

SCQF College Credit Rating Evaluation of Pilot Project

A REPORT BY HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION

October 2006

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 One of the aims of the Scottish Executive's *Life Through Learning, Learning Through Life* strategy is promoting the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to give people a better understanding about how they can build on their qualifications. The SCQF represents a rational, joined-up approach to qualifications which will help employers and individuals to see where any qualification sits in relation to another. This will make it easier for knowledge and skills to be transferred from one learning situation to another or used to gain employment. All national qualifications now have credit levels attributed to them which reflect the complexity of demand on learners, and credit points which show how many ten-hour sessions of assessed learning have taken place.

1.2 Until now, qualifications could only be credit rated by universities or by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The extension of credit rating to the college sector is welcome, because it greatly extends capacity to credit rate kinds of provision that colleges focus on: return to study, informal learning, provision for learners with additional support needs, employment-based learning or learning in partnership with others. It capitalises on the well-constructed and rigorous quality management systems that exist within colleges and the wide-ranging expertise of college staff.

1.3 The aim of the credit rating pilot project was to develop a methodology for credit rating to take place within colleges. Each college piloted its own individual approach to credit rating, at levels 1-8. Eight colleges were involved in the pilot, having volunteered for the project following dissemination events held in late 2005. Funding was provided by the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) and the Scottish Executive. Throughout the pilot, which ran from March 2006 to September 2006, the colleges were supported by mentors from two universities and from SQA. The project was overseen by the College Credit Rating Implementation Group (CCRIG) comprising representatives from the major education, training and qualification agencies in Scotland. This group provided training workshops, coordinated the funding and reviewed progress of the pilot.

1.4 The project was monitored throughout by HMIE. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the collective experience of the eight colleges throughout the pilot project and make recommendations for further development of credit rating in colleges. It reports on the approaches colleges adopted when selecting programmes for the pilot, their experience of using the SCQF guidelines and level descriptors, their methodologies for incorporating peer judgement and their different ways of applying internal quality checks. It also encompasses the many discussions that took place throughout the pilot about the impact of the extension of credit rating to colleges, on learners, on the curriculum, on staff and across the college sector more generally. Many of these discussions form the basis of the conclusions and recommendations of this report.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 HM Inspectors visited all eight colleges as part of the monitoring process. They evaluated the documentation produced by the eight participating colleges, observed meetings, interviewed senior staff and subject specialists and discussed details of methodology during the pilot project. HM Inspectors also took account of evaluation reports produced by participating colleges about their own experiences.

3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 Overall, the pilot was successful in meeting its aims and in identifying workable models of credit rating for the college sector. A useful by product was that the profile of SCQF was raised in participating colleges.

3.2 College staff successfully credit rated a range of programmes typical of college sector provision. Some colleges also developed systems for providing rapid responses to requests for the credit rating of tailored programmes.

3.3 The impact of credit rating on learner motivation was a vital consideration in the selection of programmes for the pilot.

3.4 Mentoring support was an effective way of rapidly developing expertise in credit rating within colleges. The combination of informal guidance, assistance with benchmarking and objectivity helped to build confidence within credit rating teams.

3.5 Effective team working was essential to the success of credit rating during the pilot. In many cases, the pilot built on the prior experience of staff involved in developments such as national modernisation of Higher National (HN) qualifications.

3.6 The credit rating process stimulated a challenging fresh look by college staff at learning outcomes and assessment, in both existing and new programmes.

3.7 Some colleges underestimated the time required for creating their credit rating process.

3.8 Peer judgement systems devised by colleges were effective and robust.

3.9 Colleges devised appropriate procedures and guidelines which linked credit rating to other quality processes. In some cases, quality assurance procedures had to be adapted to include informal provision.

3.10 Colleges made effective use of SCQF guidelines, levelling descriptors and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) credit rating scorecard.

3.11 The issue of external quality assurance for assessment decisions within college credit rated provision was not fully resolved by the pilot.

3.12 College staff felt that the development of a nationally monitored database of credit rated qualifications would be essential for maintaining consistency across all sectors and credit rating bodies.

4 STRENGTHS EMERGING FROM THE PILOT PROJECT

4.1 All participating colleges welcomed the opportunity to dedicate time and resources to a credit rating pilot with financial support from SFC and the Scottish Executive. In addition, the project enabled them to undertake a demanding and complex process with mentoring support from people with extensive experience of credit rating, and to access appropriate training. The mentoring system provided an excellent model of support to colleges embarking on credit rating for the first time. Mentors offered general advice and helped build confidence within project teams but, importantly, they also provided a welcome degree of externality to colleges by benchmarking their credit rating activities against those of other institutions. The mentors concentrated on the actual levelling and rating process in most colleges providing document exemplars in some cases.

4.2 Prior to the pilot, HMIE drew up a framework of themes based on key SCQF guidelines which informed the areas they monitored during its implementation.¹ Throughout the pilot, HM Inspectors concentrated mostly on the development of internal quality assurance procedures. Colleges undertaking credit rating in the future would be expected to develop similarly robust procedures which would be subject to scrutiny during the HMIE review process. HMIE were also able to draw on the experiences of all the pilot colleges to provide an overview and make suggestions about documentation, methodology and approaches.

4.3 College staff involved in the pilot found the credit rating process interesting and challenging. It raised the profile of SCQF and improved understanding of its value to learners within colleges. Staff felt that the status conferred on college-devised programmes by credit rating had important benefits. It allowed colleges to tailor programmes to the needs of learners or employers and accord the qualifications gained parity of esteem with those of external awarding bodies. It supported a degree of flexibility in programme design and enabled highly-regarded qualifications to develop in areas not covered by external awarding bodies. The development of such provision, in tandem with external partners, had potential to enhance working relationships and should improve progression opportunities for learners.

4.5 The eight colleges selected programmes for the credit rating pilot which reflected a spectrum typical of non-certificated college provision. This presented a usefully broad range of credit rating issues. Most programmes were part-time, some were community based, some were developed in partnership with others. Two colleges chose to develop and credit rate larger-scale programmes because there was no suitable provision accredited by external bodies or there was a mismatch between what was available and the needs of learners.

¹ See Appendix 2.

4.6 Colleges chose programmes from three main categories.

- Continuing professional development programmes (CPD), tailored for internal or external use.
- Programmes for learners with additional learning support needs.
- Informal, community-based programmes where the demand for credit rating had previously been identified.

4.7 During the pilot, colleges did not attempt to credit rate provision on behalf of external organisations, though most recognised that this could form a major part of future activity. Most colleges felt that the pilot project provided useful pointers to the type of provision they would credit rate in the future, and felt confident that normal programme review processes, carried out routinely in colleges, would identify such programmes. As well as opening up new markets, colleges felt positive about the potential to share expertise by credit rating provision in partnership with others.

