

LEARNING PROVIDER STANDARDS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION – working document

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The Learning Provider Standards aim to improve the quality of learning linked to humanitarian action and therefore contribute to people being more effective in assisting communities who are vulnerable to or affected by crises.

These standards have been developed, based on extensive consultations, by a consortium made up of Bioforce, the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Pearson and RedR UK. They are the product of a collaborative drafting process involving many people and organisations. They should therefore not be seen as representing the views of any one organisation.

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our thanks to the organisations and individuals who participated in the development of the standards by sharing their experience and good practices in the consultation process, by giving feedback on the drafts, and being ready to pilot them.

The Teams from Bioforce, the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Pearson and RedR.

The consultation workshop participants.

The interviewees and those responding to our surveys and questionnaires.

The Writers who helped us in reviewing the post-consultation version of the standards.

The Advisors who helped us in reviewing all the different versions of the standards, and who also contributed to their development in other ways.

This section will be revised and completed in preparation of the final version of the standards.

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Glossary

competencies - the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours identified as necessary to achieve intended results

competency frameworks - an established group of competencies needed to fulfil specific functions

humanitarian action - action taken with the objectives of saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises and natural disasters, as well as action to prevent and strengthen preparedness for them¹

key actions - actions to be taken by learning providers to achieve the standards

learners - people who are participating in a learning programme e.g. NGO staff and volunteers, government staff, community members

learning needs - what individuals or groups need to learn to develop competencies

learning objectives - describe what learners are expected to know or be able to do by the end of the programme

learning programmes - learning providers develop and/or deliver programmes that enable learners to meet specified learning objectives. A learner will participate in a learning programme to develop their competencies

learning providers - organisations, companies, departments, groups and institutes providing learning services to anyone involved in humanitarian action

learning services - services offered to individuals and organisations to build competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes

modality - the model used to deliver learning programmes e.g. online, face-to-face, distance learning, simulation exercises (in person and virtual), blended learning, internal staff learning and development programmes, coaching, gamified learning, mentoring, academic courses

resources - money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organisation in order to function

standards - (documents that provide) requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose². In this document they describe what learning providers should do to meet the overarching commitment

¹ Adapted from ALNAP's Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide, 2016, p.369.

² ISO definition <https://www.iso.org/standards.html>

INTRODUCTION

What are the Learning Provider Standards?

These standards provide relevant criteria to measure the quality of learning provision. They can be used by learning providers as a basis for verifying their performance and to guide improvements.

They are designed for use by organisations, companies, departments and institutes providing learning services to anyone involved in humanitarian action.

Learning providers that meet these standards are contributing to an overarching commitment that people involved in humanitarian action have access to quality learning programmes that will enable them to operate more effectively.

Background

Since 2012, an initiative led by 22 key sector organisations sought to develop a platform to display learning credentials and validated experience of humanitarian works (HPass). One objective of having visible credentials is to facilitate effective and rapid employment of local, national and international people involved in humanitarian action.

HPass is a strategic development towards the professionalisation of the humanitarian sector. This will require:

- the formalization of key competencies,
- quality learning provision and assessment of these competencies,
- the recognition of skills, experience and learning with the use of electronic badges.

The preliminary HPass inception report, commissioned by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy (the Academy), demonstrated that learning and assessment providers will welcome standards that can measure the quality of their services³. Many learning and assessment

³ HPI Inception Reports, Outputs 2 and 3, 2016 (unpublished material)

providers invest considerable resources to ensure the quality of their services. However, while there are some internal and external standards in use, there was no single, affordable standard that was widely accepted or directly met the needs of these learning and assessment providers.

In 2017, the Academy, Bioforce, Pearson Education, and RedR UK formed a consortium to facilitate the development of a quality framework for learning and assessment provision, including standards, quality assurance mechanisms and guidance material.

