SCQF HANDBOOK

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SCQF HANDBOOK

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This 2015 edition of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Handbook was developed following consultation with members of the SCQF Partnership (SCQFP), practitioners from SCQF Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) and other stakeholders. This version supersedes all previous versions up to and including the 2009 version.

The SCQF Handbook is a technical guide that explains how the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (sometimes referred to as the Framework) can be used to support and develop Scotland's lifelong learning agenda. It provides an overview of the main features of the Framework with regular signposting to relevant SCQF publications and other support materials for more in depth information about the various themes. These are highlighted within, and listed at the end of, each section. In addition, the SCQFP offers workshops to support the use of the Handbook by further explaining credit rating and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Up to date information on these can be found on the website, www.scqf.org.uk.

Although originally written for CRBs, it is envisaged that the SCQF Handbook will be read by, and be helpful as a reference tool to, a wider variety of users. These could include staff in training organisations, Community Learning and Development (CLD) and schools, as well as employers, professional organisations, regulatory bodies, awarding bodies both in and outwith Scotland, admissions officers and guidance staff in universities and colleges who:

- are involved in Credit Rating (both CRBs and Third Parties);
- have responsibility for Quality Assurance;
- are involved in programme design;
- are involved in the development of staff who will be involved in credit rating;
- provide pastoral or academic guidance;
- want to understand Scotland's qualifications;
- help to interpret the qualifications of prospective employees or candidates;
- are interested in links to other national qualifications frameworks;
- are responsible for strategic development to create more flexible university and college entrance requirements;
- are involved in Credit Transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning;
- support learners in understanding how the SCQF can be useful to them.

In general, the Handbook is not aimed specifically at learners or the general public. Several tailored publications supporting the understanding and use of the SCQF for these client groups are available on the SCQF website or can be obtained from the SCQF Partnership.

The Handbook is based on a revised set of 25 principles which replace the 47 Guidelines found in previous versions of the Handbook. These principles are high level statements and are designed, along with the explanatory information in this handbook, to cover all of the information published in the previous guidelines. All Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) must adhere to these principles listed overleaf.

SCQF PRINCIPLES

SCQF PRINCIPLE	DETAILS
1	Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) and the SCQF Partnership have equal responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

The above Principle is a permeating theme throughout this Handbook.

PRINCIPLES RELATED TO LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS AND CREDIT RATING

SCQF PRINCIPLE	DETAILS
2	All qualifications/learning programmes credit rated on to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework must meet the four criteria for credit rating.
3	A qualification/learning programme must be capable of being allocated an SCQF level and SCQF credit points in order that it can be included on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
4	A qualification/learning programme must have at least 10 notional learning hours (1 SCQF credit point) before it can be credit rated and considered for inclusion on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Only full SCQF credit points are awarded – fractions of SCQF credit points (e.g. 0.5) are not allowed.
5	Qualification/learning programme designers must determine the Notional Learning Hours required by a typical learner to complete all learning activities within the qualification/programme.
6	The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit or module of learning is determined independently of the perceived importance or centrality of that unit/module within a broader programme of learning.
7	The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit/module of learning is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved (e.g. grading).
8	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that within the process of credit rating, and in processes for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), they take due cognisance of the SCQF Level Descriptors and any other relevant reference points.
9	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.
10	Where assessment leads to the award of SCQF credit points then the certificates issued to learners must include the following information: • the title of the qualification/learning programme; • the total number of SCQF credit points awarded on completion; • the SCQF level of the qualification/learning programme achieved; • the SCQF logo; • the name of the CRB.
11	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all credit rated qualifications/learning programmes to the SCQF database.

ADDITIONAL PRINCIPLES WHEN WORKING WITH A THIRD PARTY SUBMISSION

SCQF PRINCIPLE	DETAILS
12	Credit Rating Bodies must assure themselves, as far as is practically possible, of the good standing and credibility of the Third Party organisation prior to any submission for credit rating.
13	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating Third Party submissions.
14	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that Third Party organisations submit information, and documented evidence of, their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to the internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions.
15	The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.
16	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that the Third Party organisation submits regular (e.g. annual) reports of progress in the delivery of any credit rated qualifications/learning programmes and is aware that they must inform the CRB if any significant changes to these are made which may affect the SCQF level or credit points.
17	Credit Rating Bodies must agree an appropriate review date for the credit rated qualification(s)/learning programme(s) with the Third Party organisation.
18	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all Third Party qualifications/learning programmes which they have credit rated to the SCQF Database.
19	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for issuing the SCQF logo and Brand Guidelines to the Third Party organisation and ensuring that they are aware of the requirements for certification as outlined in principle 10.

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO CREDIT TRANSFER AND THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

SCQF PRINCIPLE	DETAILS
20	The design and development of qualifications and learning programmes for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework should facilitate and promote credit recognition for prior informal and non-formal learning and credit transfer.
21	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is given for learning, not for experience alone.
22	SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL for informal or non-formal learning are of the same value as credit gained through formal learning.
23	RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points must involve a formal assessment or acceptance of evidence of learning which is quality assured.
24	The assessment procedures for RPL including Credit Transfer should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.
25	The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures, including those for Credit Transfer, should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the organisation.

1.1 CONTENT OF THE SCQF HANDBOOK

The Handbook comprises this introductory section plus five other sections which are supported by annexes. The themes included in the sections are:

2.0 Learning Arrangements
3.0 Credit Rating
4.0 Recognition of Prior Learning
5.0 Quality Assurance
6.0 Third Party Credit Rating

A summary of the content within each section is given in the table below.

