

2

SCQF UPDATE: JUNE 2003

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Update 2

National Implementation Plan: Update

June 2003



The Scottish Credit and
Qualifications Framework

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News and information from the SCQF: *what's been happening since September 2002?*

Since the first *SCQF Update* circulated in September 2002 there has been considerable activity on several fronts:

- publicising the SCQF
- planning implementation activities across all the sectors
- developing the main guidelines on credit-rating activity for the SCQF
- European developments for credit frameworks across Europe

Each of these areas is explained in more detail in this Update, along with a brief report on the Conference held in December 2002.

SCQF website launched

As most of you will hopefully be aware by now, the SCQF website www.scqf.org.uk went live on 1 February 2003. It gives general information on the SCQF for particular audiences, ie providers and learners, and also gives useful case studies, FAQs, links to other websites and a downloadable set of SCQF publications.

If you have visited the website and have some constructive comments on how to improve it, we would like to hear from you. Contact the Development Officer — details at the end of this Update.

There are plans to upgrade the website in the near future.

SVQs — update

A joint SQA/SSAScot project to investigate methods for assigning SCQF level and credit to SVQs and SVQ Units was carried out from April 2002 to January 2003. The recommendations from this work, and details of further action, will be published shortly.

The next phase of the work is about to commence. This involves the production of guidance for Sector Skills Councils and standards-setting bodies to carry out work on assigning SCQF level and credit to standards, and the piloting of this guidance with a number of SSCs/SSBs. This work should be completed in summer 2003.

Discussions are also taking place with the other UK regulatory authorities to discuss possibilities for a common approach, as far as possible, for areas of work relating to levelling in particular.

National Implementation Plan

The *National Implementation Plan* (the green document) was published in December 2002, and 15,000 copies were distributed.

This Plan is the base document for all implementation activities that are either currently underway or being planned, across all Scotland's education and training sectors, between 2003 and 2006.

Detailed plans from all sectors are being finalised and, from summer 2003, a variety of activities, workshops, publications etc, will take place throughout HE, FE, schools, community learning and development, and for key groups such as employers, training providers and other key stakeholders. There will also be a significant programme of work with professional bodies.

To keep up-to-date on these activities, visit the website and click on to the News and Updates page.

Publicising the SCQF

As part of the national plans for the SCQF, a Communication Strategy is being developed. Phase One is already underway. Apart from the website, activities are being developed to ensure that all providers and guidance-givers have clear information about the SCQF, so that they are well prepared to give advice to learners in the future on the potential benefits of the SCQF.

An example of this has been leaflets developed for staff in the Community Learning and Development sector and for employers. Copies are available from the website or from the Development Officer. ASC is also developing materials for staff in colleges.

The Conference in December attracted over 300 people from over 180 organisations, (see across for the Conference Report).

Three more Updates are planned over the next 12 months, so again keep a look out for them on the website or in your organisation.

The publication *Introduction to the SCQF* has just been updated. Copies will be available soon on the website and from the Development Officer.

Developing the SCQF Handbook

Credit Rating

One of the most important areas of work this year is completion of the guidelines on credit-rating for the SCQF. These guidelines are currently being consulted on, and once full agreement is reached between SQA, Scottish HEIs, and other key stakeholders, these guidelines will be published as the first section of the *SCQF Handbook*. All constructive comments on the guidelines, received through the consultation process, will be taken into account before final publication. These draft guidelines are currently available on the website.

The final version will be published on the website later on in June and distributed as soon as possible thereafter.

These guidelines will be the cornerstone for the development of any further guidelines for credit transfer and for decisions on which bodies, other than SQA and the HEIs, can credit rate learning for the SCQF.

Another particularly important area of work will be developing guidelines on APL/APEL.

These other guidelines will be published in due course as further sections of the Handbook.

European developments

The SCQF is often referred to as a world leader and a model for the development of credit and qualification frameworks both in the UK and worldwide.