How the standards were developed

Since February 2017, the four partners have carried out a comprehensive consultation process to co-design standards. As a result, a pre-consultation phase was designed in which key questions were asked to participants, who were chosen according to the consultation terms of reference.⁴ Questions were asked using a virtual notepad, in the four languages chosen for the standards: Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. The preliminary questions revolved around what quality training and assessment mean.

The pre-consultation phase led to the first version of the standards. This first version was reviewed by an Advisory Group, selected from key sector stakeholders; and a Management Group, representing all consortium partners. A consultation version was then drafted to be used in the face-to-face consultation phase. Face-to-face consultations took place between May and July 2017 in seven international regions. 163 participants participated from 16 countries and 102 organizations. 55 semi-structured interviews with 70 stakeholders were conducted, three focus group discussions with 12 participants were held.

In order to reach as many stakeholders as possible, an online consultation survey was used in July 2017. The online survey was completed by 148 participants.

Consultation findings were reviewed by a Writers' Group made up of interested stakeholders identified during the face-to-face consultation phase. The group included 55 people from 14 countries.

⁴https://www.redr.org.uk/getmedia/94b269fc-4e54-494b-a4a7-b87e157378a7/consultation_tor_for_the_development_of_learning_and_assessment_standards_for_the_humanitarian_sector.pdf

As a result, 408 stakeholders from 382 organisations from more than 60 countries contributed to the content of these standards.

The need to ensure that the standards can be quality assured was a theme that ran through all stages of the consultations.

Scope

The standards have been developed through a humanitarian lens, in relation to the learning needs of people who respond to crises, including those working in preparedness, prevention and recovery.

People working in development and other areas closely linked to humanitarian action may also find these standards applicable, although they may need some adaptation to specific needs and contexts.

Where national regulations exist, these standards are not meant as a substitute, but as supplementary. They offer learning providers the opportunity to compare their services with similar providers operating in other parts of the world.

Who these standards are for?

These standards are designed for use by organisations, companies, departments and institutes providing learning services to anyone involved in humanitarian action e.g. NGO staff, community members, volunteers, government staff, donors. The learning services may be used for external learning provision, or integrated as part of an organisation's internal learning.

These standards are applicable to learning providers regardless of their size and scope.

Structure

The learning provider standards are a set of 8 standards, with associated key actions. Standards 1 to 4 reflect the learning cycle logic and Standards 5 to 8 describe support processes and requirements. Together they contribute to the overarching commitment; that people involved in humanitarian action have access to quality learning programmes that will enable them to operate more effectively.

- The **standards** describe what learning providers need to do to meet the overarching commitment
- Each standard has associated **key actions** to be taken by learning providers to attain the standards
- There are 3 **principles** underpinning the standards that guide learning provision
 - Accessibility
 - Impartiality
 - Inclusivity
- A learner's voice accompanies each standard and demonstrates what learners experience when a standard is met

How to use the Standards

The standards are designed to be sufficiently flexible to enable appropriate application by different types of learning providers and contextualization in different regions, countries, localities and communities.

Learning providers must implement the key actions to meet the standards. Key actions explain **what needs to be in place** to ensure the quality of learning services. Further information and guidance on how to implement the key actions will be available in the accompanying handbook.

A quality assurance mechanisms manual will also be available. The manual will give information about how to measure and evidence key actions. Through the development of the quality assurance mechanisms, the form that endorsement or accreditation will take be clarified in consultation with learning providers.

PRINCIPLES

Humanitarian action, in general, is guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. These standards were created with these humanitarian principles in mind because their goal is to contribute to more effective humanitarian action.

For the provision of quality learning and assessment, three particularly relevant principles have been identified.

Accessibility: aim to reach those who have limited or no access to learning and assessment opportunities. Aim to address barriers to participation that may include location and financial restrictions, language proficiency, literacy/numeracy levels, physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments.

Impartiality: conduct processes and treat people in a fair, just and equitable manner.

