

# WP4 Survey Country report for the UK



## 1. Questionnaire sample and research

The aims of the survey were to investigate the education, knowledge, skills and training required to be an effective International Development Officer (IDO) in the vocational education and training (VET) sector. The survey also sought to investigate how informal and non formal learning could be validated and to consider labour market possibilities for IDOs.

In the UK, 40 questionnaires were distributed and 17 responses obtained with the majority (76%) from vocational colleges. The responses came from Norton Radstock College and from across the UK. The Association of Colleges was particularly helpful in generating responses.

A variety of roles was represented including vocational teachers, managers and coordinators. The percentage of time spent on international activities was fairly evenly split between full and part time roles. The majority of respondents (59%) had been in the role for more than 3 years.

To compile this report, we used a combination of desk research, electronic questionnaires and discussions with respondents.

## 2. Summary of research findings

### • Current education and training

Levels of education and formal qualifications were high with 71% having a University degree, 53% another formal qualification, e.g. competence related, and 29% a foreign language qualification.

Informal, unstructured training had been undertaken by most respondents (88%) with 41% having had non-formal, planned training. This indicates that there is scope to validate informal and non formal training.

Only one respondent was aware of any formal qualifications for the IDO role.

### • Activities and skills

The most important activities were seen to be networking, financial management and organising/conducting research. Least important activities were communicating in a foreign language, organising mobility exchanges and organising dissemination activities. However, the relatively low ranking for organising mobility exchanges may be due to the roles of those responding. Additional activities identified were time management, marketing, student welfare,



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quality control and co-ordination activities which reinforce the diverse nature of the role.

The top three key competences ranked as communication (verbal and written), project management and cultural awareness. Overall scores for the other identified competences also ranked highly with the exception of use of foreign languages. Additional competences required were stated as marketing, research skills and personal quality.

To develop these key competences, a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding was identified (please see summary of questionnaires question 10 in the appendix for more detail). The amount of information respondents were willing to give to this question indicates the need for training and the level of interest in the project.

- **Key training needs**

Project management, interpersonal skills, cultural awareness and use of ICT were the most important areas identified for specific training. Other identified areas scored quite highly apart from the use of foreign languages.

Respondents commented that such training should be provided, where needed, before an IDO starts work and that training should also be provided in bid writing, managing finances, understanding complexity/national agency requirements, organising research, PR and teaching/training skills to pilot projects.

- **Validation of training and labour market possibilities**

The majority (88%) felt that competences should be validated via work based assessment, followed by portfolio, continuing professional development, and evidence of prior learning. No respondents felt that examinations were appropriate.

A labour market trend for transferable and hybrid skills as well as conventional skills and qualifications was noted. Other comments included the importance of work placements for skills development, the development of a network of IDOs, the benefits of wider international development courses rather than VET specific, the importance of mentoring and examples of career development.

### 3. Specific country requirements & difficulties

The UK National Agency runs useful seminars, supporting literature, a helpdesk and website for IDOs. For example, start-up seminars for Leonardo and

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Grundtvig projects and contact seminars to find European partners are organised. This support can help with the training of IDOs.

Courses identified in the research include UKCISA training aimed at student advisors, CIM/British Council training aimed at those working in university and college international departments, UK Trade & Investment training for bid writing and NARIC training. General training in areas such as project management and international management are widely available often as part of university courses.

A key difference in the results compared to other partner countries is the importance placed on communicating in a foreign language. On further questioning, respondents felt that other European partners tend to speak English so there is not often a need or opportunity to speak other languages.

### 4. Recommendations

Experienced IDOs appear to be well educated and have wide ranging knowledge and skills. The need for a more structured approach to the training of IDOs comes across in the findings and for work based assessment to validate competences.

The results of the survey already provide useful information for the further study on the Set of Skills for IDOs. Six of the respondents have already indicated that they are interested in further discussions. This will, in turn, contribute to the development of competence based qualifications in Work Package 5.

By involving others in the research, we have also worked towards our dissemination objectives in Work Package 9 and should continue to keep respondents up to date on project progress.

The consideration of wider international development training rather than VET specific could be investigated further in Work Package 10 Exploitation of results.

### 5. Sources and further information:

<http://www.leonardo.org.uk/> UK National Agency

<http://www.naric.org.uk/> national agency for information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications

<http://www.ukcosa.org.uk/> UK Council for international Student Affairs

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-ie-training-and-work-experience>

<http://www.aoc.co.uk/> Association of Colleges



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## Appendix. Summary of surveys.

