

Guidance for Employers, Training Providers and Colleges on providing Formal Recognition for European Mobility Placements



Foreword

This guide forms a part of the LEOPlus Toolkit - A Practical Guide to Organising Work Placements within the EU - and focuses specifically on why and how to facilitate formal recognition for learning undertaken during European mobility placements. The guide was produced primarily by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) although in consultation with LEOPlus partners in Scotland, Finland and Sweden.

The guide is aimed primarily at employers, colleges and training providers whose students/trainees currently participate in European mobility programmes, such as those funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, or who are considering becoming involved in European mobility. The guide is specifically aimed at those organisations involved in, or expecting to become involved in, European mobility programmes and actively considering the formal recognition of learning undertaken and achieved during a European placement or exchange.

This Guide works alongside the flowchart *Options for Formal Recognition (Figure 1)* - provided on the **next page** - and is divided into numbered sections each relating to a corresponding stage within the flowchart.

What is meant by formal recognition and who can benefit?

The term *formal recognition* refers, in this instance, to some kind of document able to evidence the learning undertaken or achieved during a placement or exchange and which is easily recognised as such, as a minimum, in the home country.

Employers often choose to work in partnership with education institutes or training providers for their training delivery and this can facilitate the process of formal recognition. Together they should agree upon the process for recognition of the placement (learning period) spent abroad and upon the evidence required to support formal recognition. Whatever process is followed, formal recognition will focus upon increased knowledge, skills and competences by individual participants.

Define the Learning Aims of the Placement

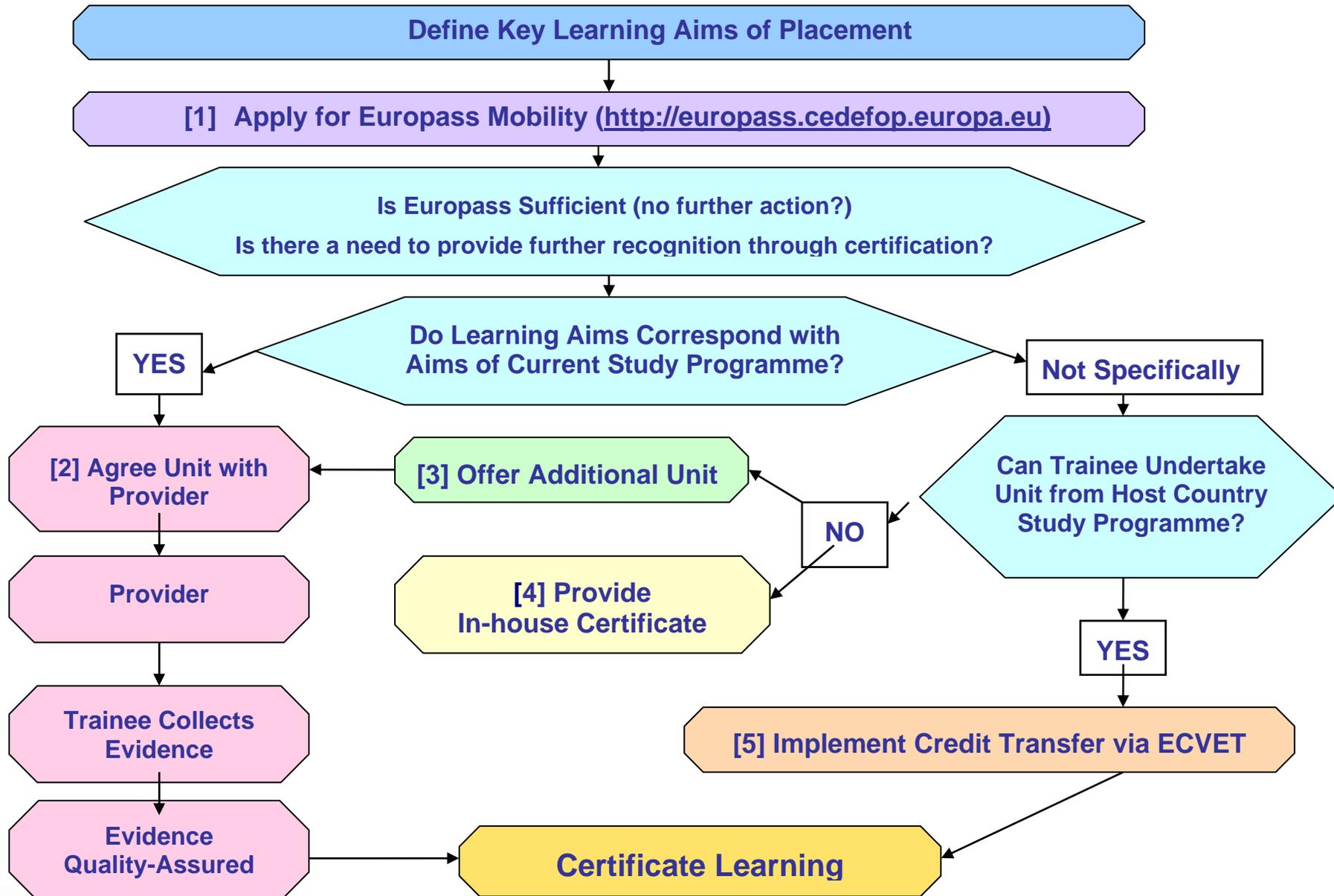
The first step is to decide what the aim of the placement is in terms of a trainee's learning. Is the aim linked to the learning aims of a programme of study such as an apprenticeship or a qualification that the trainee is currently working towards? Is the aim to enhance generic skills such as adaptability, self-confidence, negotiating skills or language skills? It is important to decide what the trainee is expected to achieve as this will help guide you as to the best method of recognition.

