

# Summary Report (Extended):

## Main Conclusions and Recommendations from the Consultation on Access 1

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# Acknowledgement

This summary report is based on the consultation and research carried out in 2003, relating to the framework at Access 1. Two Development Officers, Brenda McFarlane, Headteacher of Bothwellpark High School, and Sally Cunningham, consultant, were commissioned by SQA to carry out this work. SQA would like to acknowledge their contribution to this work.

## Introduction

This report relates to the consultation on the framework for Access 1 which took place from March to September 2003. The consultation was undertaken to establish the effectiveness of current Access 1 provision and to determine the need for, and nature of, a new framework which would provide the opportunity for national certification for those learners for whom currently there is no provision upon which to base certification.

The consultation comprised three broad strands:

- 1 Structured interviews with centres, by telephoning or by visiting
- 2 A national survey of centres conducted by questionnaire
- 3 Research into the design of a new framework for Access 1.

### Aims

The main aims of the consultation were to establish:

- ◆ the current users of Access 1
- ◆ the extent to which current provision at Access 1 met the needs of all learners working at this level
- ◆ the demand for a new framework for learners for whom there was no suitable provision within the system of National Qualifications
- ◆ the structure and content of a new framework
- ◆ the type of support/guidance materials that would be required to facilitate the implementation of a new framework
- ◆ the relationship between a new framework at Access 1 and other SQA qualifications
- ◆ the appropriateness/desirability of having SQA National Qualifications for all learners, thus supporting the strategy for inclusion and lifelong learning
- ◆ priorities for action

## The consultation process

Between March and May 2003, Development Officers carried out a number of structured interviews by telephone or by visits to forty-one centres. Initial information gathered from these interviews helped to inform the content of the questionnaire when it was developed.

Interviews were conducted with mainstream secondary schools, schools covering the range of special educational needs and further education colleges. Thirty local authorities across Scotland were involved in the consultation which provided a wide geographical representation.

Questionnaires were distributed to mainstream secondary schools, special schools and further education colleges. Questionnaires were also sent to a number of voluntary organisations offering non-SQA provision to learners with the potential to gain certification at Access level. A total of 746 questionnaires were distributed in April 2003 and there was a total of 183 responses.

A further forty-six special schools which had not responded to the consultation were contacted during September 2003 to ensure a comprehensive coverage of this sector.

## Breakdown of responses

### Structured interviews

Visits	24
Telephone interviews	17
Total number of centres contacted	41

Thirty local authorities were represented in the above, and ten further education colleges.

### Questionnaire

	Distributed	Returned
FE Colleges	47	27
Special Schools	179	61
Secondary Schools	520	97
Totals	746	183

### Supplementary Interviews

Delegates at SQA Quality Networks	12
Telephone interviews	34

# Commentary on responses

The main issues emerging from the consultation are summarised below.

a) Progression from Access 1 to Access 2

Almost all centres commented on the fact that there is no difference in the level of cognitive ability required to do the Access 1 Units which are derived from the Outcomes of Access 2 Units, and the Access 2 Units. Some centres indicated that they registered candidates for Access 2, but the candidates achieved at Access 1. Another issue was the need for standardisation of Units at the same Access level in respect of the degree of difficulty across all areas of the curriculum.

b) Lateral progression

Lateral progression is dealt with in a variety of ways. Some centres used the ASDAN material, others continued with the Elaborated 5-14 Curriculum, others used staff expertise to ensure the needs of candidates were met. Almost all centres identified the need for development to provide lateral progression for those candidates who are either operating within Access 1 or at the lowest part of Access 1. Some centres identified the need for lateral progression at Access 2 level.

c) What is offered to those who are not able to achieve at Access 1 level?

Centres offer a range of courses/programmes for these candidates:

- ◆ ASDAN
- ◆ Elaborated 5-14 Curriculum
- ◆ Locally devised courses/programmes
- ◆ Curriculum Descriptors
- ◆ Needs driven curriculum
- ◆ Equals Programme
- ◆ Core Skills Units

Almost all those consulted expressed interest in a new framework that would meet the needs of those candidates who are currently working at the lower end of Access 1.

d) Opportunity for all

Certification is not an issue for those centres whose candidates are registered for SQA National Certification. Centres with significant numbers of candidates who are unable to achieve at Access 1 due to a lack of suitable provision, identified the need for National Certification. Almost all centres offering non-SQA provision would welcome a framework that would allow the opportunity for certification for all. Colleges, in particular, service a large number of adults with learning disabilities for whom no formal certification is available.

e) Other Issues

*(Common to all sectors)*

- ◆ availability of provision leading to National Certification for those candidates who cannot achieve at Access 1 level

- ◆ the need for Unit Outcomes that are practically based for candidates currently working at Access 1 level and below
- ◆ existing Units and NABs are too ‘wordy’ and cause unnecessary workload for staff
- ◆ the need for lateral progression
- ◆ the need for staff development and training.

