

SCQF UPDATE: AUGUST 2002

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Update 1

National Implementation Plan: Update

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SCQF

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SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE FROM THE SCQF IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

Introduction

This document provides a brief update on the arrangements and timetable to develop and implement the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Copies are being issued widely across all sectors of education, training and business in Scotland and further editions will be issued to keep you informed of progress in implementing the new national education and training framework for Scotland.

Background

In September 2001 the structure of the SCQF, along with its aims and purposes, was published in the document '*An Introduction to the SCQF*', and launched at a national conference in December 2001. To plan and coordinate the implementation of the SCQF, an implementation Group has been established with members representing QAA, SQA, Universities Scotland, the further education sector (nominated by ASC), the higher education sector (nominated by the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access) the school sector (nominated by HAS) and community learning and development sector (nominated by Communities Scotland).

The central aims of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) are to:

- enable employers, learners, and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other, and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce
- help people of all ages and circumstances access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential

The SCQF will make the relationships between qualifications clearer. It will clarify entry and exit points and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors. It will also maximise the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways, it will assist learners to plan their progress and learning.

Qualifications and programmes within the SCQF will be described in terms of their level and number of credit points (known as SCOTCAT points). The positioning of two or more qualifications or programmes of learning at the same level indicate that, while they might have quite different purposes, content and outcomes, they are broadly comparable in terms of the general level of complexity of skills, knowledge and/or competence. Qualifications at the same level are broadly comparable, but not interchangeable.

SCOTCAT points are used to quantify the outcomes of learning. They are based on the amount of time that an 'average' learner at a specified level might expect to take to achieve the outcomes regardless of mode of delivery or assessment.

Credit achieved in one programme can be transferred to another. The awarding bodies will continue to determine the extent to which this transfer can take place. This decision will depend upon the nature/content of the learning for which the credit has been given and the requirements of the programme into which transfer is being sought.

There is also potential for the SCQF to benefit a wide range of stakeholders in understanding how qualifications and programmes might meet their training needs in ways not presently apparent.

Current position

The Scottish Framework is at the forefront of European and world-wide developments, achieving the inclusion of qualifications across academic and vocational sectors into a single credit-based framework. The full benefits of this integrated system of credits and qualifications will be realised by all organisations involved, working together across the varied sectors of education and training, and with stakeholders. Crucial to this is that everyone must keep in mind the needs of learners as each new action is considered and implemented.

The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) established by the development partners provides an important locus for working together. Under the Chair of the JAC, Andrew Cubie, there is good cause for optimism that all those with an interest in education and training in Scotland will work together to maximise the potential of the SCQF to ensure flexibility, inclusivity, credit transfer, learner choice and progression.

Implementation of the SCQF

The implementation of the SCQF across all the appropriate education and training sectors in Scotland is a massive and extremely important task. It is vital that the implementation is co-ordinated across these sectors and organisations and that this is done to an agreed timetable. It is also a task that is likely to be given added importance and profile by the outcomes of the Parliamentary 'Inquiry into Lifelong Learning', being carried out by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee (ELLC). It was for this very reason that the Implementation Group was formed in order that we could fully support this new phase. Our main objectives are to:

- develop and propose general policy, strategy and a timetable for implementation of the SCQF
- co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy and timetable
- inform and advise the SCQF Joint Advisory Committee on any issues of policy concerning the implementation of the SCQF

Current and future action

The Implementation Plan will be published in the autumn of 2002. A summary of some of the key areas to be addressed is set out below and a summary of associated key dates is set out at the end of the paper. We will issue more detailed information as key activities and milestones are agreed by all stakeholders and partners. In the interim, if you wish any further information please contact Lorraine Judge, Development Officer SCQF, on 0141-242 2429 or by e-mail: lorraine.judge@sqa.org.uk or l.judge@qaa.ac.uk.

Developing and implementing the structure of credits and qualifications

This is a major strand of work and involves us working collaboratively to realise the potential of the SCQF, ie using the SCQF in practice. It is anticipated that the Implementation Group will widen its membership to reflect particular areas of work and involve other organisations such as Careers Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highland and Islands Enterprise and *learndirectscotland*.

