Quality Assurance in Training

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Aspiring to be a centre of excellence in police training and development, the Police College is conscious about quality assurance and enhancement. Programme 3.2.1 of the Force *Training and Development Plan 2006-2008* stipulates that the College should 'continue to enhance the training quality assurance mechanisms on training needs analysis, course development and documentation, training delivery, and training evaluation and accreditation, and apply such mechanisms to all major programmes'.

Prior to the adoption of Quality Assurance Mechanism (QAM) in College training programmes, the responsibility for maintaining training quality falls upon individual programme owners, who develop their own evaluation methods. The result was a diversity of different course evaluation systems, which although not ineffective, were subject to different standards and were difficult to monitor.

The objective of QAM is to strengthen the quality of training provided by the College. It provides a built-in system to ensure that all training programmes meet the requirements of the Force and the community it serves and that they are of good quality, and consistently, efficiently and effectively delivered.

Quality assurance in the College is more a process and cultivation of quality culture than a one-off exercise. QAM provides standard procedures and standard templates but staff commitment to quality training is one of the critical success factors.

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURE IN THE COLLEGE

The College has formed a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) to monitor the implementation of the QAM and to oversee its continual improvement. QAC meets half-yearly, or when required.

Quality assurance requires close partnership within and between training divisions and between training divisions and the Specialised Services Training Centre (SSTC). To strengthen the collaboration, each division has a Quality Assurance Representative (QAR) nominated by their Division Head to communicate, coordinate and implement quality assurance measures within their division and to liaise with other training divisions and SSTC. QARs also have the responsibility for coordinating quality assurance deliverables within their own training division.

SSTC plays a consultancy role in quality assurance, offering advice and assistance to training divisions where needed. It provides training on quality assurance in Student Instructors' Course for all incoming trainers. A continuing professional development module for serving instructors is also designed to ensure training personnel in the College are fully aware of these quality assurance procedures.

SSTC also shares good practices in training and development within the College. Templates such as training needs analysis report, survey questionnaires and curriculum handbook are also available in the guidebooks developed by SSTC[1], which are accessible on the Learning Portal on POINT.

Division Heads have the responsibility to ensure staff compliance with the QAM procedures. They are also to report progress in implementing QAM to QAC on a yearly basis.

[1] They are *A Guide to Training Needs Analysis, A Guide to the Preparation of a Curriculum Handbook*, *A Guide to Effective Training*, and *A Guide to Training Evaluation*.

QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM

QAM is developed in alignment with the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) framework, which the Force models on for its quality management system (FPM 58-03). Of the nine criteria of the EFQM model, the College QAM has chosen process as its entry point[2].

To understand QAM in the College, it is necessary to start with its training and development process. In essence, training process in the College encompasses four stages: training needs analysis, programme design, programme delivery and programme evaluation.

Training Needs Analysis

Training needs analysis identifies training needs with a view to determining the nature, the scope and the breadth and depth of a learning and development programme to be delivered. In conducting training needs analysis, views from stakeholders are collected by means of survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews, document reviews, etc.

Training has the role of either building new competencies, closing a performance gap, or improving work operations. Since training resources are limited, a training needs analysis will help decision-makers establish the need (or otherwise) of the proposed training in terms of its potential to improve operational efficiency or personal effectiveness.

Prior to conducting training needs analysis for a new course, a brief initial proposal should be prepared and endorsed by the Director of Police College[3] (D HKPC). The initial proposal will help the course designer think through vital issues such as why the training is necessary, what is to be covered and how it is best delivered. It is a blueprint to help the course

Figure 1. Training process in the College

designers to map the proposed training against actual stakeholders' needs.

Training needs analysis is also built into the review process for existing courses to ascertain whether training needs still exist to justify its continual existence or whether the training has to be reengineered to cater for new and differing needs. For an existing course, the training needs analysis may be consolidated in the major review.

The training needs analysis report for new training has to be approved by the respective Centre Heads whereas the training needs analysis results for an existing course will be consolidated in the major review report, which will be approved by the respective Centre Heads.

Programme Design

During this phase, the training content and delivery methods are developed, based on training requirements identified in the training needs analysis.

Course owners need to prepare a curriculum handbook for each of their major training programmes. A curriculum handbook consists of three main parts: (a) an overview, (b) a course description, and (c) descriptions of modules/subjects. These handbooks have to be endorsed by the respective Centre Heads. Subsequent amendments to the handbooks will be endorsed by respective Division Heads. SSTC will assist in reviewing the handbooks prepared by training divisions and uploading the handbooks onto the Learning Portal.

Training Materials and Learning Methodologies

Training materials such as training handouts and training aids reflect the quality of the training programmes. Hence, there is a need to ensure all training materials are up-to-date and are of a high quality.