SECTION TITLE	SUMMARY
2.0 Learning Arrangements *This section will be of particular interest to those involved in programme design and all aspects of credit rating including quality assurance.*	This section introduces principles 2 and 3 and discusses in more detail the four criteria for credit rating learning onto the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The four criteria concerned are that all learning programmes: • must be written in learning outcomes; • must be a minimum of 10 notional learning hours; • must be formally assessed; and • must be quality assured. There are no specific design rules associated with qualifications/learning programmes credit rated onto the SCQF. However, there is a general set of information which would be expected to be provided to describe them. Additionally, there is a range of naming rules and conventions for some types of qualifications and learning programmes.
3.0 Credit Rating *This section will be of particular interest to those involved in any aspect of the credit rating process including those involved in staff training.*	This section introduces principles 4 - 11 and provides guidance for Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) on the considerations and practical application of the credit rating function. Specifically, this looks at the following: • Notional Learning Hours; • Credit Points; • SCQF Levelling; • SCQF Level Descriptors including additional information on SCQF Level 1; • Credit Rating process; • Certification; and • SCQF Database. There is no “standard process” for organisations to carry out the credit rating function, so CRBs should establish their own credit rating and quality assurance processes in accordance with the SCQF principles detailed in this document. However, all processes should incorporate the use of SCQF Level Descriptors.

SECTION TITLE	SUMMARY
4.0 Recognition of Prior Learning *This section will be of particular interest to those involved in any aspect of RPL, including policy makers, guidance staff, admission officers and RPL facilitators.*	This section introduces principles 20 - 25, which all relate to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer and how the SCQF can assist with these processes. It gives the SCQF definition of RPL which is widely accepted by all sectors in Scotland. It also includes principle 8 which relates to all aspects of credit rating and sets out what Quality Assurance is required to support RPL within an organisation. This section is intended to be supplemented by the comprehensive range of stand-alone materials and tools relating to RPL and Credit Transfer now available.
5.0 Quality Assurance *This section will be of particular interest to those involved in the development of policies and procedures, or others involved in any aspect of quality assurance associated with the credit rating process.*	This section introduces principles 1, 9, 15 and 24 and provides advice, direction and guidance for Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) to develop, strengthen and consolidate robust quality assurance systems. Existing or developing quality assurance systems should have operational procedures that cover: • Credit Rating; • Third Party Credit Rating (where applicable); and • Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning. CRBs will have designed and developed a range of quality assurance systems to support SCQF principles to ensure the quality and integrity of the SCQF, thereby avoiding reputational risk. While the individual design of the quality assurance system and processes is entirely within the remit of the CRBs, there are a number of elements and key features of commonality, best practice and documented evidence which are required to safeguard the reputation of the Framework outlined in this Handbook.
6.0 Third Party Credit Rating *This section will be of particular interest to all CRBs wishing to carry out Third Party Credit Rating and those CRBs who are considering making an application for Third Party credit rating status, policy makers, business development personnel, Third Party organisations and those involved in quality assurance.*	This section introduces principles 12 - 19 and provides guidance for Credit Rating Bodies on the process of credit rating qualifications/learning programmes for other organisations. Such organisations are referred to as Third Parties or Submitting Bodies. The credit rating process used here may well be the same as for internal programmes. However, the CRB will need to provide clear information to third parties on how the credit rating process will be undertaken. In addition, CRBs may require some additional quality assurance to be in place. This section also briefly outlines the process by which an existing CRB can apply for the authority to carry out Third Party credit rating. However, for more detailed information, the CRB should refer to the SCQF Quality Assurance Model.

ANNEX	TITLE	CONTENT
1	Glossary	Explanation of abbreviations and terms
2	Flowchart 1	Description of Credit Rating Process
3	Flowchart 2	Description of Third Party Credit Rating

1.2 EXPLANATION OF TERMS

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework includes a wide range of qualifications and learning programmes and recognises that different learning providers use different terms to describe similar processes. In the SCQF Handbook the term 'qualifications and learning programmes' is used as a common phrase to describe the various terms for programmes, qualifications, courses, units and modules that are used in the different sectors involved in lifelong learning in Scotland.

A full glossary of other abbreviations and terms used in the SCQF Handbook can be found in Annex 1.

1.3 ADDITIONAL SCQF PUBLICATIONS

The SCQF Level Descriptors are an essential tool for all aspects of credit rating. Unlike previous versions of the SCQF Handbook, precise details of the SCQF Level Descriptors are not listed in this document. They are published separately as **SCQF Level Descriptors** and are available in hard copy or to download from the SCQF website - www.scqf.org.uk.

A diagram illustrating the relationship of the levels of the main Scottish qualifications can be found at www.scqf.org.uk/framework-diagram/Framework.htm.

Other publications referred to within the Handbook are:

- **SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained;**
- **Quality Assurance Model for SCQFP Approved Credit Rating Bodies;**
- **Guidelines to Promote and Support the Credit Rating Process in Colleges in Scotland;**
- **Nomenclature Explained: A Guide to Naming Qualifications and Learning Programmes for the SCQF;**
- **Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning: Toolkit;**
- **Guidance on Using the Level 1 Descriptor;**
- **Brand Guidelines: The Official Logo of the SCQF; and**
- **The SCQF Database Explained - A Guide for Credit Rating Bodies.**

All are available on the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk, along with a wide range of other support materials and resources, including details of a range of training workshops offered by the SCQF Partnership. These workshops are currently available free of charge (2015).

1.4 THE AIMS AND KEY FEATURES OF THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Through working in partnership, the SCQF was developed in 2001 to meet the needs of Scotland's learners. It provides a shared context for learning in Scotland. It was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. Within the overall context of lifelong learning, the Framework supports all of Scotland's citizens, learning providers and employers by:

- Helping people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime, so as to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential;
- Enabling employers, learners and the public in general to understand:
  - the full range of Scottish qualifications;
  - how qualifications relate to each other and to other forms of assessed learning;
  - how different types of qualifications can contribute to the development and utilisation of the skills of the workforce;
  - how Scottish qualifications relate to qualifications in other countries;
  - how using SCQF Level Descriptors can assist with qualifications development and benchmarking skills and experience in all sectors.
- Providing a Framework which can support the aims of fair work and social justice by ensuring that it provides tools and resources which can recognise prior learning, support progression and improve social inclusion.

