



Jason Page on Building the VSR Curriculum

ASAP-NYCB Board & Convener, ASAP-PWI Veteran Supported Recovery Curriculum Development

“Building a competency-based curriculum, such as the VSR training, requires a systematic development process centered on the established competencies published in the associated Role Delineation Study. It’s a process, and it’s going to involve a number of steps.”

And what are these steps? “Well,” Jason says with a characteristic grin, “since you ask . . .

- (1) **Role:** First, you have to identify the purpose of the curriculum and the duration of the course. For VSR, the New York Certification Board had already determined on a 20-hour training, with 5 additional hours Orientation for non-Veterans before I came to the project. These parameters emerged during the months-long, community-validated **ASAP VSR Role Delineation Study** prepared with Veterans offering subject matter expertise. So I had to work within that framework.
- (2) **Competencies:** Next, I had to familiarize myself with the ASAP VSR Role Delineation Study, especially what we call KSAs - the 113 line items, or task descriptions, detailing the **knowledge, skills and abilities** needed to perform the VSR role competently. This material is the basis for the training content. As ASAP-NYCB Trainer Registry member Aloysius Joseph summarized last year: *“If I’m not training to the competencies, what am I training?”*
- (3) **Themes:** It’s at this point that I was able to establish thematic groups for KSAs, what we all know as **Modules** (themes) and **Lessons** (content), and weight these groupings for duration. This can be tricky. I’m trying to reproduce the importance, or weight, assigned to each of the competencies specified in the ASAP VSR Role Delineation Study under the four content domains of Advocacy, Recovery for Veterans, Military Culture & Resources, and Ethical Responsibility. (You see these four domains reproduced in the colorful VSR logo.)
- (4) **Learning Objectives:** The next piece I needed to complete was to develop learning objectives for each of the 113 KSAs. A learning objective simply states what students will have accomplished by the end of this piece of the training. I like to use the universal sentence stem, *“By the end of this module, students will be able to . . .”* Trainers do this when they submit their courses for approval.
- (5) **Content:** When I’ve mapped out the course through these steps, it’s time to develop the lesson content. I wrote the first draft of several of the lessons, as did members of the VSR Training Development Team. It was a real advantage to be working with Veterans who understood the culture as well as fellow peer recovery trainers. With this diverse team, we were able to incorporate several frameworks and knowledge bases within the overall structure I’d developed for the course. Really, VSR content development was a collaborative effort, very much in keeping the peer recovery model itself.
- (6) **Review:** Any product’s got to be put through a review process, and we developed a workflow to include initial review and beta test by the Veterans on our Training Development Team and our copy editors. A secondary edit and review followed before we uploaded the complete course to the ASAP online learning management system (DigitalChalk).
- (7) **Launch:** Finally, there comes the day when we’re ready to launch the course. For the VSR Orientation, that date was timed in recognition of Memorial Day 2021 when the dedicated webpage went live at <http://www.asapnys.org/veteran-supported-recovery/>. The 20-hour training will be announced on the website sometime after Labor Day.

That sounds like a lot of work? Jason’s got a simple answer: “Yes.” “It’s a technical process so you do have to be detail-oriented and keep reverting to your purpose and the Role Delineation Study which is the basis of both the training and the certification. You’re in service of the role, and your job is to develop a curriculum that delivers role competence to the future certificants. Hopefully, it’s how we build a more skilled workforce which is, after all, the mission of ASAP-NYCB.”

Thank you, Jason Page!