Options for Formal Recognition

- (1) Europass Mobility
- (2) Recognition within Current Programme of Study/Qualification
- (3) Additional Units/Modules
- (4) In-house Certificate
- (5) Credit Transfer (ECVET)

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Figure 1: Options for Formal Recognition



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(1) Europass Mobility

The aim of Europass is to encourage mobility and lifelong learning in an enlarged Europe. Europass was officially launched in January 2005 and a National Centre has now been appointed in every EU/EEA country to implement and promote it. Further information on Europass, including links to the national Europass centres can be accessed, in all EU/EEA languages, at <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>.

Europass currently comprises 5 standard documents that act as “translation” devices for skills, knowledge and competences across Europe with the aim of ensuring immediate recognition. For the purpose of European mobility (placements and exchanges), the most important of these documents is the Europass Mobility document which records periods of time spent in another European country for the purpose of learning or training and which can help with the process of learning recognition.

Who is responsible for completing the Europass Mobility document?

The Europass Mobility document is completed by the home and host organisations involved in the placement or exchange, in a language that has been agreed between both all involved parties.

Within the Europass website, a number of **examples of Europass Mobility documents** can be accessed.

Beyond Europass Mobility, the Europass European CV and the Europass Language Passport may also be of relevance.

Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV)

The **Europass CV** assist users in highlighting existing skills, qualifications and work experience. It provides a template, in all EU/EEA languages, to help users draw attention to the attributes that will set them apart from others. It is the responsibility of the individual to complete this document rather than the organisation.

Europass Language Passport

The **Europass Language Passport** makes it possible for users to record their language ability. Users record language courses they have completed along with any other language experience they may have and rank their proficiency according to a common European scale of language skill. It is the responsibility of the individual to complete this document rather than the organisation.