Inclusivity: promote respectful inclusion regardless of age, gender, marital status, race, nationality, disability, religion or religious or other beliefs, sexual orientation, social or educational background.

Overview of the Learning Provider Standards

Overarching Commitment

People involved in humanitarian action have access to quality learning programmes that will enable them to operate more effectively.

Standard 1. Analysis

Relevant learning needs are identified and prioritised

Standard 2. Design

Learning programmes are designed and prepared according to identified needs

Standard 3. Delivery

Learning programmes are implemented effectively

Standard 4. Assessment

Learning is assessed against the learning objectives

Standard 5. Evaluation and Accountability

The quality of learning services is maintained and improved

Standard 6. Resources

Resources are sufficient and appropriate

Standard 7. Communication

Two-way communication channels are open and accessible

Standard 8. Administration

Administration systems are secure and accurate

Standard 1. Analysis

Relevant learning needs are identified and prioritised

Key Actions

The learning provider will:

- 1.1 Use evidence to inform learning needs analyses
- 1.2 Analyse learning needs at the relevant level e.g. sectoral, organisational, individual
- 1.3 Identify competencies that need to be developed, using relevant competency frameworks when available
- 1.4 Prioritise learning needs based on current and most urgent needs
- 1.5 Analyse target learners in terms of their culture, language, existing skills and experience, conditions and constraints to learning
- 1.6 Analyse learning needs periodically



Standard 2. Design

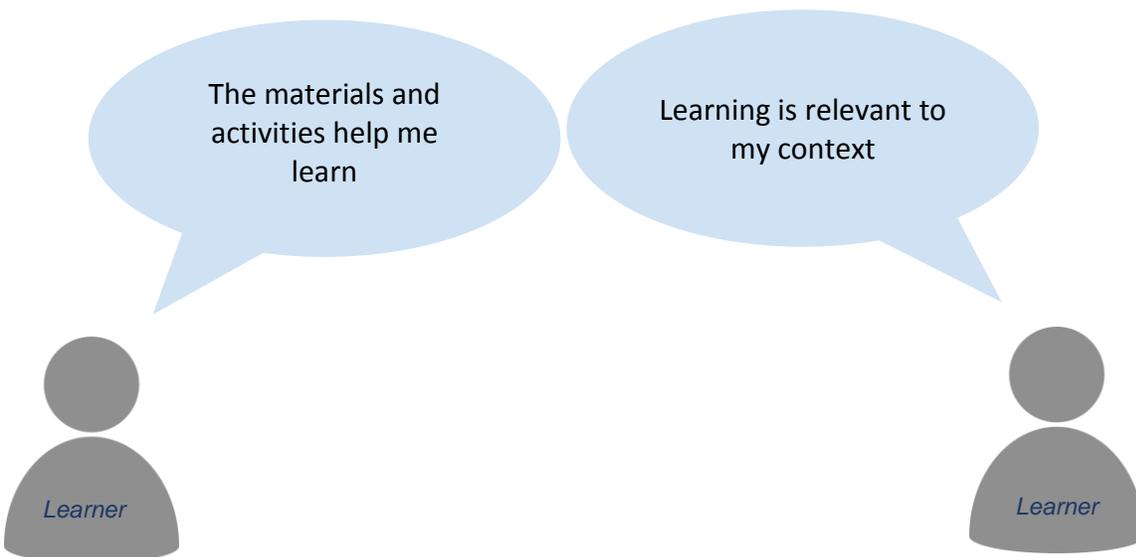
Learning programmes are designed and prepared according to identified needs

Key Actions

The learning provider will:

