



Referral Agencies

Recognising the inherent challenges for students when choosing a course and responding to their increasing requests for assistance, by referring them to the most appropriate organisation (e.g. community learning, colleges or universities) is the purpose of referral agencies. Each referral agency should be able to provide students with the fundamental information required for their particular situation. The information in these notes is aimed at staff, not only in academic institutions, but also in other organisations that deal with potential students (e.g. job centres, community or voluntary organisations) and is designed raise your awareness about the subject, which will then allow you to recognise what to do, to respond effectively and to make informed referrals.

IMPORTANCE OF REFERRAL AGENCIES

Potential students may not be aware of all learning opportunities in your region or where to find accurate information. In this case, they may need to find it at a local job centre or voluntary organisations, which then will be able to refer the students to the appropriate organisation. In an educational context, referral agencies include various organisations including those that, although not course providers themselves, deal with potential students and their enquiries. They range from local authorities and local council

to job centres, community and voluntary organisations.

Establishing good relationships between these different organisations and course providers is essential to develop an efficient referral system, enabling staff to help potential students by referring them to the most appropriate institution for their particular circumstances. It is important that you are aware of how this referral mechanism has been established and how to best make use of it.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- What are your local referral agencies?
- Is there an established referral mechanism between organisations? How effective is it? How regularly is it used?
- Discuss the importance of establishing strong communication links with referral agencies

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Local providers