

SCOTTISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CREDIT AND ACCESS

**14-06-06
Item 6
Paper 41-06**

Progress report on the self-certification of the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland against the framework for the European Higher Education Area

Introduction

1. This paper provides a progress report on ongoing work to verify that the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland is compatible with the framework for the European Higher Education Area.

Recommendation

2. A copy of the second iteration of the draft verification report is attached for members' information on progress. Please note that this version has yet to be amended as a result of comments and key issues raised at the 2nd meeting of the verification working group on 5.6.06 (the key points raised at that meeting, and at the 1st meeting on 26.5.06, are attached as annexes 1 and 2)

3. SACCA members are asked to note the contents of the papers, and:

- to identify any salient issues not covered in the papers
- to identify any other issues to be considered in the next stage of the verification process.

Further information

4. For further information on the material covered in this paper please contact David Bottomley or Alan Runcie

Progress report on the self-certification of the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland against the framework for the European Higher Education Area

Background

1. Ministers from those countries signed up to the Bologna process recommended in the communiqué from their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 that for the functioning and reputation of the Framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a whole, it is important that there exist clear and demonstrable national processes for aligning national frameworks within the overarching European Framework.
2. It was therefore proposed that criteria should be put in place for the verification that national frameworks are compatible with the EHEA Framework, and that procedures of such compatibility will be 'self-certified' by each country.
3. Scotland has agreed with the Bologna working group on qualifications frameworks to be one of two nations (the other being Ireland) to pilot the self-certification process, and to report by September 2006 on that process and the issues raised during its conduct. The experience will serve to inform the process of self-certification against the EHEA in the remainder of the Bologna countries. Ministers recommend that all signatories to the Bologna process will complete the self-certification process by 2010.
4. Both the proposed criteria for verifying that national frameworks are compatible with the EHEA and the proposed procedures governing self-certification of compatibility form the basis of the draft report (see attached paper) on the verification that the framework of qualifications for higher education institutions in Scotland is compatible with the framework for the EHEA.

The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Scotland

5. The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland (document at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/default.asp>) provides a key reference point for HEIs in the development and approval of their qualifications and programmes. QAA Codes of practice for HEIs, QAA institutional review procedures and (in those institutions where they still operate) QAA subject review processes each include a focus on the HEIs use of the framework. HEIs internal reviews are similarly required to review the use of the framework at subject level.
6. The framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland is fully integrated in the wider framework for lifelong learning, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).
7. The framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland is the responsibility of the QAA Scotland Committee, exercising that responsibility through a sub-committee – SACCA.
8. Ultimate responsibility for the process of self-certification will rest with QAA Scotland and the approval of the process and its outcomes will be the responsibility

of the QAA Scotland Committee. The process itself will be carried out by SACCA, which has as one of its responsibilities the continuing maintenance and development of the framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland and, as agreed with the Scottish Executive and Universities Scotland, it will have the responsibility for self-certification of compatibility with the European framework for the Higher Education area.

Progress to date

9. SACCA has designed and will continue to oversee the process of self-certification and receive reports on its progress, addressing any issues which might arise during the process.

10. SACCA has constituted a small expert working group to comment on the draft verification report produced by QAA Scotland and Universities Scotland. The members of the working group, which should have international expert representation, are:

Professor John Harper, Robert Gordon University, Chair of SACCA

Professor Andrew Nash, University of Glasgow

Ms Lea McKay, University of Paisley

Ms Rowena Kochanowska, University of Strathclyde

Professor Brent MacGregor, Edinburgh College of Art

Ms Rachel Heaney, NUS Scotland and SACCA

Ms Eva Gonczi, Hungarian Ministry of Education

Ms Aune Valk, Head of Open University Centre, University of Tartu, Estonia

Officers

Dr Alan Runcie, QAA Scotland/Universities Scotland

Mr Gerard Madill, Universities Scotland

Dr David Bottomley, QAA Scotland

11. The working group has met twice on 26 May and 5 June to discuss the draft report and salient issues arising, and the report has been refined accordingly after the 1st meeting. The attached version for SACCA members' information is the second draft, with amendments/additions as a result of the 2nd meeting of the group yet to be made. Please note that the key issues from that 2nd meeting, along with the key issues raised at the 1st meeting, are attached as annexes 1 and 2. The working group will continue the iteration process for the verification report electronically.

12. It is further proposed that a seminar for a small group representative of wider stakeholders (e.g. the Scottish Funding Council, representatives of Professional Bodies, SQA, the Scottish Executive) be convened on 22 August to explain the

verification process and invite comment on the report. The verification working group may meet immediately subsequent to the seminar to 'sign off' the report.

13. It is intended that the final report will be signed off by the Chair of QAA Scotland Committee, and submitted to the Bologna working group on qualifications frameworks by the end of September 2006.