Although there are regulated qualifications on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, it is a voluntary Framework. It uses two measures, SCQF Level and Credit Points, to help users understand and compare qualifications and learning programmes.

Any qualification/learning programme has the potential to be included on the Framework, provided that the qualification/learning programme meets the following criteria:
- must be based on learning outcomes;
- must be a minimum of 10 notional learning hours;
- must be formally assessed; and
- must be quality assured.

The SCQF provides a vocabulary for describing learning and which helps to:
- make the relationships between qualifications and learning programmes clear;
- clarify entry and exit points and routes for progression;
- maximise the opportunities for credit transfer;
- assist learners to plan their progress and learning; and
- minimise the duplication of learning.

The process of allocating an SCQF Level and SCQF Credit Points to a qualification or learning programme is known as 'credit rating'. SCQF credit rating can only be carried out by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies. These are:
- Scotland's colleges;
- Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); and
- Other organisations approved by the SCQF Partnership (known as SCQFP Approved Credit Rating Bodies).

Information on the process to become an SCQFP Approved Credit Rating Body is provided in the **SCQF Quality Assurance Model for SCQFP Approved Credit Rating Bodies**.

1.5 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following subsections aim to provide additional information which may be of interest to readers. Further details on these topics are to be found on the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk.

1.5.1 THE SCQF PARTNERSHIP

In November 2006, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQF Partnership) was established as a company limited by guarantee to manage the SCQF, and the company became a charity registered in Scotland in March 2007. Its members are:
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA);
- College Development Network;
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); and
- Universities Scotland.

The aims of the SCQF Partnership are to:
- maintain the quality and integrity of the Framework;
- promote and develop the Framework as a tool to support lifelong learning; and
- develop and maintain relationships with other frameworks in the UK, Europe and internationally.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework is in the guardianship of and managed by the SCQF Partnership (SCQFP).

The structure of the SCQF Partnership consists of:

- the SCQF Partnership Board which comprises senior representatives from the member organisations. Additional directors can be co-opted as required. The Board has a Independent Chair.
- the SCQF Quality Committee whose remit is to maintain the quality of the Framework and to provide clear and accurate technical information to learners, the public and others with an interest in learning, including training providers and employers. This committee also provides support to the SCQF Partnership in relation to the sharing of information, the co-ordination and decision making for SCQF Partnership's involvement, primarily in the United Kingdom and Europe, but with a watching brief on international activity.
- the SCQFP Executive Team, headed by a Chief Executive Officer, which supports the strategic development of the Framework and the implementation of the annual SCQF Partnership Operational Plan.
- the SCQF Forum which was established to promote the use and development of the Framework. It gives advice to the SCQF Partnership Board and the SCQFP Executive Team to ensure that the Framework continues to meet the needs of all learners, employers and other users of Scottish learning provision. It is made up of senior representatives from the fields of education, training, business and other learning communities in Scotland.

1.5.2 UK, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The SCQF is one of the most established and respected Frameworks internationally. The SCQF is referenced against the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) allowing for comparison with other National Qualifications Frameworks across Europe which have also been referenced to the EQF. More information on how the SCQF Partnership interacts with other countries within Europe and the rest of the world can also be found on the SCQF website and further information on the EQF is available at www.ec.europa.eu/ploteus.

The EQF aims to facilitate the recognition of the wide range of learning that takes place across European countries. By acting as a translation device, this meta framework aids in the understanding of qualifications across the different countries and education systems in Europe.

Based on eight reference levels, described in terms of learning outcomes, it covers the levels of most qualifications acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training. Most European member states have now referenced their national qualifications to the EQF.

Showing the relationship between the SCQF, other National Frameworks and the EQF helps to:

- promote lifelong learning and equal opportunities;
- benefit learners by making their qualifications easier to be understood across Europe;
- benefit employers, social partners and education and training systems in Scotland and across Europe; and
- encourage the further integration of the European labour market.

A publication which was originally developed for employers, but which a wide variety of users has found helpful, is **Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries**. It illustrates how you can compare qualifications across national boundaries, in particular those of Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland as well as showing correspondences between these countries' qualifications and the EQF.

It also shows the correspondences between UK and Irish national qualifications frameworks and the other overarching qualifications framework for European higher education – the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), also known as the Bologna Framework.

Although not specifically an SCQF publication, this document can be downloaded from the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk.

SCQF HANDBOOK

2.0 LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS

2.0 LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 SUMMARY

This section introduces principles 2 and 3 and discusses in more detail the four criteria for credit rating learning onto the SCQF. The four criteria concerned state that all learning programmes:

- must be written in learning outcomes;
- must be a minimum of 10 notional learning hours;
- must be formally assessed; and
- must be quality assured.

There are no specific design rules associated with programmes credit rated onto the SCQF as CRBs are autonomous institutions. However, there is a general set of information which would be expected to be provided to describe the qualification or learning programme.
These are:

- Name of Qualification;
- SCQF Level;
- SCQF Credit Points;
- The Awarding Body;
- Aims and Outcomes of the Qualification or Learning Programme;
- Content, Design and Structure of the Qualification or Learning Programme (including any mandatory requirements or conditions of award);
- Entry and Credit Transfer Routes; and
- Progression.

Additionally, there is a range of naming rules and conventions for some types of qualifications and learning programmes. Further information about naming rules and conventions can be found in the SCQF publication **Nomenclature Explained: A Guide to Naming Qualifications and Learning**.

2.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

2.2.1 TYPES OF LEARNING

Learning can take place in a number of ways. This is often referred to as Lifelong Learning and includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. The European Commission published a range of definitions for these in its **Recommendation on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning** in 2012. This can be accessed at www.eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01)&from=EN.