The benefits of this approach are:

- ◆ added-value of the European dimension
- ◆ known to learners and employers in some EU countries and used for recognition purposes
- ◆ an opportunity to list the skills and competencies acquired
- ◆ no additional assessment burden

The disadvantages of this approach are:

- ◆ not fully known or fully used by learners or employers in all EU countries
- ◆ not formally embedded in national qualification and validation systems
- ◆ further refinements yet needed to align Europass to other European initiatives
- ◆ not yet 100% electronic

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(2) Recognition within Current Programme of Study/Qualification

You may wish to formally integrate the learning and/or work experience a trainee undertakes during a transnational placement with the training/qualification (learning programme) they are undertaking within your organisation. For example, where a trainee is undertaking a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ), a Modern Apprenticeship Programme or a National Certificate, they might opt to use a placement or exchange to gather evidence towards part of the programme, (e.g. a Core Skills Unit¹, a Personal Development Unit or a Vocational Unit).

It is worth noting that, during the lifetime of the LEOPlus project, the Scottish Government has approved the inclusion of an optional European work placement within Scottish Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks, where appropriate. Further information on this can be obtained from the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils Scotland at:

http://www.sscalliance.org/TheAlliance/Scotland/ModernApprenticeships/framework_scotland.asp

Preparation is the key to successfully integrating the mobility placement with the qualification/or training programme being undertaken by the trainee. With some preparation the trainee can be assessed against certain learning outcomes during their transnational work placement.

Alternatively the trainee can gather evidence during their placement towards meeting learning outcomes of the qualification and/or training they are undertaking and have this subsequently assessed upon their return. The benefit of this approach is that it does not add to the assessment burden, it is flexible, that is, the institution and trainee can decide on what will be assessed and it can fit in with any length of placement.

The most common and often easiest way to achieve this is to consider what learning outcomes the European placement can contribute towards the current training programme of the employee /trainee. This is based on the principle of 'avoiding duplication' and ensures that the time spent abroad is not considered a delay to achieving current training goals.

The benefits of this approach are:

- ◆ respects the principles of avoiding duplication
- ◆ no additional assessment burden

The disadvantages of this approach are:

- ◆ no recognisable added value of the European dimension
- ◆ a lack of visible European added-value can reduce the incentive for learners to undertake placements

¹ a unit or module is either a relatively small qualification in itself (approximately 40 guided learning hours) or a component part of a qualification.

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(3) Additional Units/Modules

Where it is not possible to link the transnational placement to the qualification the trainee is currently undertaking or where you wish the trainee to have evidence of the 'added value' of having participated in a transnational placement, it is possible to achieve this by requesting that a trainee undertake a relevant unit or module which is related to the placement, which will in some way provide a link to the European placement or exchange and which is certificated.

Currently in Scotland, an employer/training provider together with an individual trainee can choose from a wide range of units at different levels, for example²:

- ◆ Experiencing Europe (SCQF Level 3)
- ◆ Working with Others: Workplace Core Skills Unit (SCQF Level 4)
- ◆ Language: Spanish 2 (SCQF Level 4)

The benefits of this approach are:

- ◆ provides additional credit/added value
- ◆ the learner/training provider can choose the most suitable unit or module

The disadvantages of this approach are:

- ◆ extra study and assessment time is required
- ◆ employers may not value any additional unit

(4) In-house Certificate

Another way to recognise time spent on a European placement or exchange is for the sending organisation (college, employer or training provider) to issue a certificate directly related to the activities of the placement. An example of this can be found on the **next page**.

The advantages of this approach are:

- ◆ it is easy to produce
- ◆ no additional assessment is required
- ◆ it provides evidence for trainees to show potential employers that they have participated in a European placement or exchange

The disadvantages of this approach are:

- ◆ the certificate does not attract any credit
- ◆ it is not formal recognition - not linked to a qualifications framework
- ◆ it is often seen as no more than an attendance certificate

² the listed examples are also available at different levels.