The process of building on the Bologna Declaration and developing a European area of higher education is continuing. Officers from the SCQF Joint Secretariat are keeping abreast of the various seminars, meetings and conferences leading up to the next meeting of ministers from countries participating in the Bologna process, which is being held in Berlin in September 2003. A report on the outcomes of this meeting will be included in the next edition of Update, and there is more information on the website www.bologna-berlin2003.de.

There are also important developments in the recognition of informal and formal learning through the Transfine Project and on vocational training on the VET Credit Transfer project.

Useful websites for these projects are: www.transfine.net and cedefop.communityzero.com.

SCQF Conference, SECC Glasgow, 16-17 December 2002 Report

The second SCQF Conference focused on plans to implement the Framework by 2006. In a keynote speech, Iain Gray MSP, then Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning, announced additional funding of £1.5m over three years to implement the Framework. A series of workshops considered how the Framework can help support developments and initiatives to meet learning needs across Scotland. At least 180 organisations from all education and training sectors were represented: around 250 people attended Day One and around 320 people attended Day Two.

The Minister told delegates 'The ambition now for us all is to work in partnership to ... make the Framework the future language of all education and training in Scotland. And the challenge for us all is to speak that language with a real passion — a passion that promotes lifelong learning for all of the people of Scotland.'

Dr Andrew Cubie, Chair of the SCQF Joint Advisory Committee, described developments to support learners

in understanding and making full use of the lifelong learning framework, and stressed that ways must be found to use it to support and enable learning.

Delegates were urged to use their links with Europe to promote the Framework, as Scotland needs to make sure its voice is heard and that it has a place at the table in all future discussions about European-wide arrangements in the area of credit and qualifications frameworks.

Individual perspectives on learning needs: key needs were highlighted

For employers

- on-the-job training needs to be appreciated as much as off-the-job training
- patterns of work may have changed, but core attributes remain reasonably constant — Core Skills in particular

For professional and statutory bodies (PSBs)

- Continuing Professional Development is an important element of lifelong learning. How to get CPD into the Framework?
- professional and statutory bodies need to play an important part in the development of the Framework in the future

For students

- promotion of wider participation is extremely important
- due to greater debts being incurred by older entrants into HE, SCQF must support transparency of public information on progression routes

For community-based learners

- clear challenges still exist if we are to attract the 50% of the population who do not benefit from higher education
- benefits of APEL for those seriously disadvantaged in society are very important

Discussions on Day Two set out the key issues for implementing the SCQF

In a keynote speech, Mary Mulligan MSP, then Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, said the Framework is a 'crucially important development for Scotland. It builds bridges and it breaks down artificial

barriers to learning. The achievement of the Framework is that it signposts people of all ages and circumstances to the education and training that is appropriate to them over their lifetime.'

Heather Jones, Chair of the SCQF Implementation Group, detailed key targets and timescales for implementing the Framework. The National Implementation Plan website www.scqf.org.uk and initial guide to employers were launched, and the project to find a methodology to credit rate and refine the level of SVQs in the Framework was almost complete. The increase in funding of £1.5m over three years showed the Executive's commitment.

Also on Day Two, speakers from FE, Schools and HE discussed key issues for implementation. Amongst those highlighted were:

- FE learners needed improved transitional arrangements for consistent and transparent articulation
- schools were building on increased flexibility in curriculum design
- challenges existed for the HE sector connected to the Bologna process and the transparency/consistency of credit transfer

Summary of issues from workshops

There were 14 conference workshops on Day Two, allowing delegates from the various sectors to meet and discuss key implementation issues. Many of these are now being addressed through implementation activities across and within sectors.

Two workshops in particular addressed international perspectives. One, run by the Commonwealth Secretariat, afforded an opportunity for delegates from Europe, New Zealand, Africa and the UK to debate framework developments across the globe. Another workshop focused on European developments, particularly as they relate to the Bologna process, which could affect HE in the future.

For more information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website on www.scqf.org.uk or contact the Development Officer, Lorraine Judge, at lorraine.judge@sqa.org.uk or l.judge@qaa.ac.uk, telephone 0141-242 2429.