4.8 In all cases, the impact on learner motivation was felt by college staff to be a vital consideration in selecting programmes for credit rating, with learner attitudes to assessment an important factor requiring sensitive consideration. College staff felt that, although the possibility of attaining qualifications was motivating for all learners, the pilot highlighted colleges' particular role in motivating hard-to-reach learners through the provision of qualifications for programmes tailored to meet their learning needs. Staff involved in the pilot felt that the gradual build up of credit rated qualifications attained this way would contribute to the learners' sense of a journey which was visibly linked to progression opportunities. It was felt that this should have a significant impact on learners' confidence and aspirations. Staff felt that for all learners, nationally recognised qualifications should improve progression and employment opportunities but this was especially significant for learners with additional learning support needs.

4.9 College staff found that credit rating stimulated a fresh look at existing provision in the light of SCQF level descriptors. It made them reconsider the value of informal and self-directed parts of existing programmes. Where new provision was being developed, credit rating introduced a level of rigour which demanded wide-ranging discussions about learning and assessment at an early stage. College staff felt this would have far-reaching benefits for future curriculum development in colleges.

4.10 All colleges devised procedures which incorporated credit rating into curriculum design, internal approval or programme review processes, evidenced by flowcharts and descriptions.² They successfully developed these within existing procedures as much as possible. One college was developing *rapid response* procedures to allow them to fulfil potential future external requests for the credit rating of tailored programmes in good time. In some cases a system was built into internal approval arrangements to allow decisions to be taken about whether provision should be credit rated or not, depending on the perceived benefits to learners. In other cases, this decision was left to subject teams.

4.11 Most colleges produced comprehensive internal guidelines for the submission of documents, with timelines for coordinating credit rating with internal approval arrangements. Credit rating itself was in all cases appropriately carried out using the essential SCQF

² See Appendix 3.

guidelines and adaptations of the scorecard developed by SQA for use with SVQ qualifications. One college had also produced helpful written advice on how to carry out the levelling and rating process, avoid pitfalls and overcome difficulties.

4.12 Colleges established pilot project teams which combined subject specialists, staff with cross-college responsibility for quality and, in some cases, senior managers. Many staff carrying out the pilot had also been involved in the national modernisation of HN programmes and had prior experience of credit rating. In most cases, the quality manager or equivalent led the project and was able to coordinate activity. Effective team working was an essential feature of the success of the projects. By the end of the pilot, most colleges felt that a significant body of expertise in credit rating was developing. It was felt that this brought benefits to the college beyond credit rating, in terms of staff development, cross-college partnerships and potentially renewed focus by staff on the curriculum.

4.13 Colleges devised a range of different methodologies to carry out the credit rating part of the process. However, there were sufficient common elements to underpin the development of key principles for the rest of the sector.

4.14 Credit rating was in all cases initiated in the subject teams, with the major part of the process being carried out by them prior to the submission of documentation to staff members carrying out peer judgement or to vetting panels. Most found that a system of levelling each of the five SCQF generic fields individually, then aggregating the scores, worked best. This approach had been commended at a training workshop offered at the start of the pilot.

4.15 All colleges successfully carried out benchmarking against existing provision and found it most useful where provision was compared not just to that at similar levels but also to levels above and below. This was relatively straightforward for programmes which were either derived from existing programmes or were structured in a similar way. It was more challenging for informal or CPD programmes. Many colleges felt that the development of a database of college-devised qualifications would greatly assist benchmarking in the future. They found the input of mentors particularly helpful in developing expertise in benchmarking.

4.16 Because of the requirement to involve peer judgement in the credit rating process, all colleges devised systems where decisions were independently reviewed to confirm or reject the initial findings of subject teams. These systems differed from college to college. In one case, for example, the full credit rating process was carried out independently by another person in the college before being compared to the findings of the subject team. This allowed the findings to be discussed in great detail but was resource intensive. In other cases, colleges which were carrying out the pilot with more than one programme asked the different team members to review each other's judgements. In most cases, the task of independent peer judgement fell to a middle manager, either a quality manager or head of education and curriculum. This credit vetting role tended to parallel that of an internal moderator.

4.17 All colleges completed the credit rating process by submitting the results to an internal approval panel, usually comprising senior or middle managers. This either fitted with normal internal approval procedures or was specially convened for the pilot project. Senior managers chaired these panels, which reviewed and ratified (or not) the decisions by the subject teams. In one college, the vetting process and panel event were combined. A few

colleges devised procedures for feeding the decisions of the panel back to the subject teams, and procedures for including their own credit rated provision in college prospectuses.

4.18 All colleges devised appropriate documentation for the credit rating process adapted from the SQA SVQ scorecard.³ Most colleges also devised useful tracking documentation, which was used to monitor each stage of the process and allowed space for comments from team members, peer vetters or panel members. Those involved in the pilot commented that good quality of information on submission documents was vital for successful peer judgement. In particular, a detailed rationale was essential to justify decisions, along with evidence from benchmarking activities and examples of learning and assessment material.

5 ISSUES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT EMERGING FROM THE PILOT PROJECT

5.1 All colleges participating in the pilot project considered that they would have found it much more difficult to carry out without the mentoring support and training offered to them. Because they felt it was so important to the success of the pilot, many staff expressed concern about the capacity of other colleges to undertake credit rating for the first time without a similar level of support. They also felt that the collective experience of the pilot colleges provided a wealth of knowledge that should be used to support other colleges.

5.2 Many staff also felt that a written guide to supplement the training and mentor support would be essential as the volume of activity increased across the college sector. Such a guide could possibly be located within enhanced SCQF guidelines. The SQA HN unit, *Credit Rating: Principles and Practice* was also considered by some staff to be a potentially valuable means of increasing the knowledge and skills of those fulfilling a credit rating or peer judgement role in colleges.

5.3 Although college staff had found that the process of credit levelling had stimulated useful discussions about learning outcomes and assessment within programmes, they found that this was also the most difficult part of the process. This was particularly so in programmes that were informal, part-time or focused on personal development. Matching the component parts of these programmes to the level descriptors involved a high degree of discussion and analysis which took considerably more time than anticipated.

5.4 Most colleges had also underestimated the time it would take to carry out the project overall: to undertake training, establish teams, attend meetings and panel events and review progress. They felt that it was important for colleges embarking on credit rating to appreciate that time was required not only to establish initial college systems but also to carry out credit rating within internal approval timelines. It was felt by staff involved, however, that as expertise developed within colleges, the process would become smoother and quicker but that time and resources for credit rating would have to be balanced against perceived benefits to learners.