Formal Learning is learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification. It includes systems of general education, initial vocational education training (IVET), continuing vocational education training (CVET) and higher education.

Non-formal Learning is, broadly, learning outside the formal school/vocational training/university system, taking place through planned activities (e.g with goals and timelines) involving some form of learning support, for example:

- Programmes to impart work-skills, literacy and other basic skills for early school-leavers;
- In-company training;
- Structured online learning; or
- Courses organised by third sector organisations such as voluntary organisations and trade unions, for their members, their target group or the general public.

Informal Learning is learning that is not organised or structured in terms of goals, time or instruction. This covers skills acquired (sometimes unintentionally) through life and work experiences, for example:

- Project management or IT skills acquired at work;
- Languages and intercultural skills acquired through a stay abroad;
- IT skills acquired outside work; or
- Skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (for example, taking care of children).

In Scotland a range of non-formal and informal learning opportunities can be offered by various organisations, for example, through Community Learning and Development (CLD), employers, training providers and voluntary organisations.

2.2.2 SCOTTISH MAINSTREAM QUALIFICATIONS

Within Scotland, most mainstream qualifications are delivered through schools, colleges and universities. These qualifications have been credit rated by the relevant Credit Rating Body and therefore all have been allocated an SCQF level and credit points. Examples of these are National Qualifications such as Highers and Nationals, as well as Higher National Certificates/Diplomas and degrees.

TITLE	SCQF LEVEL	SCQF CREDIT VALUE
National 4	4	24 credit points
National 5	5	24 credit points
Higher	6	24 credit points
Advanced Higher	7	32 credit points
Higher National Certificate	7	96 credit points
Higher National Diploma	8	240 credit points
Ordinary Degree	9	360 credit points
Honours Degree	10	480 credit points
Masters Degree (taught)	11	180 credit points

A diagram illustrating the relationship of the levels of the main Scottish qualifications can be found on the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk.

2.3. MAIN PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS

principle 2	All qualifications/learning programmes credit rated on to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework must meet the four criteria for credit rating.
principle 3	A qualification/learning programme must be capable of being allocated SCQF level and credit points in order that it can be included on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

2.3.1 PRINCIPLE 2

All qualifications/learning programmes credit rated on to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework must meet the four criteria for credit rating.

It is possible to credit rate a wide range of diverse learning provision such as that offered by colleges, universities, training providers, employers and through community learning and development, including work based learning and continuing professional development, provided that the qualifications and learning programmes meet the required criteria, which are that they:

- must be written in learning outcomes;
- must be a minimum of 10 notional learning hours;
- must be formally assessed; and
- must be quality assured.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are statements of what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do on successful completion of learning. The learning outcomes must be expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies. Learning outcomes must be achievable and assessable. Learning outcomes provide a common approach across all learning sectors to express and measure learning achievements within qualifications or learning programmes.

There must be a clearly defined set of learning outcomes for each qualification/learning programme including a clear statement of the level of demand of outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the qualification/learning programme with reference to the **SCQF Level Descriptors**.

NOTIONAL LEARNING HOURS

One SCQF credit point is equal to 10 hours of notional learning (the smallest amount of learning recognised by the Framework). This may include a range of activities and is not limited to class/tutor contact time. This is covered in more detail in Section 3: **Credit Rating**.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is the process of evaluating an individual's learning. It involves generating and collecting evidence of a learner's attainment of knowledge and/or skills and judging that evidence against defined standards which are expressed in learning outcomes.

There must be clearly defined methods of assessment and evidence that the assessment criteria and processes are appropriate to the defined learning outcomes.

Any assessment needs to be appropriate to the SCQF level of the programme. There must also be clear criteria for distinguishing pass/fail.

Further information about notional learning hours and writing and assessing learning outcomes can be found in the SCQF publication **SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained**.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

A quality assurance system must be in place to safeguard standards, protect the integrity of the programme and to ensure consistent assessment. Further information on this can be found within Section 5: **Quality Assurance**.

CRBs have their own quality assurance arrangements and must ensure that credit rating processes align to SCQF principles. Internal and external systems require to be explicit, reliable, valid and available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance bodies.

2.3.2 PRINCIPLE 3

A qualification/learning programme must be capable of being allocated an SCQF level and credit points in order that it can be included on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

SCQF levels are based on a single set of level descriptors, which are the common reference points and definitions that provide a way of recognising learning that is outcome based and quality assured. A full description of the level descriptors can be found in the SCQF publication **SCQF Level Descriptors**.

It may be easier to credit rate at the design stage of a qualification/learning programme, when writers are considering matters such as learning outcomes, course content, qualification descriptors, design principles and the nature of the assessment. The SCQF Level Descriptors can help qualification/learning programme designers consider the range of knowledge and skills required and match the required learning outcomes to the appropriate characteristics at a particular SCQF level.

The SCQF is able to recognise larger programmes of learning run over significant periods of time, and it is advisable to allocate SCQF credit points to the individual units, modules or components. The number of SCQF credit points for the overall qualification/learning programme will be derived from the total of the SCQF credit points allocated to each component, provided that the component is subject to assessment and quality assurance.

There are different models that can be applied to make an overall judgement on the appropriate SCQF Level:

- **Equal components**: all components, units or modules of a qualification/learning programme are at the same SCQF Level; then the qualification/learning programme would be allocated at this SCQF Level;
- **Exit level**: larger qualifications or learning programmes that have components, units or modules at different SCQF Levels are allocated to a final exit level for the overall qualification/learning programme. The final level of learning determines the SCQF Level for the qualification or learning programme;
- **Proportional design**: for qualifications/learning programmes that consist of components, units or modules at different SCQF Levels, there must be transparency within design principles regarding how the balance of credit points determines overall level.

