher Education and Further Education, Foundation Degrees, Higher National Diplomas
Certificate Working with Young People (Open University)	4 NVQs, Level 4 Diploma, Level 4 Certificate	C (Certificate) Certificates of Higher Education
VRQ/NVQ Level 3 in youth work	3 NVQs, VRQs, A' levels, Level 3 Diploma, Level 3 Certificate	Qualifications at Higher Education level start at level 4
VRQ/NVQ Level 2 in youth work	2 NVQs, VRQs, GCSEs Grades A*-C, Level 2 Diploma, Level 2 Certificate	
VRQ Level 1 in youth work	E Entry Level Certificate	

(The table is compiled with reference to the National Youth Agency's 'Where Youth Work Fits in to the Qualifications Frameworks' document and can be found at: www.nya.org.uk)

Please note that the National Qualifications Framework will cease by the end of December 2010 and new youth work qualifications at levels 2-3 are expected to be in place and sit on the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (www.qcda.gov.uk).