5.5 The process of attributing points, each one worth ten hours of learning, was also challenging for college staff teams. Many underestimated the extra time required in programmes for learners to carry out individual study, practise practical activities and prepare

³ Examples of college documentation appear in Appendix 3.

for offsite activities such as work placements. The mentors were particularly helpful in this exercise. Staff considered that the experience they had gained would make the process easier in the future.

5.6 The pilot identified the points in internal approval timelines which would best accommodate credit rating. However, not all the programmes being credit rated in the pilot had been previously subject to the same level of internal approval or internal moderation. This was because some colleges were retrospectively credit rating programmes that were quality assured within subject areas and not systematically subject to central college approval and moderation systems.

5.7 Involvement of external moderators for assessment decisions in college credit rated programmes was the subject of considerable discussion during the pilot and colleges found the SCQF guidelines unclear on this issue. For the purposes of the pilot, the degree of good standing within curriculum areas subject to regular successful external moderation by SQA or other awarding bodies was considered by HMIE to represent sufficient external quality assurance. However, some college staff expressed concern about the scale of provision that could potentially be subject to college credit rating but was not at present subject to external moderation.

5.8 Similarly, much of the provision selected for the pilot was not included in Further Education Statistics (FES) reporting to the same level of detail as certificated provision. This has implications for monitoring of performance indicators and addressing them in programme review or self-evaluation activities.

5.9 The issue of whether in the future provision credit rated by colleges would qualify for Individual Learning Account funding was also raised and is yet to be clarified.

5.10 Some college staff felt that it would be important to compare learner performance in credit rated college-devised programmes against externally accredited ones, particularly in the early stages of roll-out, to ensure that quality assurance systems were equally robust. Several colleges felt that, because of the specific nature of much of the provision likely to be credit rated, it would have to be subject to regular review, some even suggesting it should have a maximum three-year shelf life.

5.11 One college within the UHI Millennium Institute (UHIMI) network found that the college procedures they devised for credit rating a programme at level 7 were not acceptable to UHIMI (and therefore ineligible for funding) because they did not conform to the UHIMI's other internal procedures. Because there is no restriction on other colleges on the range of levels at which they can credit rate, this appeared to highlight an area of inconsistency in the sector which could constrain the activity of several colleges in the Highlands and Islands.

5.12 All colleges involved in the pilot established very well-thought-out procedures for credit rating and applied quality checks which reflect a sector with a reputation for robust quality assurance. Many felt that a national database of credit rated qualifications, monitored centrally, would be welcomed by the college sector, to provide examples of credit rated provision for benchmarking, contribute to overall consistency and to constrain the over-development of qualifications of a similar type.

6 PROGRAMMES CREDIT RATED IN THE PILOT PROJECT

College	Provision	SCQF Credits	SCQF Level
Aberdeen	Hotel Housekeeping	20	2
The Adam Smith	Youthlink Training for Advocates	2	5
Clydebank	Eskills – how to learn online	2	4
Edinburgh's Telford	Interactive Whiteboard Skills	3	5
	VLE Skills	3	6
	ICT Skills	3	5
	Sport and Recreation – Octopus Project	16	3
	Effective Presentation Skills	2	7
Forth Valley	Equality Diversity Inclusiveness Training for Trainers (EDIT)	12	6
James Watt	Career Preparation	6	5
Lauder	Laundry Skills: Vocational Certificate	12	3
	Counselling Skills	4	5
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	Access to Gaelic	90	7

7 BEYOND THE PILOT PROJECT

7.1 Following the pilot, participating colleges plan to capitalise on the expertise they have developed and extend credit rating within their colleges in a considered and measured way. In most cases, colleges plan to credit rate internal programmes, for example in CPD or for learners with additional support needs. In some cases, credit rating may be offered commercially to external organisations as part of the college's business plan. In other cases, colleges will develop their partner relationships by credit rating provision in tandem with them and, in doing so, fulfil aspects of college strategic objectives.

7.2 In all cases, colleges intend to build on the lessons of the pilot and prioritise the programmes they plan to credit rate. In this, they will balance the perceived benefits to learners of credit rating programmes against the resources required to carry it out. They also intend to continue to refine their internal quality assurance procedures and to embed credit rating into existing college systems as seamlessly but effectively as possible. HMIE reviews will monitor the effectiveness of these procedures within the review of quality assurance.

7.3 In order to disseminate expertise in credit rating, most participating colleges intend to develop internal mentoring systems or establish credit rating champions within them. Each college plans to embark on a programme of staff development to raise awareness of the lessons of the pilot and encourage other staff to become involved in credit rating.

7.4 Other colleges embarking on credit rating will wish to access the expertise built up during the pilot, and wider cross-sectoral support systems are likely to be established.

7.5 The extension of credit rating to colleges will increase the scale and scope of qualifications in the public domain. This will impact positively on the number of opportunities for learners to achieve qualifications but it will also require a degree of external moderation if these qualifications are to be perceived as having value. All agencies involved in successfully rolling out the pilot should continue to liaise and share understanding of credit rating issues as they evolve.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 SCQF should:

- amend guidelines to clarify the position on external moderation of assessment decisions within college credit rated provision; and
- establish a national database of all credit rated provision and monitor it for consistency and scale of activity.

8.2 SFC should:

- allocate resources to support all colleges that wish to undertake credit rating; and
- fully incorporate college credit rated provision into FES reporting.

8.3 Colleges should:

- develop their awareness and understanding of the benefits of credit rating;
- actively participate in training and development related to credit rating;
- actively promote the benefits of college credit rated provision to learners, employers and other partners; and
- establish internal credit rating procedures based on the good practice identified in this pilot.

9 APPENDICES

9.1 Proposed arrangements for the external quality assurance of SCQF credit rating in Scottish Colleges (*Guidance provided by CCRIG in November 2005 in advance of the pilot project*)

1. Background

At present the responsibility for external quality assurance in further education is discharged through the SFC/HMIE review model. HMIE have developed, in conjunction with the Council and with colleges, a rigorous and comprehensive quality framework and a review model. The external review of colleges relies on a differentiated model with a proportionate follow-through determined by the findings of a common review phase one. A key aspect of the model is that colleges undertake regular, comprehensive and systematic self-evaluation leading to action which improves and enhances the learner experience. Colleges use the *Quality Framework for Scottish FE Colleges* as a reference point for their own evaluation activity and HMIE review teams use this framework as a reference point for external review.

The purpose of the following arrangements is to outline how these external quality assurance arrangements will in future encompass SCQF credit rating processes that develop in colleges. In a steady state the external quality assurance arrangements for credit rating in colleges will be swept up within the established arrangements for external quality assurance.

