

Building our capacity to learn

Development and Standards is a small team within Learning and Development charged with bringing new learning product to members of the AFP and ensuring that the quality of that product meets organisation and participant requirements.

According to Federal Agent Steve Samuels, Coordinator of Development and Standards, recent developments within the law enforcement environment have highlighted the fact that Learning and Development must remain responsive to business needs.

“It is important that the AFP maintain a capacity to identify when new training products are needed, be able to produce those products with stakeholders and ensure quality,” he said.

Development and Standards is a vital link in maintaining that capacity and the services provided through the three work teams of Research and Development, Curriculum Design and Quality Assurance help maximise our ability to introduce training products in a timely and efficient way.

“An important part of how we conduct business is by communicating across the organisation,” Federal Agent Samuels said. “Our teams regularly survey the workplace in an effort to identify what product is required, but we can only do so much. We encourage the workplace to come to us as well. Quite often people know what they want; they just don’t know how to go about getting it.”

Research and development

The Research and Development Team has been established to identify training and learning requirements.

Because devising and conducting training can be an expensive exercise, developing a business case is important. A business case contains the required detail to support the idea so it can be given a priority rating for development.

It will ideally consist of the need for the training, the learning outcomes required, the cost in terms of time and resources, and the expected return on the investment to core business functions. Much more product is required than can be developed and to assist in determining what gets done and when, a priority system has been devised to ensure an initial focus on the most critical areas.

Once the business case has been established and agreement reached to proceed, the project team can assist in identifying and gathering learning content.

Curriculum development

Developing curriculum is not just a matter of bundling a heap of notes together and talking to participants.

To ensure participants gain maximum benefit from the experience, delivery strategy, desired outcome and assessment measures must be determined at the outset.

Team members have extensive skills in the field of curriculum design and development and work with clients to build a training package once it has been prioritised for development.

Over the past two years Learning and Development has invested heavily in AF POLL, the AFP's on-line learning platform. Being able to distribute on-line learning material reduces the need for face-to-face courses and allows personnel to access the required training on an as-needed basis.

Part of the strategy in developing AF POLL was to design all on-line learning to look and feel the same.

If every on-line course looks different and requires different commands to make it work, participants soon get sick of the inconsistencies and their learning suffers as a result. The on-line learning strategy to make all courses look and feel the same allows participants to become accustomed to the process and technology.

While on-line learning will never replace face-to-face, it is a chance for courses to be driven by the learner's needs and not a training schedule. It also allows training material to reach far more people.

Developing blended solutions for training needs is the future of training. Doing part of a course on-line to develop knowledge and another part face to face to develop skills will see the AFP use its training resources in the most effective manner, with increased benefits for the participant and the organisation.

Quality Assurance

The AFP College in Barton in the ACT has been a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for many years. As such, the college offers nationally recognised qualifications to people who complete accredited courses.

Strict requirements placed on RTOs mean qualifications from these facilities are recognised by other tertiary bodies across Australia.

The role of the Quality Assurance Team is to ensure that the training provided by the College meets the



national standards. However, to ensure that the College is consistent in all that it does, the team assesses all courses offered by Learning and Development against the national standards, producing one set of standards for a more consistent product.

Members who complete training courses are asked to evaluate the course process and outcomes. Additionally, the team travels out to the workplace to speak to course participants to determine how the course has assisted them in their work.

These longitudinal studies are currently being conducted for the Recruit Training Program and the Advanced Diploma in Public Safety (Police Investigations).

Another area of responsibility for the team is assessment. While some courses are competency based it is critical that the assessment reflects the participant's ability to actually be able to perform the task.

Development and Standards is committed to the development and implementation of the best possible training product for AFP personnel.