2.4 SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS

The SCQF website has the following range of support materials relevant to this section.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION
SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained
SCQF Level Descriptors

SCQF HANDBOOK

3.0 CREDIT RATING

3.0 CREDIT RATING

3.1 SUMMARY

This section introduces principles 4 - 11 and provides guidance for Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) on the considerations and practical application of the credit rating function. Specifically, this will look at the following:

- Notional Learning Hours;
- Credit Points;
- SCQF Levelling;
- SCQF Level Descriptors;
- Credit Rating process;
- Certification; and
- SCQF Database.

There is no "standard process" for organisations to carry out the credit rating function so CRBs should establish their own credit rating and quality assurance processes in accordance with SCQF principles detailed in this document. These processes should be explicit, reliable, valid and subject to external review.

A flowchart outlining the possible stages of a credit rating process can be found in Annex 2 at the end of the Handbook. CRBs may wish to use this as guidance however each CRB will design and develop a credit rating process which links to their own internal structures and processes.

However, all processes should incorporate the use of **SCQF Level Descriptors**.

3.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Credit Rating is a process of professional judgement leading to a formal statement on the volume of SCQF Credit Points and allocation of an SCQF Level for a qualification/learning programme.

Professional judgement is exercised by those qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of expertise, using SCQF Level Descriptors.

The focus of the credit rating process is on learning outcomes and on the arrangements for both learner achievement and assessment of those learning outcomes. Credit rating is therefore not solely concerned with the delivery process.

3.2.1 SCQF MEASURES FOR CREDIT RATING

The two measures that are used to place qualifications/learning programmes on the Framework are:

- The volume of learning – described as SCQF Credit Points;
- The level of learning outcomes – described as SCQF Levels.

Following successful credit rating, qualifications/learning programmes will automatically be part of the Framework and the CRB must ensure that they are then entered on to the SCQF Database.

3.2.3 SCQF CREDIT RATING BODIES

SCQF credit rating can only be carried out by CRBs. These are:

- Scotland's colleges;
- Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); and
- Other organisations approved by the SCQF Partnership following a formal application and approval process.

All CRBs are required to operate appropriate quality assurance systems that also offer a high level of externality (See Section 5: **Quality Assurance** for further details of externality) as part of the process of being approved to become a Credit Rating Body. Details of the criteria and the processes to become a Credit Rating Body are available from the SCQF Partnership and in the SCQF publication **Quality Assurance Model for SCQF Partnership Approved Credit Rating Bodies**.

All CRBs can credit rate their own learning provision with some also approved to credit rate learning for other organisations, referred to as Third Party credit rating. Further details of Third Party credit rating can be found in Section 6: **Third Party Credit Rating**.

3.3. MAIN PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO CREDIT RATING

principle 4	A qualification/learning programme must have at least 10 notional learning hours (1 SCQF credit point) before it can be credit rated and considered for inclusion on the Framework. Only full SCQF credit points are awarded – fractions of SCQF credit points (e.g. 0.5) are not allowed.
principle 5	Qualification/learning programme designers must determine the Notional Learning Hours required by a typical learner to complete all learning activities within the qualification/ programme.
principle 6	The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit or module of learning is determined independently of the perceived importance or centrality of that unit/module within a broader programme of learning.
principle 7	The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit or module of learning is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved (e.g. grading).
principle 8	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that within the process of credit rating, and in processes for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), they take due cognisance of the SCQF Level Descriptors and any other relevant reference points.
principle 9	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.
principle 10	Where assessment leads to the award of SCQF credit points then the certificates issued to learners must include the following information: • the title of the qualification/learning programme; • the total number of SCQF credit points awarded on completion; • the SCQF level of the qualification/learning programme achieved; • the SCQF logo; and • the name of the CRB.
principle 11	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all credit rated qualifications/ learning programmes to the SCQF database.

3.3.1 PRINCIPLE 4

A qualification/learning programme must have at least 10 notional learning hours (1 SCQF credit point) before it can be credit rated and considered for inclusion on the Framework. Only full SCQF credit points are awarded – fractions of SCQF credit points (e.g. 0.5) are not allowed.

Credit points provide a way for learners, employers and learning providers to describe and compare the amount of learning that has been achieved, or is required to be achieved within a qualification/learning programme at a given level of the Framework.

By using credit as a measure, the SCQF is able to recognise any size of qualification or learning programme provided that it meets the required criteria and that it takes a minimum of 10 notional hours to achieve the learning outcomes.

Notional learning hours are defined as the time required for a typical learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes. The amount of time taken by actual learners in reality may differ but this does not affect the number of SCQF Credit Points awarded. Further information can be found in the SCQF publication **SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained**.

3.3.2 PRINCIPLE 5

Qualification/learning programme designers must determine the Notional Learning Hours required by a typical learner to complete all learning activities within the qualification/programme.

Notional learning hours for a qualification/learning programme must include all the learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes, as well as the assessment. Notional learning hours might include: formal activities that involve teaching and tutor contact time; self-directed activities that involve study, research, applied learning, developing practice, reflection and review; informal learning and assessment activities that involve planning and completing assessment tasks.

The mix of learning activities may vary according to the requirements of the qualification or learning programme.

3.3.3 PRINCIPLE 6

The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit or module of learning is determined independently of the perceived importance or centrality of that unit/module within a broader programme of learning.

SCQF credit points are allocated exclusively on the volume of learning, determined by the amount of notional learning hours that are required to achieve the learning outcomes.

Once credit rated and allocated a number of SCQF credit points, this value remains the same for a unit/module regardless of the programme it is contained within and the perceived importance of that unit within the design of that programme.

There is no limit to the number of SCQF credit points that can be allocated. The determining factor is the amount of time required to achieve the specified learning outcomes.

3.3.4 PRINCIPLE 7

The number of SCQF credit points allocated to a unit or module of learning is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved (e.g. grading).