- 2.1 Develop SMART* learning objectives that target identified competency gaps
- 2.2 Select existing or create new learning programmes with suitable content, materials and activities
- 2.3 Take into account learners' existing knowledge, skills and experience
- 2.4 Select appropriate modalities to deliver learning programmes, taking into consideration accessibility and available resources
- 2.5 Ensure learning programmes are contextually relevant and culturally appropriate
- 2.6 Determine selection criteria or recruitment processes if required
- 2.7 Adapt learning programmes to address specific, individual needs e.g. literacy and numeracy levels and language proficiency
- 2.8 Design methods and tools to assess learning
- 2.9 Plan the delivery of learning programmes, taking into account conditions and constraints e.g. regulatory, financial, time, availability, motivation & ability of the target learners

*Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound



Standard 3. Delivery

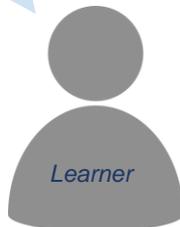
Learning programmes are implemented effectively

Key Actions

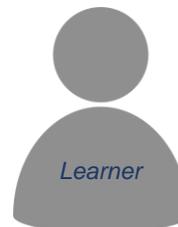
The learning provider will:

- 3.1 Implement any agreed selection criteria or recruitment processes for learners
- 3.2 Implement learning programmes as designed
- 3.3 Support learners throughout the programme to enable them to meet the learning objectives
- 3.4 Draw on learners knowledge and experience during the delivery of the learning programme
- 3.5 Implement proportionate and participatory monitoring of learners' progress
- 3.6 Respond and adapt to learners' progress
- 3.7 Implement reasonable measures to ensure learners' safety, security and wellbeing

My knowledge, skills and experience are acknowledged and drawn upon during the programme



I am supported to learn and I can ask for help if I don't understand



Standard 4. Assessment

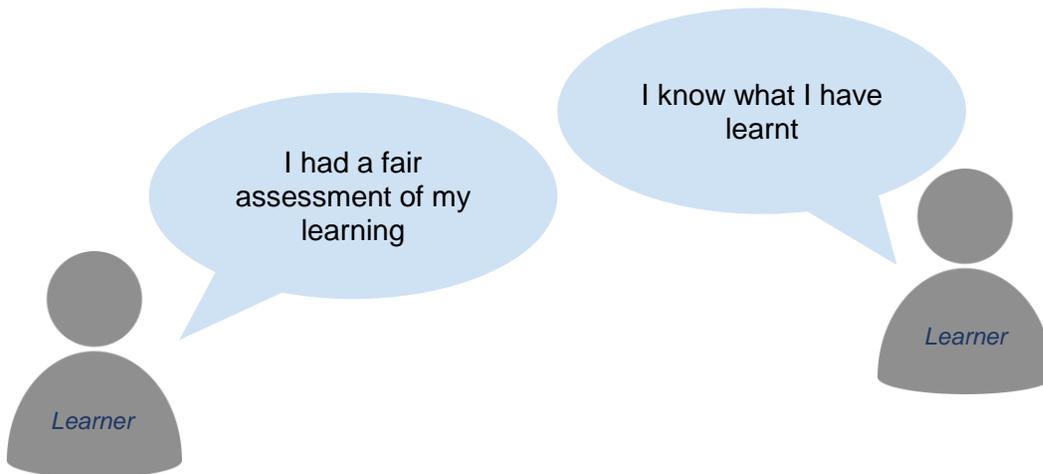
Learning is assessed against the learning objectives

Key Actions

The learning provider will:

- 4.1. Implement proportionate and participatory assessments of learning
- 4.2 Conduct fair and consistent assessments
- 4.3 Share assessment results with learners
- 4.4 When applicable, provide formal recognition of learning*
- 4.5 Document evidence-based results

*NB more information on how to assess competencies is available in the Assessment Provider Standards