It is proposed that, building on colleges' developing and maturing approaches to quality assurance and improvement, the focus of external quality assurance will be to evaluate the processes employed by organisations with a view to, where appropriate, improving and enhancing them. The purpose of this approach is to support continuous quality improvement in colleges.

2. External quality assurance arrangements during the pilot

The following arrangements are proposed for external quality assurance in the pilot phase.

1. The college credit rating implementation group will make arrangements for a number of colleges to become involved in pilot activity in 2006 either as individual organisations or consortia.
2. A college that is involved in the pilot should ensure that appropriate staff participate fully in the launch activity and in any information and training seminars organised by the SCQF college credit rating implementation group.
3. During the pilot phase, HMIE will engage with those colleges that are involved in credit rating to evaluate the processes being implemented. It is likely that this engagement will take place before a college undertakes any credit rating and afterwards, to take account of the outcomes. HMIE will provide statements of their level of confidence in the processes being implemented and make recommendations for improvement where necessary.

4. HMIE will submit a report to the SCQF partners at the end of the pilot phase about the success of the pilot in securing high quality arrangements in colleges. This report will identify strengths, weaknesses, points for action and good practice in relation to the overall arrangements in colleges.

5. During the pilot, colleges will restrict their credit rating activities to provision they deliver within levels 1-8 of the SCQF framework.

3. Longer-term external quality assurance arrangements and developments required

In the longer term, HMIE, in consultation with SFC, will embed in the general cyclical arrangements for external review the processes necessary to quality assure credit rating activities in colleges. This will be consistent with the Scottish Executive's objective of "*not overburdening learning providers with audit requirements.*" HMIE will adjust existing methodologies in order to sweep up the arrangements for credit rating within the external review process several developments.

1. Through their regular contact with colleges, HMIE will maintain an overview of those colleges undertaking credit rating activity.

2. Where a college is engaged in credit rating, the credit rating processes will form part of the sample reviewed by an HMIE review team. The credit rating processes will be reviewed by the B6 (Quality Assurance) reviewer.

3. The quality framework element B6, and in particular the quality indicators B6.1 (Policies and procedures) and B6.2 (Arrangements for assuring quality) will be the reference point for external evaluation.⁴

4. A guidance note will also need to be developed to inform colleges of the development in the arrangements for external review of those colleges engaged in credit rating and the enhanced role of the B6 reviewer.⁴

5. Training for B6 reviewers, both associate assessors and HMI, will be included from 2006 in the annual training event for B6 reviewers or otherwise as appropriate.⁵

6. Section 1 of the SCQF Credit Rating Guidelines will be the reference point for all external quality assurance activity.

7. As part of its normal cycle of self-evaluation and quality improvement activity a college engaging in credit rating should evaluate and review its processes regularly.

⁴ HMIE will develop a guidance note for colleges after analysis of the outcomes of the pilot, in summer 2006.

⁵ This will begin at the September 2006 training event.

9.2 Requirements placed on a college, a consortium of colleges or a college along with another partner (for example, a Higher Education Institution or SQA) engaging in the SCQF pilot on credit rating of assessed learning (*Guidance provided by CCRIG in November 2005 in advance of the pilot project*)

1. Introduction

The SCQF guidelines require a credit rating body to have:

- rigorous processes to ensure that the stated levels and volumes of outcomes will accurately reflect the intended purpose and aims of the learning experience being credit rated;
- rigorous, secure and appropriate arrangements for assessing learner achievement against those outcomes that are consistent internally and aligned with those of other credit rating bodies; and
- sound evidence to support the credit rating, supported by peer judgement.

Generally, the proposed arrangements must meet the overall criteria of being explicit, reliable, valid and available for scrutiny. (*SCQF handbook Section 1, page 3*)

2. Requirements for colleges, consortia of colleges and colleges working with HEIs or SQA

(All processes will be tested through the pilot activity in 2006 and lessons learned will be incorporated into the final arrangements for quality assurance).

1. The college credit rating implementation group will make arrangements for a number of colleges to become involved in pilot activity either as individual organisations or consortia in 2006. HMIE will expect the college or consortium of colleges to set out their arrangements for credit rating and share these with HMIE before implementing them. These arrangements need to meet fully the general and specific requirements of the SCQF credit rating guidelines in the SCQF handbook Section 1 Credit rating guidelines, parts 1-3 and the associated appendices.

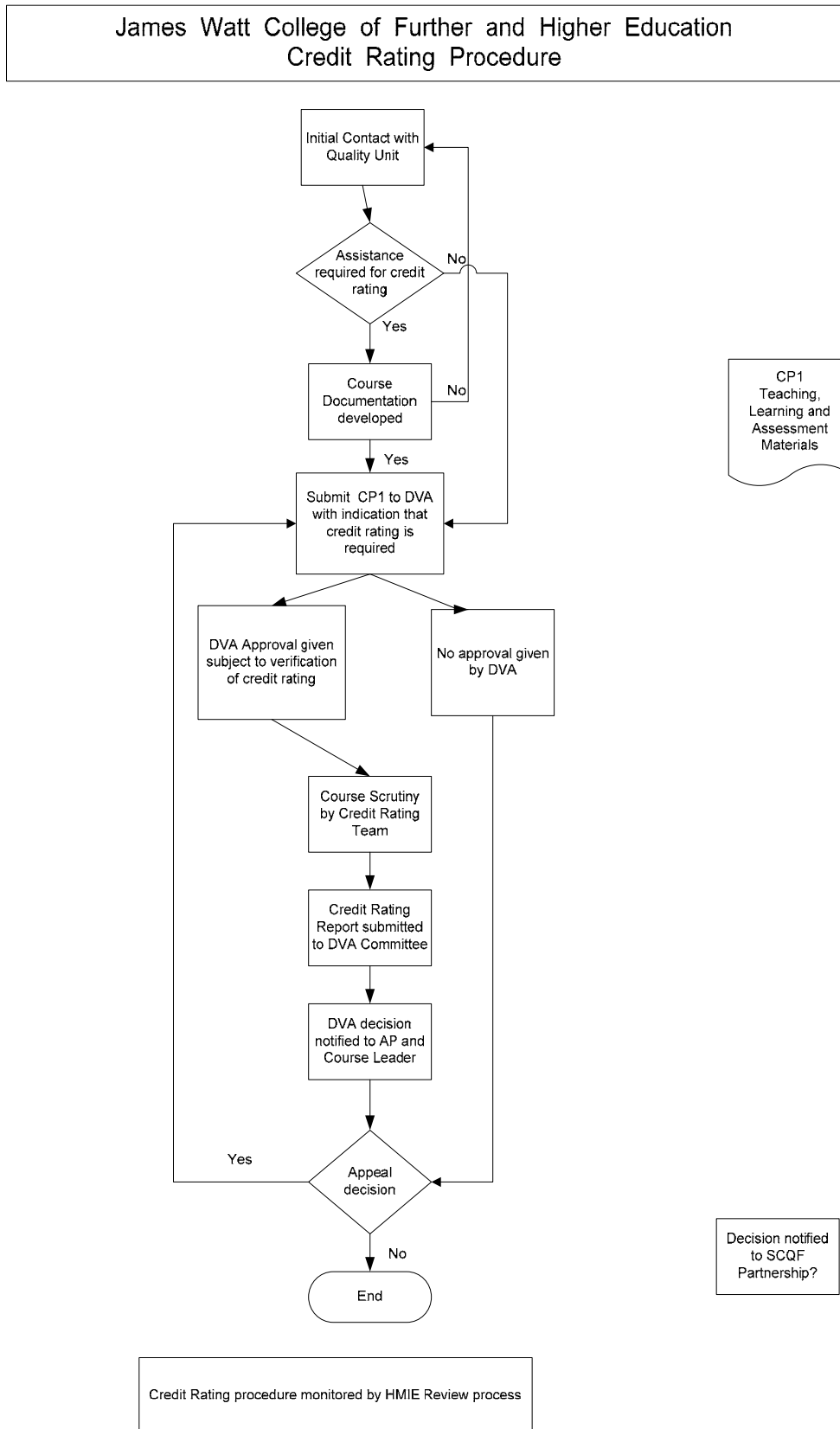
2. HMIE will provide advice to the organisation on whether further development is necessary or whether the organisation has demonstrated sufficiently its ability to become involved in credit rating.