The Research Centre sends alert messages through POINT on procedural and legislative changes to all instructors in the College, who are responsible for updating their own training handouts. Course owners are to ensure that materials are duly updated in accordance with their updating mechanism while all training materials have to be approved by the respective Division Heads.

To update College learning methodologies, SSTC will share with training divisions best practices from other learning institutes, overseas and
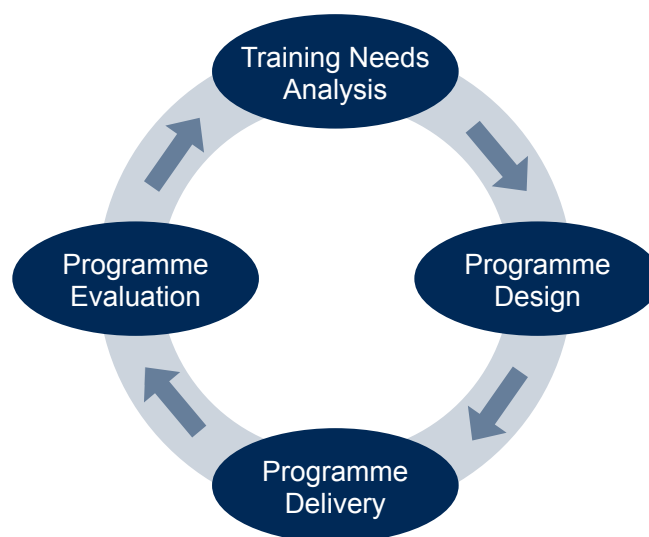
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[2] EFQM Model is a non-prescriptive Total Quality Management framework. Its nine criteria are leadership, people, policy and strategy, partnership and resources, processes, people results, customer results, society results and key performance results.

[3] The proposal should include a description of the course such as course title, background, course objectives, course contents, scope and training approach.

local training conferences, etc., as and when appropriate.

Programme Delivery

This phase implements course curricula, including the training content and delivery methods devised at the Programme Design phase. Course owners are to ensure all their trainers are competently trained in instructional skills. The respective Division Heads will play a monitoring role in overseeing courses under their command.

Trainer Development

A training programme and its QAM depends very much on well-qualified and dedicated trainers to make it effective.

Training personnel in the College do not all fall into the category of instructional staff. There are, for example, training managers like Centre or Division Heads who are not directly involved in classroom training but are nonetheless required to manage training and development activities and to steer the direction of training programmes under their command.

Working alongside and supporting the training managers and instructional staff are training specialists, the Force Training Officer (FTO) cadre and

Senior Training Officers (STO) on secondment from Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI), under SSTC who are professional training personnel providing consultancy and expertise advice on all training and development issues Forcewide. The FTO/ STO cadre is in the training support role and is normally not heavily involved in classroom delivery.

Training managers must have updated knowledge about recent trends and best practices in not only police training but also training and development as a whole. For this group of training personnel, SSTC shares with them the latest training knowledge and trends, as and when appropriate.

In the forefront of training are the instructional staff, who are either trainers overseeing and participating in the entire training process or other instructors providing skills-based training in one specialised area. The former includes the course directors while the latter are instructional staff such as weapons training or driver training instructors.

Whichever position these training personnel occupy in the College, they must have the necessary functional competencies in training and

development although their required competencies may differ depending on their role within the College.

Trainers in the College are mostly recruited from frontline formations, bringing with them a wealth of practical experience. However, many may have little training experience. To be an effective trainer, they need to master essential training concepts such as quality assurance, learning theories, learning ethics and the training process.

The College has a two-tier approach to trainer development. In the first tier, the Student Instructors' Course (SIC) provides foundation training for all instructors. In the second tier, the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme provides opportunities for the continual development of SIC graduates.

Trainers are mandated to complete the four-week SIC within six months of taking up instructional duties in the College and attend at least one CPD module[4] every year during their tenure in the College. Besides, they can attend seminars or training courses organised by other Formations or the CSTDI, etc. Under the peer observation system, they are to observe at least one class conducted by one peer instructor of the same rank every year during their tenure in the College.