*(Colleges)*

- ◆ problems exist where candidates cannot progress beyond Access 1 and Access 2 because many have already undertaken the Units at these levels in school
- ◆ there is also a need for Units/Clusters/Courses that are more vocationally based
- ◆ the need to develop Units that are contextually different from those offered in school for adult candidates who may not progress beyond Access 1 or Access 2 was also identified
- ◆ colleges would consider extending their provision if Units/Clusters/Courses for adults with learning disabilities who are not able to achieve at Access 1 could be devised

*(Schools)*

- ◆ difficulties in the transition from Elaborated 5-14 Curriculum to SQA National Units
- ◆ workload issues in respect of resource production to support the delivery of Access 1 Units
- ◆ tensions exist for teachers trying to meet individual candidate needs within what some see as an inflexible structure
- ◆ the lack of a nationally-validated framework for those for whom provision is not currently available in the SQA system of National Qualifications
- ◆ the impact on the confidence of teachers where certificated courses are not available

## **The design of the Framework at Access 1**

The third strand of the work involved developing proposals for the structure and content for the framework, taking account of all the feedback. Six draft Units in Healthy Basic Cooking were developed as a model. These were selected because of their practical and intrinsically motivating nature. One of the Units was tested in a limited pilot with 10 centres and the results of this were very positive. An initial evaluation of the effectiveness of this Unit and the viability of the model was undertaken in early October 2003. The design of the draft Units gave consideration to the issues highlighted by practitioners from both the structured interviews and the questionnaire.

The main points were the need for:

- ◆ the structure and content to reflect individual learner needs
- ◆ Units which have practical / activity based Outcomes as opposed to cognitive Outcomes
- ◆ a range of Units within each subject area, which allows opportunities for curricular continuity and lateral progression
- ◆ Units which offer lateral progression through contextual change
- ◆ the opportunity for National Certification for all learners

- ◆ Units which can be delivered without significant adaptation and which are clearly written
- ◆ curriculum / assessment support / guidance materials to assist in the delivery of Units
- ◆ linkage to other levels of Access 1 provision to facilitate vertical progression
- ◆ the identification of a number of priority areas in the development of a new Framework.

## Conclusions

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings of the consultation process.

- 1 Centres are offering a variety of non-SQA Courses in the absence of appropriate SQA provision.
- 2 There is very strong support for the achievements of all learners to be recognised through SQA National Certification.
- 3 There is a need for a new level within the current Access 1 Framework (a Supported level), designed to address the needs of those learners with severe/complex and profound/multiple disabilities which allows their inclusion in a National Qualifications Framework.
- 4 Provision in the following areas should be developed at the Supported level of Access 1:
  - ◆ English/Language and Communication
  - ◆ Mathematics/Numeracy and Life Skills
  - ◆ Independence and Life Skills
  - ◆ ICT
  - ◆ Personal and Social Development
  - ◆ Expressive Arts
- 5 The seven Independent Access 1 Units have been successful in enabling certification for some learners who are unable to progress to Access 1 Units which are derived from Access 2 Outcomes. Further development of this Independent level has support.
- 6 There is a need to retain the Access 1 Units derived from Access 2 Outcomes for those learners who are able to make the progression to Access 2.
- 7 Access 1 and Access 2 provision, is however, problematic for some and does not meet all learners' needs. It also creates barriers to continued learning for those candidates unable to progress from Access 1 to Access 2, as well as those unable to progress from Access 2 to Access 3. Access 1 and 2 provision should :
  - ◆ address learners needs
  - ◆ have Unit Outcomes which are practically based
  - ◆ have coherence
  - ◆ have opportunity for lateral progression
- 8 Staff often find Unit descriptors difficult to understand, difficult to implement without considerable adaptations and are unsure about the definitions of support outlined in the support notes.

- 9 There is a strong demand for curriculum materials and assessment support/guidance materials and these should be available as new provision is developed.
- 10 There is a strong demand for other forms of support for centres and practitioners, for example, seminars and Support Networks, and training and development.
- 11 Experienced practitioners working in the area of severe/complex and profound/multiple disabilities, see the need for a greater level of their involvement in all new developments in relation to Access 1.
- 12 The Curriculum Descriptors, although useful for some practitioners, create difficulties for many practitioners and learners, with their Learning Targets based as they are, on the Performance Criteria of Access 2 Units.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the consultation process.

- 1 Develop a coherent three level Access 1 structure incorporating the following:
  - ◆ First level — the development of a new level at Access 1 designed to meet the needs of learners with severe/complex and profound/multiple disabilities and which would allow for these learners to be included in the National Qualifications Framework. Units at this level will be delivered with Support.
  - ◆ Second level — further development of the new Independent Units to provide the opportunity for vertical progression for those who may be able to progress from the first to the second level.
  - ◆ Third level — the retention and development of Access 1 Units derived from Access 2 Outcomes to allow progression from this level to Access 2.
- 2 Incorporate the following into the above structure of three levels of Units:
  - 2.1 Breadth, balance, coherence and continuity
  - 2.2 Lateral and vertical progression
  - 2.3 Practically based Unit Outcomes
  - 2.4 Clearly written Unit descriptors and NABs which are easily delivered
  - 2.5 The modes/subjects listed in the conclusions
  - 2.6 Opportunities for learning for life.
- 3 Make the first level of the framework (the Supported level), the starting point for development to provide a foundation on which to base subsequent Access 1 levels.  
  
(Note: as an illustration of this level, the curricular area of Home Economics: Healthy Basic Cooking was selected for development).
- 4 Ensure that provision developed genuinely meets the needs of learners at this level in terms of suitability, coherence and progression by involving those with the appropriate expertise in the develop of provision.
- 5 Develop further Access 2 provision to ensure opportunities for ‘learning for life’ for those candidates unable to progress to Access 3.

- 6 Develop curriculum/assessment support/guidance materials in collaboration with other national agencies as appropriate to support the delivery of all Access 1 and Access 2 levels
- 7 Identify other suitable forms of support for practitioners delivering Access 1 and 2, for example, Support Networks and seminars, and work with other agencies to provide this.