3. A college undertaking credit rating will be expected to demonstrate clearly the following:

Arrangements	Indicative evidence	Links to the SCQF handbook reference (Section 1)
1. Processes are rigorous to ensure that the stated levels and volume of outcomes will accurately reflect the intended purpose and aims of the learning experience being credit rated.	Flowchart or description showing the process addresses guidelines 1- 12 in section 1 parts 1-3 of the SCQF credit rating handbook.	"shared confidence" Page 3 Also the guidelines 1-12 in Part 3 of Section 1
2. Credit rating is based on sound evidence and includes peer judgement. A peer may be a member of staff from the college or from another organisation.	Flowchart or description showing the process.	"shared confidence" Page 3
3. The panel or group of staff involved in making judgements about level and number of credits have sufficient specialist knowledge and appropriate experience and training.	Qualifications, teaching experience, evidenced in a mini CV. Evidence of attendance of these staff at the launch seminars, involvement in capacity-building workshops, involvement in HN developments on secondment to SQA.	Guideline 10 "professional judgement"
4. Staff involved in peer judgement are suitably experienced and qualified.	Qualifications, teaching experience, subject knowledge of peers, role in credit rating arrangements, mini CV.	"shared confidence" Page 3
5. Suitable methodologies are in place.	Flowchart or description showing the process.	"shared confidence" Page 3
6. Outcomes will be consistent with the level descriptors in the SCQF guidelines, section 1.	Flowchart or description of the process, demonstrating how the level descriptors would be used.	Appendix 2, Pages 22 - 33
7. Relevant benchmarks are referred to.	Flowchart or description of the process, demonstrating understanding of appropriate benchmarks.	Guidelines 10 and 12 Pages 9 and 11
8. The assessed learning the applicant is seeking to credit rate (for the pilot only).	List of assessed learning that the organisation or group is intending to credit rate.	CCRIG minute of meeting of 3 Oct 2005
9. A commitment to participating fully in the external quality assurance arrangements which will form part of the pilot (in the pilot these arrangements are likely to include a visit from HMIE).	Statements in processes.	CCRIG minute of meeting of 3 Oct 2005
10. Arrangements for record keeping are robust and linked with internal quality arrangements.	Details of how records of outcomes will be kept and how these may be accessed.	
11. A demonstration of how the arrangements for credit rating fit within the organisation's core quality assurance system.	Overview of QA arrangements and the location of credit rating activities within these arrangements: diagram.	Guideline 12 Page 11

9.3 Exemplar materials from participating colleges

9.3.1 James Watt College credit rating/internal approval flowchart



9.3.2 Aberdeen College procedures and tracking documentation

Procedure for SCQF Credit Rating of College Devised Provision

For : College Devised Units

Programmes consisting solely of College Devised Units

Note: This procedure is linked to the Procedure for Internal Validation and/or Approval of College Provision. Validation/approval of College Devised Provision is conditional upon the provision having been Credit Rated.

1. Sector Manager and Curriculum Manager/Team Leader agree new College Devised provision to be submitted for credit rating, validation and approval.

2. Sector Manager submits the appropriate proposal form to the Head of Educational Programmes and Curriculum Support for initial authorisation by the Curriculum Advisory Panel.

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- Form CDP (College Devised Provision Proposal) for stand-alone College Devised Units
- Form CDP and Form GAP/GAM for:
 - a) programmes consisting entirely of College Devised Units
 - b) programmes consisting of a mixture of College Devised Units and Units accredited by SQA or another awarding body.

3. Curriculum Advisory Panel considers the submission and decides whether the development should proceed.

4. If the submission is sanctioned, the Sector may proceed with the development of the Unit/Programme and the credit rating of the Unit/Programme using the SCQF Credit Rating Scorecard and associated Credit Rating Guidelines.

5. Sector Manager submits SCQF Credit Rating Scorecard and Unit Descriptor(s) to Head of Educational Programmes and Curriculum Support who arranges for the Credit Rating to be vetted by appropriate members of the Credit Rating Team. (See Appendix 1 for composition of the Credit Rating Team).

6. When the Credit Rating has been confirmed the processes of validation and approval, as set out in Procedure 1: Internal Validation and/or Approval of College Provision, are completed.

