



# Designing and implementing a quality assurance process for dietitians delivering accredited Self-Management Education Programmes for people living with chronic disease.



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## Background

Seventy-five chronic disease management dietitians currently deliver 3 QISMET\* accredited Self-Management Education (SME) programmes: **DISCOVER DIABETES – Type 2**, the **National Diabetes Prevention Programme**, and the **Best Health** weight management programme for people living with obesity. A Quality Assurance (QA) process was designed to enable these dietitians to achieve and maintain accreditation and ensure programme fidelity.

## Aim

To design, develop and implement a practical, achievable and scalable QA process, to ensure programme fidelity and ongoing development of dietitian educator group SME facilitation skills.

## The 6 Step QA Process

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Step 1: Reading           | • Any relevant reading materials identified by the dietitian educator such as course curricula and care guidelines. Each educator documents this in their QA log document.                                                                                        |
| Step 2: Educator Training | • Attendance at Core Educator Training for each SME programme. This training is mandatory, any missed sessions are completed at the next round of educator training. Each educator documents this in their QA log document and completes a self-reflection diary. |
| Step 3: Shadowing         | • Ideally all educators shadow a min of 50% of a core course with an experienced dietitian educator. Each educator completes a self-reflection.                                                                                                                   |
| Step 4: Co-facilitating   | • Ideally an educator would co-facilitate a min of 50% of a core course with an experienced dietitian educator. This means sharing delivery of the key content of the sessions. Each educator completes a self-reflection.                                        |
| Step 5: Lead Delivery     | • Educators lead out delivery of their own courses, engage in self-reflection and develop their skills and confidence as an educator of the SME programme(s) they deliver. Each educator completes a self-reflection diary.                                       |
| Step 6: QA Observation    | • Once ready an educator is observed by a member of the SME office delivering 1 - 2 sessions of the SME programme they are delivering. Structured feedback is provided.                                                                                           |



Self-reflection is a key part of the educator QA process and is built into each of the steps above. Additional training: Level 1 Behaviour Change Skills, Empowerment Approach to Care, Facilitation Skills and MECC is also required.

## Outputs and Outcomes

This project has resulted in a number of outputs and outcomes:

### Outputs:

- A structured QA process for educators which includes a suite of QA documentation (including Educator QA Guidance, a QA Log, reflection diaries and QA feedback documents),
- A structured support process for dietitian educators completing the QA process,
- A structured process with guidance documents to support the QA observers.

### Outcomes:

Seventy-five dietitians currently facilitate the three accredited HSE programmes nationally, with approximately ten on statutory leave at any time. By the end of 2025, 25% (n=18) of these educators had completed the QA process, with 50% (n=37) projected to achieve QA accreditation by the end of 2026. Qualitative feedback from dietitian educators who have completed the QA process was consistently positive, highlighting increased confidence, enhanced reflective practice, and the value of detailed, constructive feedback. The process was described as supportive, reassuring, and confirming for the educator on their fidelity to standards of programme delivery while giving them opportunities to identify areas for professional growth.



## Conclusion

A standardised QA process for dietitian educators delivering accredited SME programmes has supported the delivery of high quality patient care, programme fidelity, improved dietitian confidence and competence, while upholding accreditation standards. The process informs national implementation and quality improvement strategies, and is transferable to other chronic disease SME programmes and disciplines.

\*QISMET stands for the Quality Institute for Self-Management Education and Training, see [www.qismet.co.uk](http://www.qismet.co.uk) for further information.