### 1. How would you describe your organisation?

a) Vocational college	13
b) Private training organisation	0
c) Education authority	0
d) Other, please, specify:	4
• University	
• FE College with HE courses	
• Association of Colleges	
• voluntary organisation for disabled people	

### 2. Please state your role in the organisation

a) International project or mobility coordinator	2
b) Vocational teacher with international responsibility	0
c) Manager with international responsibility	6
d) Other, please specify	8
• NVQ Manager	
• Vocational teach and coordinator of student on international work placements	
• Librarian (ILT)	
• Vocational teacher who participates in various european projects	
• Quality Coordinator	
• Post 16 Teacher Training Manager	
• International Director	
• Deputy Chief Executive	

### 3. What percentage of your working week do you spend on international activities?

a) Less than 50%	8
b) 50-75%	1
c) More than 75%	8

### 4. How long have been in this role?

a) Less than a year	2
b) 1-3 years	5
c) More than 3 years	10

### 5. Please state any formal qualifications for your role

a) University degree	12
b) Foreign language qualification	5
c) Other formal qualification e.g. competence related	9

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## 6. Please state any training for your role

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| a) Non formal i.e. planned activities                       | 7  |
| b) Informal i.e. experience gained on the job, unstructured | 15 |

## 7. Please state your country

- |                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| a) Belgium                      | 0  |
| b) Finland                      | 0  |
| c) France                       | 0  |
| d) Germany                      | 0  |
| e) Greece                       | 0  |
| f) Italy                        | 0  |
| g) Romania                      | 0  |
| h) UK                           | 17 |
| i) Other, please specify: ..... | 0  |

## CURRENT SITUATION

## 8. From your experience in an international role, how important are the following activities? (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important)

	1	2	3	4	5	Score
a) Networking	0	0	0	3	14	82
b) Writing bids and reports	0	1	3	5	8	71
c) Organising and conducting research	0	2	2	5	9	75
d) Organising dissemination activities	0	2	1	7	6	58
e) Organising mobility exchanges	5	1	1	6	4	54
f) Communicating with others	0	0	0	3	14	82
g) Communicating in a foreign language	5	4	3	3	2	44
h) Writing materials	0	0	2	7	8	67
i) Design and creative work	0	1	3	8	4	63
j) Piloting project products	1	3	2	5	6	63
k) Administration	0	2	3	5	7	68
l) Financial management	2	0	4	3	10	76
m) Other (please state)	0	0	0	0	3	
• Time management						
• Marketing						
• Student Welfare						
• Quality Control						
• co-ordination skills						



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9. In your opinion, how important are the following competences for being an International Development Officer? (1 = not at all important, 5 = very important)

	1	2	3	4	5	Score
a) Communication (verbal & written)	0	0	1	3	14	85
b) ICT (use of technology & the internet)	0	0	0	5	12	80
c) Use of foreign languages	0	4	9	2	3	58
d) Interpersonal (teamwork, motivating others)	0	0	0	1	15	79
e) Project management	0	0	0	3	14	82
f) Time management	0	0	0	5	12	80
g) Cultural awareness	0	0	0	4	13	81
h) Understanding education sector you represent	0	0	1	4	12	79
i) Other (please state)			1		2	
• Marketing						
• Research Skills						
• Personal Quality						

10. What do you see as the key areas of knowledge, skills and understanding required to be an effective International Development Officer? Please base your answer on the competences you identified as most important in the previous question.

- Ability to clearly understand the working brief and expected outcome.
- Ability to create effective teams using team members from different cultures and back grounds.
- Effective project and time management skills.
- A results focus.
- Excellent communication skills in all mediums.
- Well developed leadership skills with an ability to create commitment in others to the project through professional development and enjoyment.
- A strong belief in role and seeing it as important, challenging and worthwhile.
- Since my role in European projects has not been a management role, I cannot comment on key areas that relate to that. From my perspective, the key areas of skills relate to the ability to communicate effectively and work together well with colleagues from other cultures and countries, valuing the different contributions that all can make. This includes a high level of interpersonal skills and communication skills both face to face and via the internet. There is also the need for good time management and prioritisation skills to be able to produce the required products within the constraints of a teaching role which is the main aspect of my working life.
- Understanding the role as well as be vocationally aware of the subject area
- I appreciate that it is not always possible for everyone to have the full set of competences at the level that I have identified as being most important to be an effective IDO.
- Communication, interpersonal and time management skills are important basic skills that are essential to be effective.
- ICT, the use of foreign languages, and project management are the hybrid skills that as individuals we may have had relevant training to utilize and bring to the role. These are all key areas where training is available and can be learnt to enhance the role of an effective IDO.
- Cultural awareness of your own and partnering countries should be researched and key differences understood. Likewise the understanding of your educational sector should be researched so that questions asked can be answered or at least an effective IDO should know where to go or who to ask for the required answer.