Note: the Procedure is summarised in Appendix 2

Date: June 2006

Responsibility for procedure: Head of Educational Programmes and Curriculum Support

Responsibility for implementation: Head of Educational Programmes and Curriculum Support, Sector Managers, Curriculum Managers/Team Leaders

Responsibility for distribution: Quality Assurance Team

Distribution to: all academic team manual holders

Responsibility for review: Head of Educational Programmes and Curriculum Support

Review date: June 2007

SCQF Credit Rating Team

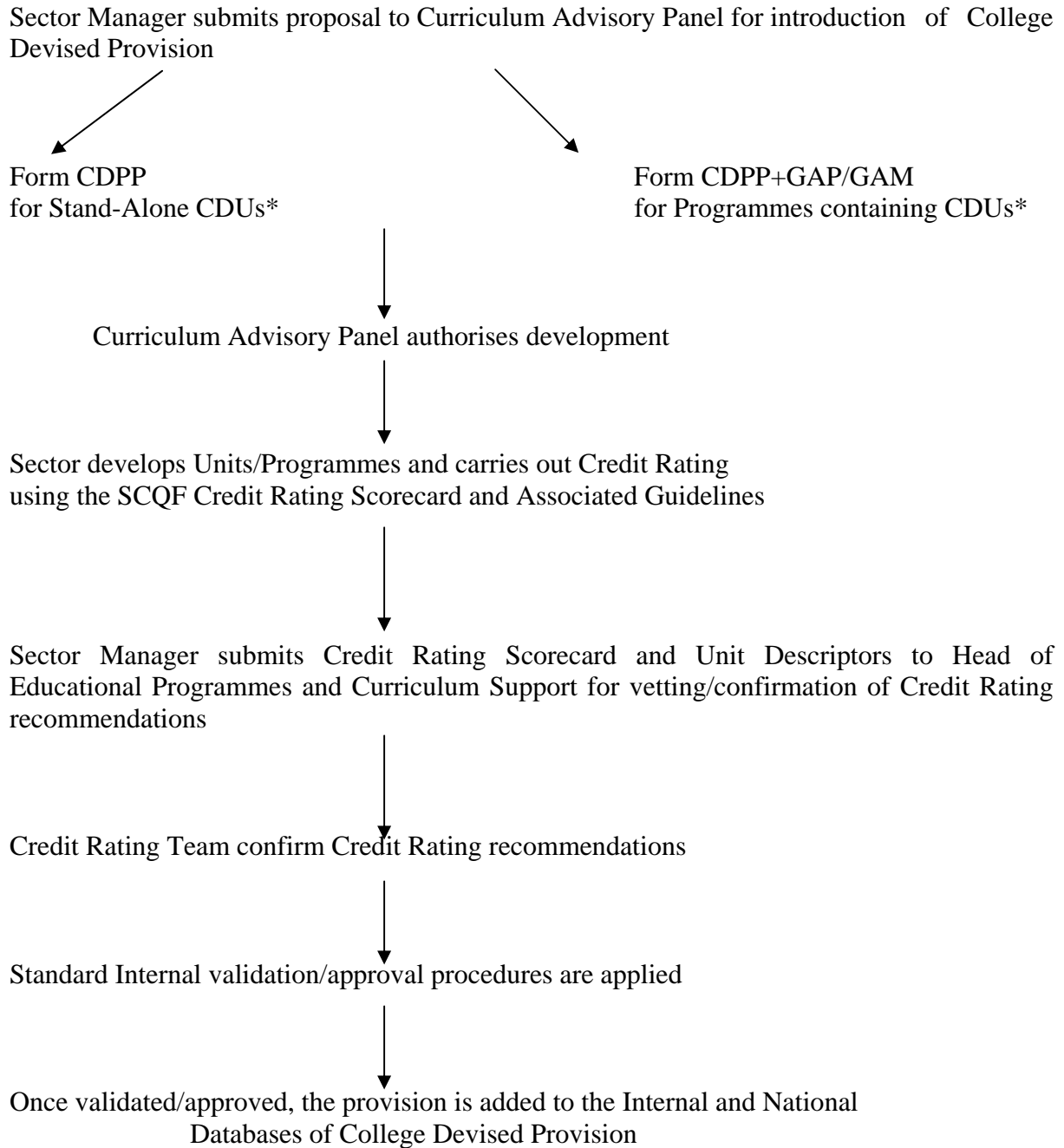
Members of the SCQF Credit Rating Team have amongst them:

- knowledge and understanding of the SCQF, the level descriptors and the agreed processes for allocating level and credit value
- experience of credit rating
- experience of Unit writing
- experience of the quality assurance arrangements of the College

Composition of the Credit Rating Team

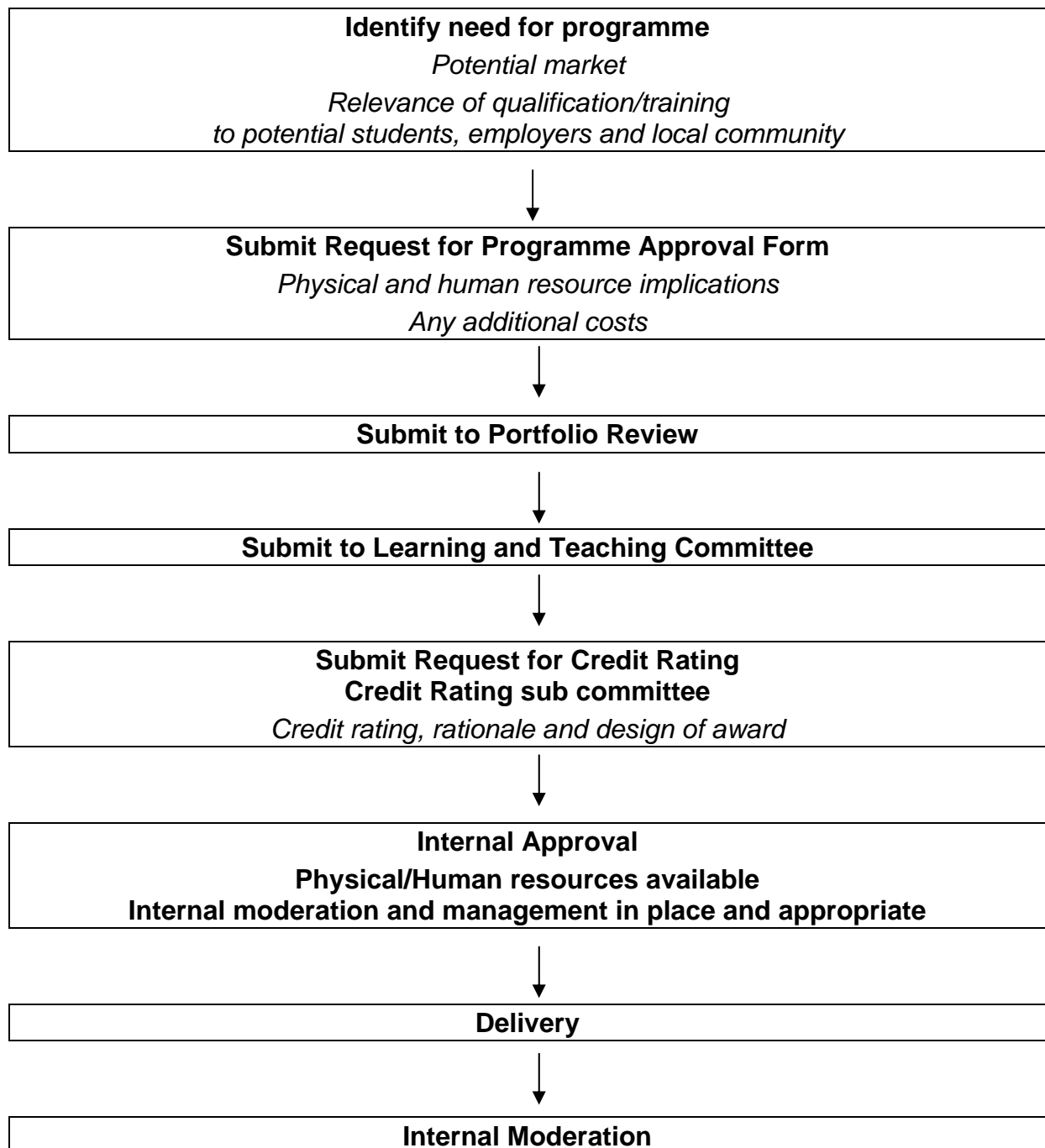
Head of Educational Programmes and Curriculum Support
Head of Quality Assurance and Staff Development
APL Development Officer
Senior Lecturer Curriculum
Experienced Credit Rater/Unit Writer
Representative from the Robert Gordon University Credit Rating Unit

