



**CASE STUDY** ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES

## Developing a National Job Evaluation Scheme to review pay arrangements for the AoC



The AoC Management Services provides business solutions to organisations in Consultancy, Training, Recruitment, and conferencing. They offer extensive experience in education and the broader public sector, as well as the private sector.

### Background

The Association of Colleges was created in 1996 as the single voice to promote the interests of further education colleges in England and Wales.

The Association provides a broad range of services to its subscribers. It represents their interests locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Its management, split into various directorates, provides a pool of expertise on which the sector draws.

### The Challenge

To develop a national job evaluation scheme; this formed an important part of an overall review of pay arrangements that was conducted by the AoC, with the participation of the nationally recognised trade unions for further education. The scheme was funded and is owned by the AoC but was developed jointly with the trade unions. The outcome is a system which can be used by the 360 colleges of further education in England and Wales as a method of determining the relative size or value of the jobs carried out by lecturers, managers, and administrators and support staff in order to provide an equitable, consistent and transparent basis for grading posts in a pay structure (for example a pay spine).

The scheme design and testing project started in September

2000 and was completed on time in May 2002 (21 months). Support by Pilat to colleges implementing the scheme is ongoing and Pilat is presenting to 25 Welsh colleges on 27 June 2006 with a view to the scheme being adopted in Wales, funded by the Welsh Assembly.

### The Solution

A joint management/trade union steering group was set up. The group was actively involved in devising the factor plan and reviewing the outcome of the comprehensive tests conducted during the project. The unions comprised Unison, NATFHE, ATT, T&GWU and GMB. National officers of the two major unions (Unison and NATFHE) took part in the selection of the consultants.

An initial fact-finding questionnaire was prepared and issued to all colleges to identify current arrangements and to sound out opinion on possible developments.

A programme of visits to a sample of 20 colleges was carried out by the consultants, and representative focus groups were consulted on the basis upon which job evaluation could satisfactorily be carried out. A major item for discussion was the choice of factors for the factor plan. Discussions took place frequently with national and, where appropriate, regional or area union representatives. These discussions formed an essential and valuable part of the project.

In developing the factor plan the aim was to ensure that the factors:

- Incorporated characteristics present in all jobs to be evaluated - the fundamental competencies used and the key demands made on job holders
- Were present in variable degrees so that distinctions could be made between jobs in relation to the degree to which the competencies and demands made on job holders in each

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factor were different

- Were not discriminatory
- Did not duplicate one another or overlap

The factor plan provided the basis for a points based non-computerised analytical job evaluation scheme referred to as the 'paper-based' scheme. This was to become the framework for the computerised version. Extensive tests of this paper scheme were conducted in colleges involving both managers and trade union representatives and the outcomes were debated by the Steering Group. The final plan was the seventh version. A major challenge was to convince NATFHE, the main lecturer's union, that the scheme would be appropriate for their members. It took a lot of effort in the form of meetings and iterations to achieve their agreement.

### The Result

The final version of the plan incorporated 12 factors based either on competency or job demand criteria. The factors comprised:

- Theoretical/practical/professional knowledge
- Thinking skills
- Planning and development skills
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Responsibility for staff
- Responsibility for students
- Responsibility for relationships with others
- Responsibility for resources
- Physical demands
- Emotional demands
- Working conditions

Particular care was taken to ensure that the scheme was non-discriminatory. This was largely the responsibility of Sue Hastings as the team's equal pay expert.

The paper scheme was pilot-tested extensively in colleges using a balanced sample of test jobs. The outcomes of these tests and their implications for the factor plan were reviewed by the Steering Group and amendments made as agreed.

The paper scheme was then converted for use on the Gauge software. The computerised system was tested on the same jobs as the paper scheme to ensure that the results were consistent. This indicated where changes were necessary to the Gauge question trees and enabled 'conventions' to be drawn up (conventions are guides on the interpretation of the questions based on actual examples).

Details of the scheme were communicated to colleges who were encouraged by the AoC to adopt the scheme. Training was provided by the consultants to colleges as required.

Advice was given to colleges through the AoC on how the scheme could be used to support grading in the pay spine structures operating in Further Education.



**Pilat Europe Limited**  
29 Hendon Lane  
London N3 1PZ  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: +44 20 8343 3433  
Fax: +44 20 8343 4656  
E-mail: info@pilat.com

**Pilat North America Inc.**  
496 Route 22 West  
Lebanon NJ 08833  
USA  
Telephone: +1 800 338 9701  
Fax: +1 908 823 9438  
E-mail: info@pilat-nai.com

**Pilat Israel Limited**  
9 Habarzel St.  
Tel Aviv 69710  
Israel  
Telephone: +972 3 568 8230  
Fax: +972 3 562 4598  
E-mail: info@pilat.com

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