

SCOTTISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CREDIT AND ACCESS

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Overview of developments within the European Commission including ECVET and the EQF

Introduction

This paper provides an update on the major developments with regard to the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the proposal European credit transfer system for vocational and educational training (ECVET).

Recommendation

SACCA members are asked to note the contents of the paper.

Further information

Further information on the contents of this paper is available from David Bottomley or Alan Runcie.

Overview of developments within the European Commission including ECVET and the EQF

The European Qualifications Framework

1. Following the consultation on the proposed 8 level European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in late 2005, the results of the consultation were discussed at a conference in Budapest in February 2006, which SCQF development partners attended. Results of the consultation indicated broad support for the establishment of an overarching EQF, and, at the Hungarian conference, the European Commission (EC) announced a number of initiatives to take the EQF forward.
2. The EC is preparing an EQF “recommendation”, for presentation as a formal proposal in the second half of this year. This will be a framework for co-operation and will be open for review.
3. In parallel to this, the EC will expand testing of the EQF in a variety of ways:
 - There will be a call for proposals under the Leonardo da Vinci programme to support those who wish to work together on key issues related to the EQF (see <http://www.leonardo.org.uk/>)
 - As of March 2006, the EC has established, within the framework of the Education and Training 2010 work programme, a cluster of countries interested in working together on the recognition of learning outcomes, particularly non-formal and informal learning. This will lead to specific peer-learning activities in the field of the recognition of learning outcomes.
 - The EC has established a technical working group which will look specifically at how to improve the reference level descriptors for the EQF in the light of the consultation process. This group will eventually be open to experts from all Member States and its work will inform the draft recommendation. Whereas it is intended that the EQF should continue to ensure that top vocational training and professional qualifications can be fully recognised at levels 6, 7 and 8, the level descriptors should now also include a very clear reference to the cycle descriptors developed as part of the Bologna process in higher education. The cycle descriptors will form the main reference point in aligning national higher education frameworks with the framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Links to national frameworks

4. The establishment of an EU-level co-ordination structure will be proposed as part of the EQF recommendation. This group will have a key role in ensuring transparency, consistency across countries and in improving the EQF over time. Contact and coordination points at the national level will be proposed as part of this process.

Sector links

5. The Commission will explore how to align sectors with the EQF, with the overall aim of facilitating the linkage of sector-based initiatives to national qualifications systems. The focus of the EC will be on sector-based developments at the international level which are not at the moment feeding into national systems from the outset, rather than on sector-based initiatives which are already fully integrated into national systems.

The European Credit Transfer system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

6. ECVET is proposed as a tool to support the recognition of learning outcomes achieved in vocational education and training in the European context. It will be voluntary and applicable to formal and non-formal learning. The EQF level descriptors will be the key reference point in determining the level of units and qualifications within ECVET.

7. The EC will launch a public consultation process on the establishment of ECVET in the second half of 2006. Based on the results of the consultation process, the EC could adopt a draft recommendation on a credit transfer system for vocational education and training by the end of 2007.