Credit Rating of College Devised Provision



* College Devised Units

9.3.3 Forth Valley College credit rating flowchart



Full Programme Specification

Section 1 – Programme Summary Information

Programme / Subject Details	
Proposing Institute	
Lead Staff	
Partners Involved (if any)	
Programme/Subject Rationale	
Intended Market for Learning (e. g. community-based, commercial activity etc).	
Planned Intake and Mode of Delivery Please provide details of the proposed number of learners for the initial and future intake and describe the mode of delivery.	
Signature of Proposer	
Date Submitted	

SCQF COMPONENT GRID – LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

1.3.1 SCQF Characteristics	1.3.2 Best Fit Level	Justification (Note – not all characteristics will be relevant and not all aspects of the level descriptors will be relevant)
Knowledge and Understanding		
Practice/Applied Knowledge		
Generic Cognitive Skills		
Communication/ ICT/Numeracy		
Autonomy/Working With Others		
Estimated Level (best fit)		

Summary of Rationale

For recommended component level including reasons for final level selected (if different levels identified for characteristic); justification of selection with reference to levels above and below; quotes/extracts from component (unit/module) to support selection.

SCQF COMPONENT GRID – PART 2 CREDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Component breakdown (if relevant) e.g. topics/sections from the component	Formal input Hours (e.g. contact time with tutor, acquisition of knowledge/ understanding)	Additional Activities Hours (e.g. developing practice, reflection, research/study time) (hrs)	Assessment Hours (e.g. planning, completion of assessment tasks) (hrs)	Total time
Total hours				
			Credit value (hrs/10)	
Notes on Approach				

9.3.5 Edinburgh's Telford College credit rating documentation

1. COLLEGE PROCESS

- 1.1 Course Team Leader completes College forms 1, 2 and 3 with input as appropriate from other members of the course team, and then submits paperwork for consideration by Creditation Panel.
- 1.2 Members of the Creditation Panel independently review documentation supplied and complete College form 5.
- 1.3 The Creditation Panel meets to consider findings of individual members and agrees final outcomes. These are recorded on College form 4
- 1.4 The findings of the panel are fed back to the Course Team Leaders, detailing additional work to be done, if any, eg provision of additional information. If no additional work is required the level and credit points will be confirmed on College form 5.
- 1.5 The Course Team Leader submits amended/additional paperwork to the panel by agreed date.
- 1.6 The Creditation Panel meets to reconsider amendments/additional paperwork and makes final decision which is recorded on College form 5.

2. COMPLETING COLLEGE FORMS – Form 1: Summary

SCHOOL	
CURRICULUM TEAM	
COURSE TEAM	

Course Title	
Duration (hours)	From Form 3
<p>Aims of the course <i>The defined aims and objectives of the learning processes should be entered here, including, where appropriate, possible articulation and progression.</i></p> <p>Example The main aim of this course is to develop self esteem, respect for others, communication skills and team work through practical participation delivered in a non school environment.</p>	
<p>Rationale for course <i>You should consider what the requirement is to run this course.</i></p> <p>Example</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The technology in our new campus requires that staff develop their ICT skills to be able to effectively carry out their work role. With Interactive Whiteboards in all classrooms, and an increased use of VLE to support learning, delivery staff will require to become competent in the use of laptops in order to use the new technology. Many support staff will be required to use laptops as touchdown desks do not have PCs installed on them. Furthermore, off site working will mean that staff will have to use laptops in order to carry out their role. 2. A large number of school pupils find traditional methods of learning difficult and often struggle to sustain appropriate relationships leading to under achievement. Learning through practical activities in a non school environment offers a different and challenging way to learn, encourages students to engage more positively in school activities and allows a development of self esteem and self belief. 	
<p>Entry requirements (prior knowledge, experience or qualifications) <i>Enter the minimum qualifications/experience required by the average student to be able to achieve the outcomes in the notional hours.</i></p> <p>Example Knowledge of and experience with Microsoft Office and Excel is required as well as basic browser skills. Ideally the ICT Skills course should be completed prior to undertaking this course.</p>	

Give a brief outline of the planned delivery (attach course outline showing teaching content and student activity as Appendix A)

A brief outline of the delivery, coupled with a learning plan which details both lecturer and learner activity should be submitted for this section.

Learning Outcomes

There should be a clearly defined set out outcomes for the course including a clear statement of the outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the course Generally this statement should begin with the phrase 'By the end of this course the learner should be able to

Example

By the end of this course the learner should be able to

- Understand the characteristics of oral communication
- Plan and deliver a short presentation
- Understand the appropriate use of voice skills
- Understand the importance of non verbal communication

Method of Assessment (attach assessment instruments as Appendix B)

Documented evidence on assessment processes should be submitted here, including

- *the principles, procedures and processes of the assessment outcomes*
- *method(s) of assessment*
- *evidence that the assessment criteria and processes are appropriate to the defined learning outcomes*
- *clear criteria for marking assessments particularly for distinguishing pass/fail.*

Give details of how the assessments will be quality assured (including independent verification as Appendix C)

Where appropriate, evidence of the involvement of external bodies in the quality assurance of the assessments should be given to ensure

- *appropriateness of methods and instruments of assessment*
- *regular review of assessment strategies and decisions*

Quality (attach details of how this course will be quality assured as Appendix D)

It is important that all courses are included in the Quality circle and so a statement of where this course is reviewed within the Course Team provision is required here.

