

SCOTTISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CREDIT AND ACCESS

17-10-06
Item 3
Paper 42-03

Programme of work for 2006/07

Purpose and recommendation

- 1 This paper provides SACCA an outline of a the proposed main priorities for the programme of work in 2006-07.
- 2 SACCA is invited to consider the proposals and to identify any other priority areas of work.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

- 3 As outlined in paper 42-10 the arrangements for supporting the SCQF and its use across all sectors of education and training are undergoing significant change. The partnership between the five organisations of QAA, Universities Scotland, SQA, ASC and the Scottish Executive is in the final stages of being formalised through the establishment of a Company Limited by Guarantee, the owners of which are the 5 partners (each of which will nominate a member to the Company Board). The Company will establish a Quality Committee to make recommendations to the Board of the Company on any matters concerning the maintenance and quality assurance of the SCQF as a whole – in this respect it is important to note that the Company will be responsible for the SCQF as an overarching Framework, it will not have any responsibility for the frameworks that sit within the SCQF including the HE framework and qualifications of HEIs.
- 4 In addition, the Company will also establish a ‘user group’ which is basically a successor to the Joint Advisory Committee and which is likely to have the name of SCQF Forum. The role of this forum will be to provide a means for the range of sectors and organizations which relate to the SCQF to work together in making use of the opportunities created by the SCQF.
- 5 Finally, the Scottish Funding Council has a duty to adopt and promote a credit and qualifications framework and has agreed that it will adopt and promote the SCQF.
- 6 It is in this context that a key strand of SACCA work over the coming years could be to support the HE sector in making use of the SCQF and in doing so to work with other sectors and organisations in achieving this. This would include in particular the College sector and the Regional Access Fora.
- 7 Related to this, and as awareness of the SCQF increases across the range of education and training sectors, there is a need to continue to ensure that there is increased awareness and understanding of the higher education framework and in particular of the range of higher education qualifications and learning opportunities i.e. not just of the main traditional full-time undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. Attention should be given to raising awareness of the opportunities presented by HEIs in e.g.: credit rating of work-based learning; the development of programmes of learning with

employers; the work and range of opportunities created by HEIs to support CPD and lifelong learning including through Graduate Certificates and Diplomas; the opportunities for credit transfer etc etc.

- 8 As a start to the above work and with reference to the work of the SFC to promote the SCQF, it is suggested that SACCA, QAA Scotland, Universities Scotland and the ASC - should meet with the SFC for discussions about the ways in which the College and HEI sectors can best be supported in making use of the SCQF.
- 9 Paper 42-04 provides details of a potential programme of work although the final form of the programme will depend on the discussions with the ASC and any discussions with the SFC.

European and international developments

- 10 At the time of the establishment of SACCA, and largely as a result of SACCA's activities, higher education in Scotland was one of very few countries pioneering the use of credit-based frameworks. The situation, however, has changed somewhat and many other countries either have or are developing credit systems for higher education. In addition, such developments are now taking place at a European level i.e. through the Bologna process and the increasing promotion of the ECTS.
- 11 The Bologna Working Group on qualifications frameworks has now completed its main tasks i.e.
 - of the developing the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
 - of running a series of regional workshops to support the range of Bologna countries in their development of national frameworks
 - providing the means for two 'pilots of the process for self certifying national frameworks against the EHA framework.
- 12 Scotland and Ireland acted as the two pilots and, in addition to producing their reports of the national self-certification processes, the two countries will produce a joint report for the Working Group on lessons and issues arising from the pilots and with any suggestions for further guidance or clarification of the self-certification process. This report will be submitted to a meeting of the Working Group in December 2006.
- 13 It is not yet clear whether or not the Bologna Working Group will continue beyond this year or if there will be any alternative mechanism for sharing and supporting developments across the Bologna countries. However, SACCA and the two parent bodies (QAA Scotland and Universities Scotland) may wish to consider if and how they might play a role in this area. The next meeting of the Bologna Working Group is likely to take place in December 2006. QAA and Universities Scotland officers will attend the meeting and report back on developments and any plans for further work to support the Framework for the EHEA and the sharing of development across the Bologna countries.
- 14 Similarly, further consideration could be given to ensuring that the 45 Bologna countries are fully informed of and fully understand the nature of the higher education framework in Scotland. Conversely there is the potential need to carry out more work to support the higher education sector in Scotland in not only understanding the nature and purpose of the Framework for the EHEA and the various national frameworks but also in exploring the opportunities created by these developments. This could be done with Universities Scotland's TQF and with the Bologna promoters e.g. through providing updates and

running workshops e.g. on transcripts and the EDS and the Bologna Frameworks.

- 15 Finally, as outlined in paper 42-09 later in the agenda, the European Commission is progressing with its work to create a lifelong learning credit and qualifications framework – along the lines of the SCQF (in this context it is important to note that both QAA and Universities Scotland have been active in supporting the line the EQF should be a general 'high level' framework and that the main European point of reference for higher education frameworks remains as the Bologna framework). As with the Bologna developments outlined above, a key strand of work for SACCA over the coming year could be to support the HE sector by raising awareness of the EQF and its implications.

Work-based learning

- 16 A small group has been established to take forward the work on the 'work-based/related' Scottish Bachelors degree. Co-incidentally, a number of other developments and activities both within the HE sector and e.g. the Scottish Social Services Council are also focusing on ways in which to recognize work-based learning. The growing interest in the recognition of work-based learning provides an opportunity for the SACCA work to link with these developments with a view to widening the scope of work on the Bachelors Degree to support the HE sector in the recognition of work-based learning in general.
- 17 Alongside this, there is the potential to work with e.g. the Sector Skills Development Agency in Scotland in raising awareness amongst employers of the HEI qualifications framework, the range of qualifications offered by HEIs and the opportunities for e.g. recognition of work-based programmes.

Other work

- 18 Linked to all the above, there remains a need to continue to raise awareness of SACCA across the HE sector. As part of this work, the SACCA website will be finalised and made live by December 2006.