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- Sound understanding of the subject areas for any project. High levels of motivation and a willingness to learn. A Team Player
- Good communication skills (all aspects), ability to conduct and understand research, base reports on research conducted, write coherent and succinct reports. Use of foreign languages is obviously absolutely essential if you do not speak English. Motivation of others in the team (either co-ordinator or WP leader). ICT becomes more important and understanding how it can help communication (and create questionnaires such as this). Ability to consult and obtain consensus before moving forward. Time management is separate to project management. Marketing skills are needed to facilitate dissemination and other aspects.
- In my view the key area of knowledge/skill for an IDO is in the area of interpersonal communication skills and cultural awareness. These skills allow an IDO to work in partnership with a wide range of people/organisations which is crucial to the role of an IDO. In my view this is the most important competency of an IDO and though the other competences identified above are important, I believe they are secondary to communication skills and cultural awareness.
- organised and available
- informed and networking with other international officers
- being in a management role
- making decision
- have a business and financial motivation
- ambitious and an acute sense of students welfare
- Knowledge of Further and Higher Education
- Knowledge of major donor agencies and effective bid management
- Effective communicator who can build and sustain partnerships
- Knowledge of major recruitment trends (Further and Higher Education)
- Honed business development skills and commercial acumen
- International Officer/Manager should have high levels of product and sector knowledge; also the ability to lead and motivate a team and to inspire confidence in senior management as to the effectiveness of the international activities. Should also be nationally and internationally networked to keep up to date with developments in the sector and in the international student arena.
- Empathy and sensitivity to other cultures.
- Experience of developing and writing projects and then delivering them.
- Experience of monitoring and evaluation
- Mentoring skills (both for colleagues, incoming international students and staff and home learners)
- Ability to liaise at all levels
- Good financial management skills
- Excellent project management skills
- Need to communicate clearly and check that others have understood. Need to take responsibility for assigned tasks and motivate others to work with you. Need to get to know others in the team, take an interest in them and see their strengths as team players. Project management skills with ICT training, e.g. producing GANTT charts to meet deadlines & objectives.
- Developing an international strategy
- Relationship management
- Understanding of the cultural context
- Extending staff involvement in the most broadest sense possible
- It is vitally important that in such a role there is a good understanding of the technical aspects of running the particular type of project, and the requirements that must be fulfilled. Ensuring that the project/s stay/s on track is vital, and that the time is focused into activities that contribute to the achievement of the project objectives. In all of this high level interpersonal skills must be implemented - to ensure



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project teams are well coordinated, but also to maximise the benefit of the networking that goes on between international partners.

- Project Management
- Sectoral Understanding
- Communication
- Cultural Awareness

### 11. Do any formal qualifications for the International Development Officer role exist in your country?

Yes, please specify:	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UKCISA Training; CIM/British Council International Marketing Programme; NARIC Training; UKTI training for bid writing etc.</li> </ul>	
No	9
Don't know	7

## THE FUTURE

### 12. In your opinion, to what extent do you think specific training in the following areas is needed to be an effective International Development Officer?