The number of credit points for a qualification/learning programme is the same irrespective of the grade achieved. Judgement on how well a learner has performed and the grading and classification systems used to report the learner's performance are the responsibility of the relevant programme owner/deliverer or awarding body. The number of SCQF credit points awarded to the learner is not influenced by, and is independent of, the grade that is achieved.

3.3.5 PRINCIPLE 8

Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that within the process of credit rating, and in processes for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), they take due cognisance of the SCQF Level Descriptors and any other relevant reference points.

The SCQF has 12 levels, each increasing in demand from level 1 - 12 by changes to factors such as complexity, depth of knowledge and the learner's autonomy in demonstrating achievement. The levels reflect the current Scottish system of education and training. The levels of the Framework are described by a set of SCQF Level Descriptors, which provide a general understanding of each SCQF level. The SCQF Level Descriptors are expressed in terms of 5 characteristics:

- Knowledge and understanding;
- Practice: applied knowledge and understanding;
- Generic cognitive skills;
- Communication, ICT and numeracy skills; and
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

As some characteristics may not be relevant for particular qualifications/learning programmes they should not be regarded as a required checklist. There is no expectation that learning outcomes in a qualification/learning programme will cover all of the characteristics.

Full details of the SCQF Level Descriptors are available within the separate SCQF publication **SCQF Level Descriptors.**

The SCQF Level Descriptors provide reference points for determining the level of a qualification, learning programme, unit of learning or for the Recognition of Prior Learning. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning for individual qualifications.

SCQF Level Descriptors can allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications/learning programmes achieved in different contexts. Sometimes a broad comparison is all that is required by an individual or organisation for internal planning or to identify informal progression pathways without carrying out a formal quality assured credit rating process. This is sometimes referred to as 'benchmarking' or 'mapping' and does not allow any formal statement of SCQF level or credit or permit the use of the SCQF logo. Any organisation which only carries out this informal process must ensure that any SCQF level or credit estimated as a result is not formally promoted to learners or the general public through publicity or course material and does not appear on any certificates or learning transcripts.

ALLOCATING AN SCQF LEVEL

Allocating an SCQF level is a matter of professional judgement. The CRB will be responsible for ensuring that the credit rating process and outcomes are consistent with relevant reference points. Therefore, the SCQF Level Descriptors should be used along with other reference sources such as relevant qualification or programme descriptors, higher education subject benchmark information, SQA specifications and other appropriate sources

of information and guidance. Wherever possible, the SCQF Level Descriptors should not be used as the sole reference source.

Whilst the process of allocating SCQF level and credit points is sometimes seen as being easier at the design stage, other models are possible and equally acceptable. The SCQF Level Descriptors can, and should, be used at any stage in the design, development and validation/accreditation of qualifications and learning programmes.

After establishing a provisional level for a qualification or learning programme, CRBs should ensure that they carry out a final comparison with the SCQF Level Descriptors for the levels above and below the proposed level to establish the 'best fit'.

If, after this process, the learning is not at the desired SCQF level, the organisation would need to undertake a review and revision of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. In some circumstances, further development work may be required.

More information on using the SCQF Level Descriptors can be found in **SCQF Credit Rating: Criteria Explained** and **Guidelines to Promote and Support the Credit Rating Process in Colleges in Scotland.**

SCQF LEVEL 1 GUIDANCE

At Level 1 each of the 5 characteristics is not individually detailed. The SCQF Level 1 descriptor is written as an inclusive statement designed to allow learners with different types of abilities to respond to and achieve learning outcomes. It is therefore important that the aims and objectives, learning outcomes and assessments reflect this appropriately.

At this level the emphasis is placed on the learning which takes place as a result of learners' participation in, and experience of, situations as well as the carrying out of basic tasks. It is important to recognise that at this level the personalisation of support is crucial and that the level of support required by a learner to achieve the outcomes at this level will, and should, be needs led.

Whilst the format of the descriptor at Level 1 is different, the physical process of credit rating at SCQF Level 1 does not differ from that at any other level and the SCQF principles will still apply. However there are a number of specific considerations to take into account when interpreting and applying the Level 1 descriptor.

More information can be found in the SCQF publication **Guidance on Using the Level 1 Descriptor** and the **SCQF Level Descriptors**.

3.3.6 PRINCIPLE 9

Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.

All SCQF Credit Rating Bodies are required to establish credit rating processes in accordance with SCQF principles and with the CRB's own, robust, quality assurance system.

The organisational quality assurance system must cover areas such as:

- Programme design, including the issuing of formal records;
- Assessment procedures, transcripts or certificates;
- The credit rating function;
- Governance of credit rating; and
- Externality.

These processes should be explicit, reliable, valid and available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance bodies, for example, an external auditing body.

The CRB should ensure that appropriate credit rating systems involve a range of staff who cover the following:
- knowledge and understanding of the SCQF, the SCQF Level Descriptors, and the principles laid out in this Handbook;
- experience of credit rating;
- experience of quality assurance, including programme approval or review; and
- experience of programme delivery and learner assessment in the relevant subject area and at the relevant levels.

In addition, the credit rating system should ensure that there are clear checks and balances between those involved in programme design, credit rating and approval/decision making.

Good practice suggests that the person or group which develops a qualification or programme can contribute to discussions on the level and credit rating but should not take part in the final decision making. It is suggested that the final decision making should be taken by a group, not an individual, and that the group should be able to draw on a range of expertise as described above.

This principle is also comprehensively covered in this Handbook's Section 5: **Quality Assurance**.

3.3.7 PRINCIPLE 10

Where assessment leads to the award of SCQF credit points then the certificates issued to learners must include the following information:

- the title of the qualification/learning programme;
- the total number of SCQF credit points awarded on completion;
- the SCQF level of the qualification/learning programme achieved;
- the SCQF logo;
- the name of the CRB.

Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for their own certification processes but should seek guidance from the SCQF Partnership where required to ensure that their own certificates meet the requirements listed.

