

Umhverfisstofnun – Volunteer training review 2010 Trail Team Training

During summer 2010, three training courses were organised as part of the ICV Trail Team programme. The aim of these courses was to prepare participants for their eleven-week placements with the Environment Agency volunteer programme. These courses were used to test both training and assessment techniques.

The training courses have three main aims:

- Introducing participants to mountain footpath construction techniques which include building stone cross-drains, stone steps and constructing earth and turf drainage ditches.
- A general introduction to The Environment Agency, its structure and areas of operation, as well as the role of volunteers and how they fit into the organization.
- Providing an opportunity for participants to experience living and working in teams.

Training course structure:

- Course duration is 5 days (approximately 40 hours)
- Focus on practical on-site training. Approximately half a day of classroom presentations and discussions.
- Course includes 8-12 participants.
- Participants are divided into “training teams” of 4-5.
- Each team is assigned a trainer who works with them throughout the course.
- Course is overseen by a course coordinator.

Assessment design:

- Participants (individuals / groups) are asked to create a presentation using photographs and text (using PowerPoint).
- Participants are provided with a list of questions in order to help structure their presentations.
- Training course 1 assessed participants individually. Training courses 2 and 3 assessed participants in groups.
- Training courses 2 and 3 included an additional verbal question and answer session aimed at individuals within groups in order to ensure full participation by all group members.

Assessment Review

Problems encountered with the individual assessment design:

- This assessment relies on the use of digital cameras and access to computers to create the presentations. Providing adequate computer time for all participants proved to be problematic.
- Providing suitable facilities for creating computer presentations proved to be problematic within a camp environment.
- As the practical activities are undertaken in groups, there is a large amount of similarity / repetition between presentations. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction at the repetition of material in the presentations.

Due to problems encountered with the individual assessment process during training course 1, the process was changed to group assessment for courses 2 and 3.

Problems encountered with both individual and group assessment designs:

- Some participants had limited experience in working with computers and creating PowerPoint presentations. In some cases, this slowed down the presentation process slow and required additional technical support from trainers.
- Where text was used, some participants encountered difficulties due to limited skills in written English. Generally, participants with first-language English were more able to express themselves in the text.

Due to the reliance on computer presentations as a medium for assessment, there is a risk that participants with limited computer and English language skills may not have the ability to demonstrate their comprehension of the course.