CERTIFICATE

*add name of college, employer or
vocational training body*

This is to certify that

*Successfully completed a transnational work
placement with [name of organisation] in
[name of country] during the period [date]*

and [optional]

*a course of [language] as a foreign language at
[name of vocational training institution] in [name of country] and in
[name of country] from [date] to [date]*

*This activity was supported by the European Commission's
LEONARDO DA VINCI Programme [optional]*



[name of signatory]
Principal / Chief Executive
[name of college, employer, or vocational training body]



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(5) Credit Transfer (ECVET)

Some students/trainees undertake a longer mobility placement and attend a college or training facility in the host country for a long enough period to allow them to gain (or partly gain) a qualification (part of a qualification) within the host country. The trainee may however wish to have their certificate recognised within or transferred into their home country's qualification system. This is the principle behind the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

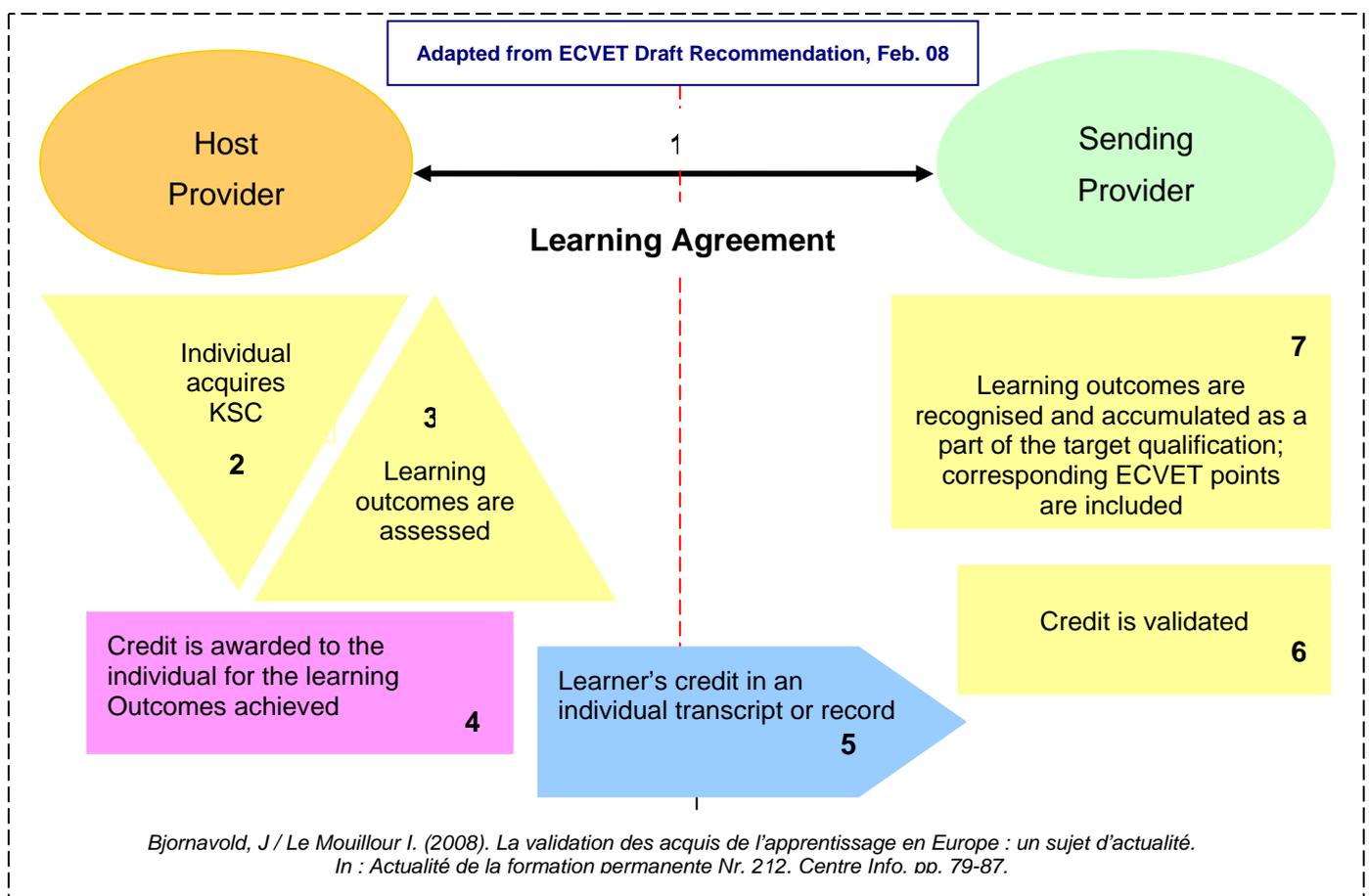
The objective of ECVET is to create a European tool that will facilitate the transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired by individuals moving from one learning context to another or from one qualification system to another. Currently, not all European countries are in a position to provide credit transfer from one system to another. However, in Scotland, where there is already a unit and credit based qualifications system, where all mainstream qualifications are placed within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and where further work is being undertaken to bring more sectoral qualifications into the framework, ECVET is technically possible to implement and Scotland is in a unique position to be able to offer credit transfer to learners from Scotland undertaking a European work placement where their learning is assessed and meets certain conditions.