Standard 5. Evaluation and Accountability

The quality of learning services is maintained and improved

Key Actions

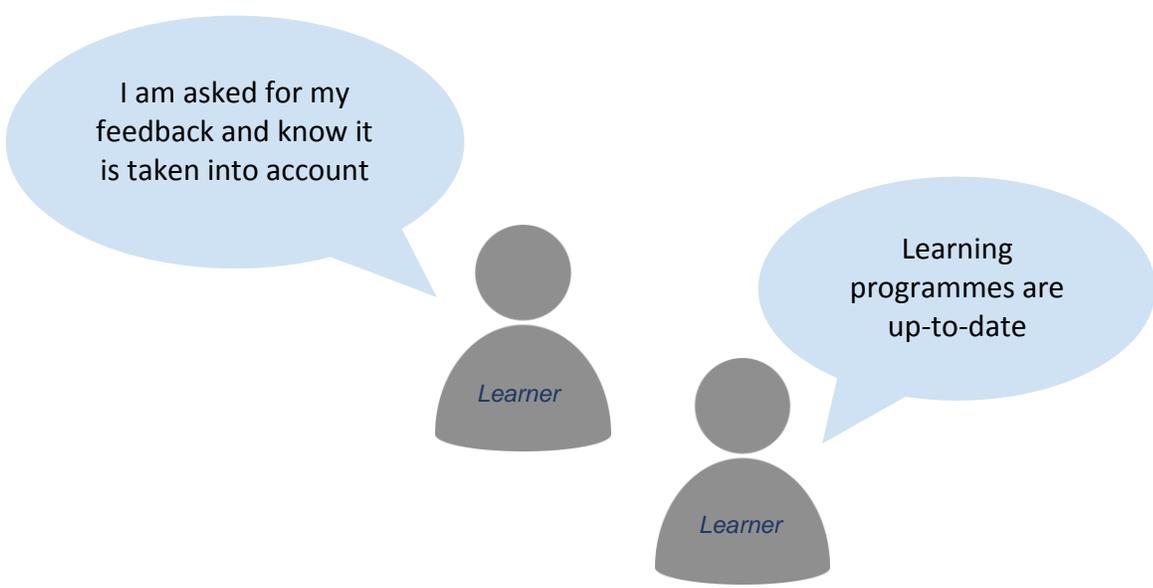
The learning provider will:

5.1 Design and implement participatory and proportionate monitoring and evaluation of learning services

5.2 Use transparent and accessible feedback mechanisms to receive and give open feedback

5.3 Apply processes to document and resolve concerns and complaints

5.4 Use lessons learnt and best practice to inform change, drive continuous improvement and ensure learning services remain fit for purpose