Areas of work

- An agreed national implementation plan will be developed for full integration of all programmes/qualifications currently covered by the framework. This plan will include clear timetables indicating dates by which particular areas of coverage or key targets will be achieved.
- In addition to the above, implementation plans for each main sector — schools, FE, HE, Community Learning and Development will be developed. These will take account of and support particular sectoral needs, but will also build on collaborative approaches where possible. These plans will include information on key dates, activities and communication and support approaches.
- The Scottish Executive will be working on an ongoing basis to ensure that the SCQF is taken full account of in planning and policy-making. This will require a collaborative approach across a wide range of departments to ensure consistency of message and to capitalise on good practice.
- A programme of work is underway to refine the place of SVQs within the Framework. This project is investigating possible methods for the allocation of credit and level to both units and SVQs. The work is being carried out by SQA in partnership with the Scottish Council of NTOs.
- The development and publication of an SCQF Handbook which will relate to the main concepts, components, definitions, structure and features of the Framework.
- Work will take place to investigate the possibilities for harmonising approaches to the recording of achievement and Progress Files. This work will need to take account of the range of approaches used in different sectors and to support different programmes.
- The development of progression and credit transfer pathways — both generally and within subject areas, across school, further and higher education, community learning and development and professional and other qualifications.

Extending the SCQF

This entails work to include other qualifications within the SCQF, for example those of Professional and Statutory Bodies, SWAP Access Programmes and relevant Community and Adult Education Programmes. In addition, work will need to be done to take account of the other UK frameworks.

Areas of work

- The development of generic criteria and procedures for the credit rating of all forms of learning, including prior learning.
- Joint work with a range of Professional and Statutory Bodies to identify opportunities for the inclusion of key qualifications and programmes within the SCQF
- Consideration of both the devolving of credit rating and levelling to other appropriate bodies and the mechanisms for providing a credit rating and levelling service.
- The development of a plan to bring other appropriate programmes and qualifications within the SCQF.

Improving national awareness and usage of the SCQF

The success of the SCQF will result largely from a wide and shared understanding of the Framework, its purposes and benefits. This strand is concerned with work to promote and raise awareness and understanding of the SCQF in:

- further education
- higher education
- schools
- community learning and development
- the employment sector
- information and guidance services
- Sector Skills Councils
- the rest of the UK

This will be achieved through national and sector specific communication strategies including, amongst other things:

- national and sectoral conferences, seminars and workshops
- meetings with key interest groups and organisations
- publications
- press and other media
- the provision of an SCQF website and information service
- working with Careers Scotland, *learndirectscotland* and other national bodies offering information, guidance and related services to promote understanding and usage of the SCQF and its language
- working generally with providers of qualifications and programmes to promote understanding and use of the SCQF and its language including through programme specifications and documentation

Articulating with developments in the rest of the UK and Europe

It is important that the SCQF is not developed in isolation from developments in qualification frameworks elsewhere in the UK and in Europe. The SCQF should enable employers and learners to have a clearer understanding of the relationship of Scottish qualifications to those elsewhere and enable the movement of learners between systems.

The SCQF has been developed in parallel with a number of other frameworks in the UK, notably the QAA framework for higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and work led by QCA (the regulatory body for England), but supported by ACCAC and CCEA (the regulatory bodies for Wales and Northern Ireland respectively) to establish a framework for the qualifications for which they are responsible.

Areas of work

- It is important that a formal liaison mechanism is maintained with other framework developments across the UK and also in Europe. To this end, meetings are already being held with the regulatory bodies in the rest of the UK and also with other credit consortia such as those in Northern Ireland (NICAT), Wales, and England. This will be extended to other groups and organisations as appropriate.

Enhancing the SCQF and responding to national education and training developments as appropriate

This will be achieved through, amongst other things, commenting on draft proposals and consultations and advising those charged with implementation of key initiatives.

Consideration will also have to be given to the final ELLC Report, due to be published in September, and the Minister's response to this.

The establishment of the new Sector Skills Development Agency and the Sector Skills Councils will also require support to ensure awareness of the SCQF and its uses.

Next stages

Publication of National Implementation Plan	Autumn 2002
Development of a Promotional Strategy	December 2002
SCQF website launched	December 2002
Report on the position of SVQs in the SCQF	December 2002
SCQF National Conference	December 2002
SCQF Handbook — initial sections	Early 2003