Further information on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and on credit-ratings within the SCQF can be obtained at:

- ◆ **Understanding Qualifications: A Guide to the SCQF for Employers**
- ◆ **SCQF Credit Rating Service Guide**

The diagram below (Figure 2) presents the key steps within ECVET.

Figure 2: ECVET for Transfer and Accumulation of Learning Outcomes



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In the next diagram (Figure 3), these steps have been contextualised for a trainee enrolled on a Modern Apprenticeship Programme in Scotland, undertaking a work placement organised by a Technical College in France. In this example, the learning from the work placement would substitute for some of the learning from the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) within the Modern Apprenticeship. The key to success here is the preparatory work undertaken both by the training provider/college in Scotland and France, and by SQA as the SVQ Awarding Body in Scotland. Once the training provider/college in Scotland has verified that the French College is a bona fide institution, SQA would then check for a broad match of learning aims and levels to ensure that credit transfer is appropriate.

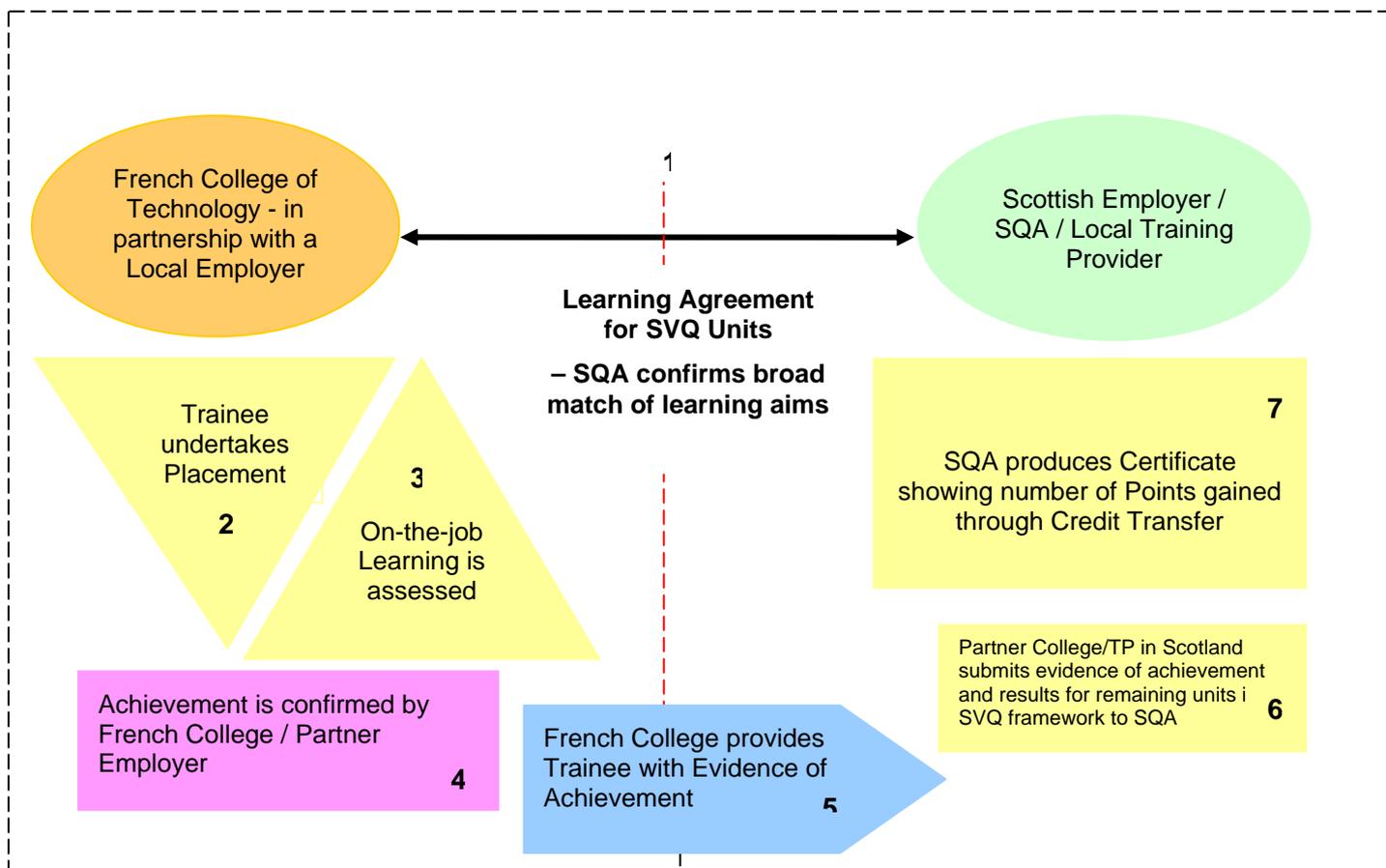


Figure 3: ECVET Example – Scotland and France

The benefits of this approach are:

- ◆ respects the principle of avoiding duplication
- ◆ European added-value should be apparent³
- ◆ makes qualifications/units portable, transferable and recognisable

The disadvantages of this approach:

- ◆ not all European countries have a credit-based or unit-based system
- ◆ there is a requirement for bilateral agreements
- ◆ involves a lot of paperwork – not yet automatic

³ SQA is currently considering the most effective way to reflect credit transfer

