

Key issues from 1st meeting of self-certification group at QAA Scotland offices, 26.5.06

Present:

John Harper (Robert Gordon University, Chair)
Rowena Kochanowska (University of Strathclyde)
Andrew Nash (University of Glasgow)
Brent MacGregor (Edinburgh College of Art)
David Bottomley (QAA Scotland)
Gerard Madill (Universities Scotland)
Alan Runcie (QAA Scotland/Universities Scotland)

Apologies:

Lea McKay (University of Paisley)
Rachel Heaney (NUS/SACCA)
Eva Gonczi (Hungarian Ministry of Education)
Aune Valk (University of Tartu, Estonia)

General

1. The group agreed that it was not necessary to involve a range of subject disciplines/perspectives in the alignment process, as it was the framework itself which was the subject of alignment, and not qualifications at the subject level. The only exception was in highlighting the character of integrated masters and their relevance to particular disciplines.
2. The group welcomed the inclusion of students in the process (through NUS and SACCA) and, through QAA Scotland Committee to whom final report will be made, employer representation
3. The group supported the idea of holding a morning seminar on 22 August to discuss the draft report with a wider range of stakeholders, with the possibility that the group would meet for a final time on the afternoon of the 22nd to address issues which arose in the morning and to 'sign off' the final version of the report.
4. The group suggested it would be helpful to see a copy of the draft Irish report (the Republic of Ireland is the other 'pilot', with Scotland in the verification process). It was further suggested that representatives involved in the Irish process should be invited to the seminar on 22 August.
5. The group agreed with the Chair's suggestion that the report should address itself to the specifics of each criteria as succinctly as possible, with the possibility of additional information appearing in appendices or as a supplement to the main point at issue.

Main issues highlighted under specific criteria:

Criterion 1

The body responsible for the conduct of the verification process (QAA Scotland), as nominated by the devolved Scottish Executive, should be highlighted under criterion 1, with any additional information about QAA Scotland, the framework for qualifications of HEIs and the SCQF going into an appendix.

Criterion 2

The group agreed that this criterion was the main focus for discussion. To that effect:

- The summary of the comparisons of the qualification descriptors of the Scottish framework with the Bologna cycle descriptors should be placed at the beginning of this section, with the methodology for the comparison being explicitly stated.
- The order of the summary of the comparison of the qualification descriptors of the Scottish framework with the Bologna cycle descriptors should be reworked to emphasise that the Certificate of Higher Education and the Diploma of Higher Education are short cycle qualifications within the first cycle, and that there are two end of first cycle qualifications (first cycle qualifications of choice), the Bachelors Degree with Honours and the Bachelors Degree
- The explicit link of SCQF credit to ECTS credit should be highlighted more under this criterion
- The Masters degrees should be addressed separately to emphasise their respective character and qualities, particularly the integrated masters, the postgraduate certificate and the postgraduate diploma
- The design of the Graduate Certificate and the Graduate Diploma to gel with the lifelong learning needs of Scotland should be emphasised.
- Mention should be made of professional doctorates (page 5 of the report)
- The section on entry requirements should be made clearer by reference to the SCQF levels and level descriptors
- Criterion 2 should be reworked for further comment and discussion in time for the next meeting of the group on 5 June.

Criterion 3

Learning outcomes and the link to ECTS should be addressed succinctly and clearly

Criterion 4

Mention should be made of how any proposed modification/addition to the framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland would be processed and quality assured.

Criterion 5

The statement from the ELIR handbook should be placed at the start of this section. Further information about consistency with the Berlin Communique should be included.

Criterion 6

Ok.

Criterion 7

Additional mention of QAA Scotland's assurance role.

Procedures

These were thought to be straightforward and acceptable as currently stated.