Since other instructors are mainly involved in skills-based training in one specialised area, training skills required are limited to face-to-face delivery skills including verbal communication such as giving positive feedback, briefing, debriefing, demonstration and fundamental facilitation skills as well as basic training concepts. They are therefore mandated to complete courses on delivery skills such as the four-day Effective Presentation Course run by SSTC within six months of taking up instructional duties in the College.
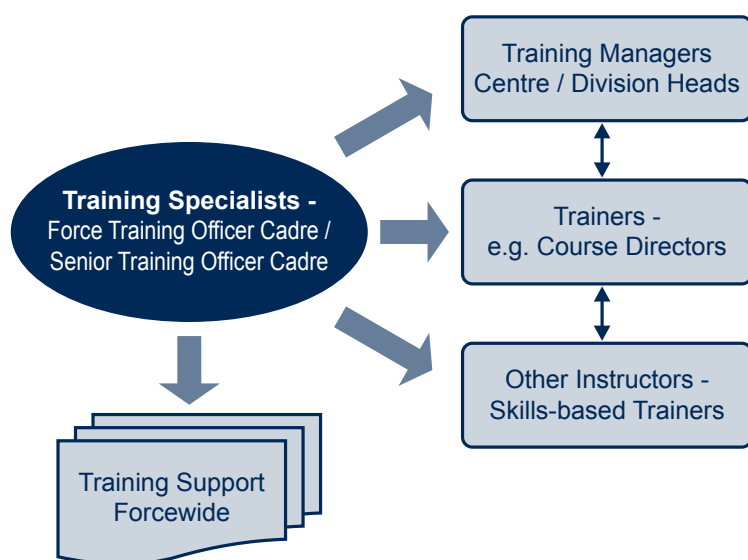

Figure 2. Training personnel in the College

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[4] Current CPD modules run by SSTC include Quality Assurance Mechanism, Experiential Learning and Debriefing Skills, Learning Technology, Training Games, Leadership Training, Use of Voice and Persuasive Communication.

As training specialists, the FTO/STO cadre needs to be fully conversant with the whole range of training and development knowledge and skills including updated training strategies and approaches, quality assurance process, learning methodology such as e-learning, training evaluation, learning technologies such as learning management system and accreditation process. They are therefore to participate in at least a one-day training programme every year, which may either be an overseas vocational course or duty visit, a local vocational course or visit to a reputable organisation, guest lectures or the sharing of best practices.

All training personnel are encouraged to take responsibility for continual learning by attending relevant courses such as those provided by CSTDI and other professional training and development bodies, by participating in self-study via e-learning, instructors corner on the learning portal and knowledge management system, and by taking up further private study.

As for knowledge support, the Force Library holds a wide range of learning and development related reference books, periodicals and videos in areas like management and leadership training, e-learning, learning psychology, training needs analysis, programme design, training delivery and training evaluation.

Programme Evaluation

Training evaluation assesses the effectiveness of a training programme and hence the value of investment in training. Different evaluation methods can be employed such as end-of-course evaluation questionnaires, interviews with participants, test/examination/ project, peer evaluation and feedback from supervisors.

There are three tiers of course evaluation. Tier one is the end-of-course evaluation, which summarises trainee evaluation at the end of a training course. Tier two is the annual course review, which is conducted once a year consolidating end-of-course evaluation and ascertaining the applicability and usefulness of a training programme.

Tier three is a major course review that is conducted once every three years. The review should cover a wide range of training issues such as future demand for the course, the appropriateness of course objectives, duration, content, and course structure as well as examining other training-related issues like the possibility of academic accreditation by a university, etc.

The end-of-course evaluation report and annual course review report need to be endorsed by the respective Division Head, while the major course review report has to be approved by respective Centre Head.

Evaluation provides evidence-based information to improve the quality of training. It should be undertaken for a meaningful purpose and is not to be regarded as a mere routine. Therefore, it is not cost-effective, for example, to ask all trainees of frequently run training courses with a relatively large class size to complete evaluation questionnaires for the purpose of annual or major course reviews. Evaluation can proceed on the basis of well-represented samples. Similarly, the end-of-course evaluation of long training courses, for example, those of six or more months, can be consolidated in the annual course review.

Major Courses

All major training courses run by the Police College shall comply with the QAM requirements. A course which fulfils all of the criteria below will be classified as a major course:

(a) Ownership: whether the courses are solely owned by the College
(b) Mandatory: whether the courses are mandatory for certain target groups of trainees
(c) Course duration: three days or more
(d) Number of participants: at least 30 trainees per year
(e) Frequency of courses: at least two courses per year

QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT

To further enhance the credibility of the College QAM and provide technical assistance to the training units, Quality Assurance Audit has been introduced. The audit is done on a quarterly basis for a training unit. The ultimate aim is to ensure continuous improvement of QAM.

D HKPC STANDING ORDER

D HKPC Standing Order on QAM was issued in early 2012 to further enhance the compliance of all training divisions with the QAM measures.

References

1   D HKPC Standing Order No.19 - Quality Assurance Mechanism
2   Canadian Police College (2007). *Programme Development and Evaluation*. Ottawa: Canadian Police College. (http://www.cpc.gc.ca)
3   Centrex (2005). *A Model Approach to Managing the Quality of Learning and Development*. London: Centrex [now National Policing Improvement Agency]. (http://www.npia.police.uk)
4   Centrex (2004). *Quality Assurance Framework*. London: Centrex [now National Policing Improvement Agency]. (http://www.npia.police.uk)
5   The European Foundation for Quality Management (2003). *EFQM - Introducing Excellence, the European Foundation for Quality Management*. Brussels: Brussels Representative Office. (http://www.efqm.org)