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Key Success Factors

Whichever recognition option you choose, preparation and organisation are key. Unless you provide the trainee with an in-house certificate, there are additional steps to be undertaken at the three key stages of the placement (pre-placement, during placement and post placement).

Pre-Placement: Additional Steps

- ◆ discuss with the host organisation the learning outcomes/unit being undertaken by the trainees and for which evidence is being gathered
- ◆ where possible, identify a mentor and/or assessor within the host organisation who will work with the trainee during their visit and who will support and make judgments on the work of the trainee
- ◆ preparation for trainees – discuss with trainees the learning outcomes for which evidence will be gathered
- ◆ provide trainees with the learning materials and the evidence gathering tools required, for example: logbooks or portfolios

During Placement: Evidence Gathering and Recording

- ◆ trainee gathers and records the evidence
- ◆ where appropriate, the mentor/assessor ensures that the evidence gathered meets the requirements of the learning outcomes/aims

Post Placement: Verification, Validation and Certification

- ◆ the evidence gathered during the placement is presented to the trainee's lecturer/assessor for assessment and verification
- ◆ a decision is made on the quality of evidence and how it meets the learning outcomes
- ◆ the achievement is recorded and information passed to the Awarding Body at the appropriate time
- ◆ certification ensues subject to any external quality assurance procedures

We hope you have found this Guide on Recognition useful. For more information on organising EU work placements for trainees, please refer back to the LEOPlus Toolkit.