EXAMPLE

This course is part of the ? Course Team provision and therefore reviewed at Course Team meetings where each course is assessed against A1 – A9 of the HMIE Framework. It is also included in College Internal Moderation cycle.

SCQF Credit Points	from Form 3	SCQF Level	From Form 2
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3. COMPLETING COLLEGE FORMS – Form 2: Level Recommendations

When completing this form you should bear in mind that level is based on

- knowledge and understanding
- practice: applied knowledge and understanding
- generic cognitive skills such as evaluation and critical analysis
- communication, numeracy and IT skills
- autonomy, accountability and working with others

and is **NOT** based on

- amount of time taken to achieve
- year of study
- content of course
- centrality of a unit to a course.

COURSE TITLE		
SCQF characteristics	Best fit level	Comments (Note – not all characteristics or aspects of the level descriptors will be relevant)
Knowledge and understanding		<p><i>In this section you should give evidence of how this level was arrived at – do not quote directly from the level criteria.</i></p> <p><i>The levels should be selected using</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>best fit with the criteria</i> • <i>benchmarking with known awards</i> • <i>professional judgement.</i>
Practice/applied knowledge		
Generic cognitive skills		
Communication/ICT /numeracy		
Autonomy/working with others		
Estimated level (best fit)		<p><i>When deciding on the overall level you should take into account the predominant level across the criteria – and if this is not possible, consider the units used for benchmarking.</i></p>
<p>Summary of Rationale for recommended component level including reasons for the final level selected (if different levels identified for characteristic); justification of selection with reference to levels above and below; quotes/extracts from component (unit/module) to support selection</p>		
<p>Example The majority of the candidates who present are on a level comparable with HN students who undertake and achieve the unit DH4934 Oral Presentation or the oral outcome of the other HN Communications units – D5P334 or D5P404</p>		
<p>Notes on Approach used plus who was consulted, discussion points, issues raised, etc</p>		
<p><i>In this section you should give evidence of consultation with others: colleagues, partners from outside agencies, etc and their input to the process.</i></p>		

4. COMPLETING COLLEGE FORMS – Form 3: Credit Recommendations

It should be noted that the minimum credit is 1 for a notional 10 hours of learning.

Notional hours can be seen as being equal to

Amount of time given to formal structured learning + independent learning

COURSE TITLE		
Input	Descriptions of Learning Activities	Hours
Lectures/classes	Credit can be awarded for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending formal teaching sessions, eg classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars and tutorials • Involvement in informal learning, eg community groups, community based workshops, youth groups, outdoor activities • Practical work in labs and other locations • Relevant ICT activities • Using libraries and learning resource centres • Expected private study and revision • Practice through gaining, using and refining skills in the workplace • Being assessed • Personal programme planning • Being counselled or mentored • Reflection • Work based learning • Self directed study using online or text based open learning materials • Online/peer group learning 	
Tutorial		
Workshops		
Practical		
Independent Learning		
Assessment		
Other (state)		
Total hours		
Credit value (hrs/10)		
Notes on Approach		
In this section you should give evidence of how the breakdown of learning activities was arrived at and how they enhance/support the learning activities.		

9.3.6 Lauder College design team questionnaire

**Lauder College
SCQF Credit Rating Pilot**

**Name of
Programme:**

**Name of
Respondent:**

Please complete the following questionnaire by placing a cross beside the statement (letter A– K) that you judge to be the most appropriate or applicable to successful candidates for this award. Please note it is not necessary for all the statement to be applicable for it to be most appropriate.

Note: there are additional sections of this questionnaire which are not reproduced in this report, relating to;

Practice: Applied Knowledge and Understanding

Generic Cognitive Skills

Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills

Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others

Knowledge and Understanding
The successful candidate will be able to:

A	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject/discipline 	
B	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline • Simple facts and ideas associated with a subject/discipline 	
C	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual • Some simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/ discipline • Knowledge of basic processes, materials and terminology 	
D	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual but has some theoretical component • A range of simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/discipline • Knowledge and understanding of basic processes, materials and terminology 	
E	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalised knowledge of a subject/discipline • Factual and theoretical knowledge • A range of facts, ideas, properties, materials, terminology, practices, techniques about/associated with a subject/discipline • Relate the subject/discipline to a range of practical and/or everyday applications. 	
F	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broad knowledge of the subject/discipline in general • Knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles • An awareness of the evolving/changing nature of knowledge and understanding • An understanding of the difference between explanations based in evidence and/or research and other forms of explanation, and of the importance of this difference 	

G	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broad knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of a subject/discipline • Detailed knowledge in some areas • Understanding of a limited range of core theories, principles and concepts • Limited knowledge and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms • An outline knowledge and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes 	
H	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope, main areas and boundaries of a subject/discipline • A critical understanding of a selection of the principal theories, principles, concepts and terminology • Knowledge that is detailed in some areas and/or knowledge of one or more specialisms that are informed by forefront developments 	
I	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge that covers and integrates most of the principal areas, features, boundaries, terminology and conventions of a subject/discipline • A critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles • Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, some of which is informed by or at the forefront of a subject/discipline • Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the subject/discipline is developed, including a range of established techniques of enquiry or research methodologies 	
J	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge that covers and integrates most, if not all, of the main areas of a subject/ discipline - including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions • A critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts • A critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, principles and concepts • Extensive, detailed and critical knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, much of which is at or informed by developments at the forefront • Critical awareness of current issues in a subject/discipline and one or more specialisms 	
K	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A critical overview of a subject/discipline, including critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts • A critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of one or more specialisms • Knowledge and understanding that is generated through personal research or equivalent work which makes a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline 	

9.3.7 Sabhal Mòr Ostaig vetter documentation

CREDIT RATING SCORECARD					
RECOMMENDATION FOR SCQF LEVEL AND CREDIT OF COMPONENT					
Component title (unit/module):				Reference:	
Qualification:	As above			Reference:	
Recommended SCQF level:			Recommended SCQF credit points:		
Organisation:					
Name:					
Position:					
Signature:					
Date:					
VETTER'S COMMENTS					
Levelling	Agree		Disagree		Queries to be addressed
Credit rating	Agree		Disagree		Queries to be addressed
Comments/ queries					

Name:			
Signature:			
Date:			
DECISION			
SCQF level		SCQF credit points	
Comments			