	Very much	Quite	A little	Not at all	No opinion	Score
a) Communication (verbal & written)	8	3	3	1	0	63
b) ICT (use of technology & the internet)	7	5	4	0	0	67
c) Use of foreign languages	2	5	8	0	0	54
d) Interpersonal e.g. teamwork, motivating others	10	4	1	0	0	69
e) Project management e.g. time management	10	5	1	0	0	73
f) Cultural awareness	9	6	0	0	0	69
g) Understanding education sector you represent	7	7	1	0	0	66
h) Other (please state)	2	0	0	0	0	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and team working</li> <li>• Update information from Home Office, Naric, UK CISA, British Council, TVET, etc</li> </ul>						

### 13. Any other gaps or training needs you identify?

- I would argue that anyone who is or is going to be an International Development Officer needs to have skills in all these areas, before starting such work. If they are missing any of these skills, then clearly they need specific training urgently to enable them to become more effective.
- A skill that they may not have which would require specific training needs would be writing bids, and managing the finances of an international project.
- Language and service delivery
- Nothing at this stage
- Nothing
- I attend rather a lot
- Bid writing; understanding complexity and national agency requirements. Organising research, building a representative sample. PR. Teaching/training skills to pilot projects



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14. What do you see as the most effective way of validating the competences which individuals have developed?

a) Examinations	0
b) Work based assessment	15
c) Evidence of prior learning	10
d) Portfolio	13
e) Continuing professional development	13
f) Other (please state)	2
• Experience in a different role	
• Job Outputs	

15. Please use this space to write any other thoughts or ideas you have about how the training and development of International Development Officers could be improved and the labour market possibilities for IDOs.

- Work placements in multi national organisations working in multi cultural markets
- Work placements in partner organisations to gain insight in different cultures, work styles and local areas of interest.
- From my experience of working on two projects, it would be good to have some way of having the new skills and competences that I have developed validated other than through the final product.
- information of the countries within the project
- I would imagine that IDOs are very much like Information and Knowledge workers where on the job training, formal training and qualifications, experience gained from previous roles and life experience are all important transferable skills.
- What needs to be put in place is a way of identifying any untapped relevant knowledge or skills and build from this framework. (This may already be in place) or work in progress. What can be said is that more and more the labour market is looking for those people with conventional skills and qualifications supported by strong transferable and hybrid skills.
- I do not believe language training should be included in any training of IDOs - this is unrealistic.
- It would be useful to get a 'User Group' for IDOs - compare experiences, learn from each other, network, find partners for projects.
- Need to find other titles that people use, else people may feel excluded. For example, I only work within Europe - is this international?
- a more advanced regional development
- UKCISA offers a range of courses aimed at Student Advsiors and the British Council do have a course aimed at those working in University and College international departments - though this could be complimented by courses tailored for those working in the VET sector - to my knowledge there appear to be very few courses aimed at this sector.
- I would balance sending staff on VET specific courses against sending staff on general courses regarding international relations and business development, much can be learned from the wider commercial sector.
- For senior staff I would probably look at MBA's with an International Bias our courses provided by INSEAD and Cranfield.
- I think this questionnaire is difficult to answer as the role of the International Development Officer is not really defined - is it someone who is Head of an International Office, is it someone who manages European projects, is it someone who advises and looks after international students? the roles in



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different colleges/universities can change so much for each institution, so I found it a little difficult but have completed it from the perspective of my own position and job role.

- From my own experience, I previously worked as International Co-ordinator for 13 years in the Further Education sector and found that the majority of my training for this role took place 'on the job'. My manager was an excellent mentor and included me in meetings/project visits etc so that my knowledge was continually expanding. I also assisted in doing bits of research when she was writing funding applications. When I took over her position after 4 years I was submitting successful bids for funding and have had 100% success ever since. I constantly promoted what I was doing at my institution with other colleges and took opportunities to disseminate practice whenever the National Agency offered it through national seminars and workshops. This approach led to me being asked to be the UK representative on the Leonardo stakeholder consultation group at Brussels prior to the launch of the Lifelong Learning Programme and other opportunities for raising my own career profile followed to the extent that I am now self-employed in my area of expertise. Among the contracts I now undertake, some of the most rewarding are those where I am developing and delivering training on best practice in international work to those working in that area.
- Since my initial mentoring many years ago, I have tried to adopt the same approach with junior members of staff - encouraging their development, giving them opportunities to test themselves, giving them opportunities to deputise at International partnership meetings and putting a degree of trust in them, whilst all the while being there as a support mechanism.
- Course for new IDOs and CPD/portfolio for existing regional/local groups to share ideas, best practice and mentoring.
- Potential IDOs should have the opportunity to be involved in projects beforehand, even just in a 'shadowing' role - so that they can experience a project as a participant before taking on the responsibility themselves.

If you are interested in discussing your ideas further, please fill in your details below:

Name (optional): .....

Contact details (optional): .....

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.



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