Where CRBs are not able to show all of the above on the certificate issued to learners, this information must be produced and issued to the learner in another format. In some cases this may be in the form of a transcript. Guidance should be sought from the SCQF Partnership on acceptable formats.

The certificate must not include any other National Qualification Framework level other than the relevant SCQF level. In addition, the word "level" must only be used in relation to the actual SCQF level. The one exception to this which is allowed is where a CRB wishes to include the relevant EQF Level in addition to the SCQF Level.

CRBs must give guidance to Third Party organisations on the certification process as highlighted in principle 19.

There are strict guidelines regarding the use of the SCQF logo. These can be found in the SCQF publication **Brand Guidelines: The Official Logo of the SCQF**.

3.3.8 PRINCIPLE 11

Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all credit rated qualification/learning programmes to the SCQF database.

The SCQF database holds details of all qualifications and learning programmes that have been credit rated, including the title, the SCQF level, the number of SCQF credit points, the relevant CRB and Programme Owner.

The SCQF Partnership relies on all CRBs maintaining the accuracy of the information on the SCQF database. Whether credit rating their own qualifications and learning programmes or providing a credit rating service for others, the CRBs are required to update the SCQF database with details of the qualifications and learning programmes that they have credit rated. (NB Scottish university undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications [as held by UCAS] and those qualifications provided by SQA Awarding Body are uploaded in bulk annually by the SCQF Partnership.)

The SCQF database can be accessed on the SCQF website - www.scqf.org.uk.

Credit Rating Bodies can obtain information on how to upload and maintain their provision on the database in the SCQF publication **The SCQF Database Explained - A Guide for Credit Rating Bodies**.

3.4 SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS

The SCQF website has a range of support materials relevant to this section.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION
SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained
SCQF Level Descriptors
Guidelines to Promote and Support the Credit Rating Process in Colleges in Scotland
Guidance on Using the Level 1 Descriptor
Brand Guidelines: The Official Logo of the SCQF
The SCQF Database Explained - A Guide for Credit Rating Bodies
Quality Assurance Model for SCQF Partnership Approved Credit Rating Bodies

NOTES

SCQF HANDBOOK

4.0 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

4.0 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

"RPL is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations such as through life and work experiences." (SCQF publication 2010: **Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning: Toolkit**)

4.1 SUMMARY

This section introduces principles 20 - 25, which all relate to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) including Credit Transfer and how SCQF can assist with these processes. It also includes principle 8 which relates to all aspects of credit rating and sets out what quality assurance is required to support RPL within an organisation.

This section is intended to be supplemented by the comprehensive range of standalone materials and tools relating to RPL and Credit Transfer now available.

4.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process for recognising all types of learning – whether that learning has its roots in experience, or is acquired through informal or formal education and training. It is the learning itself which is crucial, regardless of the context in which it has been acquired.

RPL can be used by a wide range of people either to help them to re-enter learning or to contribute towards a programme of learning. Through RPL it may be possible to make a claim for SCQF Credit Points which can reduce the amount of time needed to achieve the required learning programme or qualification.

Credit Transfer is a type of RPL which allows the transfer of SCQF Credit Points from one qualification to another or learning programme to another to minimise the duplication of learning.

There are three main types of RPL:

- RPL for personal/career development;
- RPL to gain entry to a learning programme;
- RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points to gain entry with credit or advanced standing in a programme/ qualification.

The first type is referred to as formative recognition and the other two are referred to as summative recognition. Only summative recognition can lead to the award of SCQF Credit.

An RPL claim for credit involves the comparison of the individual's learning to the aims and/or learning outcomes of the qualification or learning programme for which credit is being sought. The RPL process for the award of SCQF Credit Points will determine the SCQF Level and the number of SCQF Credit Points that can be awarded.

This would normally only be carried out to enable a learner to gain entry to a qualification/ learning programme or to allow them to have exemption from parts of the qualification/learning programme. The latter is often referred to as entry with advanced standing.

Note that gaining entry with credit to a Higher Education Institution (HEI) or FE college is normally dependent on the learning outcomes from the learner's original learning programme matching the learning outcomes of certain units/ modules within the HEI's learning programme.

Similarly, a comparison of learning outcomes identified from formative recognition of informal or non-formal learning with the entry requirements for a qualification/learning programme can also be carried out.

The amount of credit which will be recognised for Credit Transfer is at the discretion of the receiving institution. The process of recognising prior learning involves making a professional judgement as to what has been learned, how much learning has taken place and whether the learning is still current.

RPL should be:
- Learner Focused;
- Accessible;
- Flexible;
- Reliable, transparent and consistent; and
- Quality assured.

Further information can be found in the SCQF publication **Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning: Toolkit**, by using the online **RPL Guide** which can be found on the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk/more/rpl/ and also the National Framework for Scottish Higher Education published by QAA Scotland whch can be found on the Enhancement Themes website at www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/recognition-of-prior-learning---national-framework-for-scottish-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=6.

4.3 MAIN PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

principle 8	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that within the process of credit rating, in processes for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), they take due cognisance of the SCQF Level Descriptors and any other relevant reference points.
principle 20	The design and development of qualifications and learning programmes for the SCQF should facilitate and promote credit recognition for prior informal and non-formal prior learning and credit transfer.
principle 21	Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) is given for learning, not for experience alone.
principle 22	SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL for informal or non-formal learning are of the same value as credit gained through formal learning.
principle 23	RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points must involve a formal assessment or acceptance of evidence of learning which is quality assured.
principle 24	The assessment procedures for RPL, including Credit Transfer, should be consistent with the normal assessment and quality assurance of the organisation.
principle 25	The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures, including those for Credit Transfer, should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the organisation.

4.3.1 PRINCIPLE 8

Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that within the process of credit rating, in processes for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), they take due cognisance of the SCQF Level Descriptors and any other relevant reference points.