I am asked for my feedback and know it is taken into account

Learner

Learning programmes are up-to-date

Learner

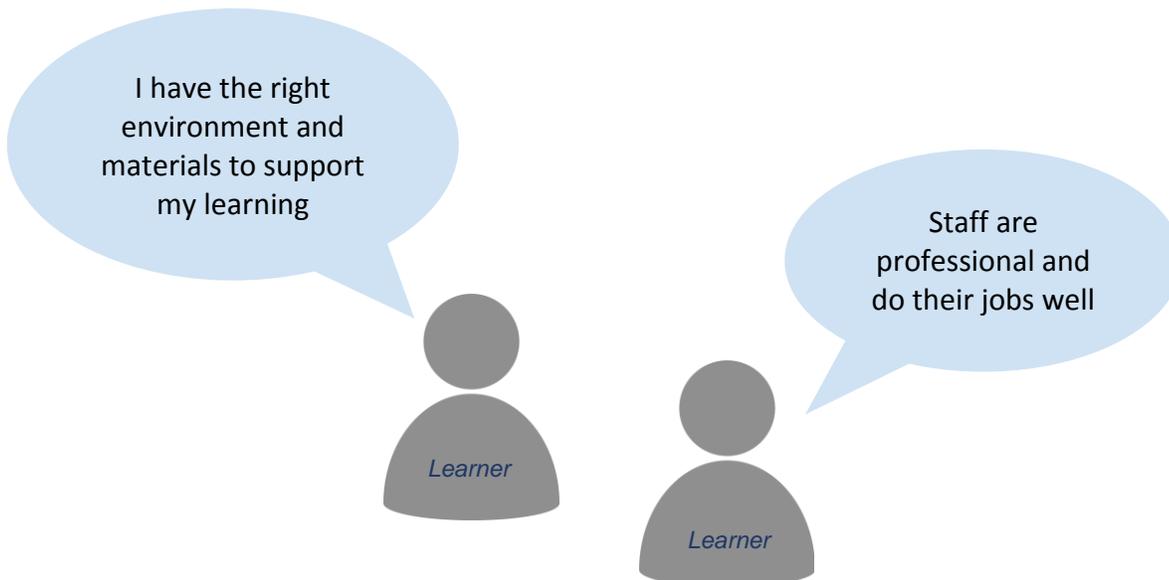
Standard 6. Resources

Resources are sufficient and appropriate

Key Actions

The learning provider will:

- 6.1 Identify what resources are required to design and deliver effective learning programmes
- 6.2 Establish and implement procedures for procuring, maintaining and managing sufficient and appropriate resources
- 6.3 Ensure there are sufficient, competent and appropriate staff available to design and deliver learning programmes
- 6.4 Treat staff in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner and comply with local labour law
- 6.5 Implement reasonable measures to ensure staff safety, security and wellbeing



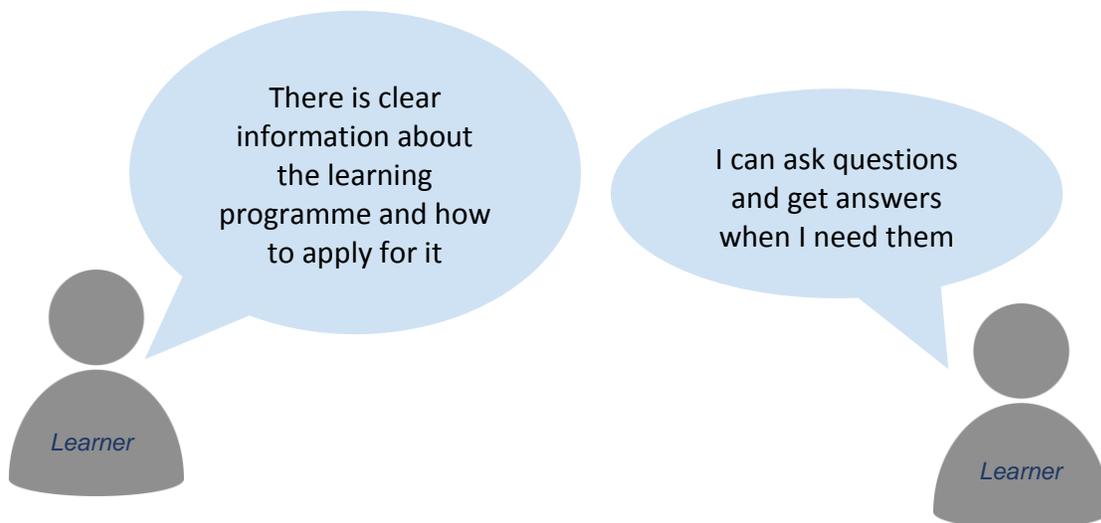
Standard 7. Communication

Communication channels are open and accessible

Key Actions

The learning provider will:

- 7.1 Establish and maintain appropriate and accessible communication channels e.g. with learners and organisations
- 7.2 Provide relevant, clear and accurate information about learning programmes and services
- 7.3 Communicate clearly, accurately and in a timely manner
- 7.4 Respond to queries in a timely and appropriate manner



Standard 8. Administration

Administration systems are secure and accurate

Key Actions

The learning provider will:

- 8.1 Provide effective administrative and logistics support for learners and organisations
- 8.2 Store candidate information using secure and appropriate data management procedures
- 8.3 Maintain confidentiality of learners' information and records