In all forms of RPL, the SCQF Level Descriptors must play a major part in determining the level at which the evidence of learning is recognised. It is not possible to award credit towards a qualification/learning programme if the level of the prior learning has not first been agreed.

4.3.2 PRINCIPLE 20

The design and development of qualifications and learning programmes for the SCQF should facilitate and promote credit recognition for prior informal and non-formal prior learning and credit transfer.

For learners to gain maximum benefit from the SCQF, it is important that educational institutions develop and implement Credit Transfer and RPL policies and procedures. This will help learners by allowing for the transfer of their credit points along with the ability to have their prior learning recognised so that they:

- minimise any duplication of learning, and
- develop their full personal, social and educational potential.

The design of qualifications/learning programmes for the SCQF should make the Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer as straightforward as possible to implement. This means writing clear learning outcomes and assessment and having a clear and consistent structure for the qualification/learning programme. More information on this can be found in Section 2: **Learning Arrangements**.

Descriptions of qualifications/learning programmes should include details of arrangements for possible RPL.

4.3.3 PRINCIPLE 21

Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) is given for learning, not for experience alone.

Learning is often derived from a person's experiences, which might be positive or negative. It is the content, currency and amount of learning that a learner has which is subject to recognition, not the experiences themselves (these are simply the medium through which learning is acquired).

There is no restriction on the type of experience that can provide someone with knowledge and skills – even negative experiences might have led someone to learn something about themselves. RPL is about recognising that all experiences can provide a basis for learning.

The process of recognising prior learning involves making a judgement as to what has been learned, how much learning has taken place and whether the learning is still current.

Case studies of learners who have achieved recognition of their prior learning can be found on the SCQF website www.scqf.org.uk.

4.3.4 PRINCIPLE 22

SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL for informal or non-formal learning are of the same value as credit gained through formal learning.

Credit points are fundamental to the SCQF because they are the building blocks for Credit Transfer. They provide a way of quantifying the amount of learning achieved and they symbolise the amount of time taken to complete a unit/module or qualification/learning programme.

The principle of transferability of SCQF Credit Points can help learners gain access to different forms of education, give them advanced standing/entry into a course (for example allowing them directly into the second or third year of a related degree programme instead of the first year) and supports both flexibility and progression. SCQF credit points are a means to quantify the learning that has been achieved, regardless of the context in which that learning was achieved. So, credit awarded through RPL should be regarded in the same way as credit awarded through other learning and assessment processes.

4.3.5 PRINCIPLE 23

RPL for the award of SCQF credit points must involve formal assessment or acceptance of evidence of learning which is quality assured.

Whether someone is having prior learning assessed for Credit Transfer purposes or other purposes relating to RPL, there must be some form of judgement involved. In relation to Credit Transfer, a formal judgement (that is, it is recorded in some way) is made of how much specific credit for prior learning can be awarded in the context concerned. This may include a judgement made on acceptance of all or part of the SCQF credit points associated with previously formally assessed learning programmes or qualifications. Individual institutions should have their own regulations in place on this.

For other forms of RPL, (such as recognition of experiential learning) a judgement is made of the content of materials provided by the learner as evidence of their prior learning.

Regardless of how credit is awarded, a learner needs to provide evidence of his/her learning and the evidence needs to be assessed and quality assured by qualified practitioners.

4.3.6 PRINCIPLE 24

The assessment procedures for RPL including credit transfer should be consistent with the normal assessment and quality assurance of the organisation.

An organisation making judgements about RPL and Credit Transfer should use the same types of quality assurance systems as it does for any other type of formal assessment for example internal and external moderation/verification, appeals etc. The organisation should also consider a policy of any limits of credit awarded within a programme of learning, double counting of credit and implications for grading etc. and these should be consistently applied and available to learners.

4.3.7 PRINCIPLE 25

The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures, including those for Credit Transfer, should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the organisation.

Before setting up systems for RPL to operate in practice an organisation should set out the organisation's policy position on RPL. Some institutions have a policy statement which gives information about what the institution's position is on RPL/Credit Transfer. Some organisations create a policy and procedures document which can be given out to staff and to learners. Ultimately it is the organisation's decision regarding what goes into the policy and procedures document.

It is recommended that any policies and procedures emerge from, or are integrated into, quality assurance systems which are already in place in the organisation. As good practice, the organisation should have in place policies which indicate how the processes of RPL and Credit Transfer are regularly monitored and reviewed. This monitoring and review should be a formal process which records the outcomes and rationale for any changes.

4.4 SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The SCQF website has a range of support materials relevant to this section.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION
Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning: Toolkit
RPL Case Studies
SCQF Online RPL Guide
Higher Education RPL Framework

SCQF HANDBOOK

5.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE

5.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE

5.1 SUMMARY

This section introduces principles 1, 9, 15 and 24 and provides advice, direction and guidance for Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) to develop, strengthen and consolidate robust quality assurance systems. Existing or developing quality assurance systems should have operational procedures that cover:

- Credit Rating;
- Third Party Credit Rating (where applicable); and
- Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning.

CRBs will have designed and developed a range of quality assurance systems to support SCQF principles to ensure that the quality and integrity of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework is maintained, thereby avoiding reputational risk. While the individual design of the quality assurance system and processes is entirely within the remit of the CRBs, there are a number of elements and key features of commonality, best practice and documented evidence required to safeguard the integrity of the Framework outlined in this Handbook.

5.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Principle 1 states that CRBs and the SCQF Partnership have equal responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of the SCQF. This underpins all of the other principles. Safeguarding the integrity and reputation of the Framework is paramount and quality assurance systems must be strong and rigorous enough so as not to compromise this integrity. This requires robust quality assurance arrangements which are essential for learners, learning providers and employers to have confidence in the Framework's integrity.

To sustain confidence CRBs require robust:

- Internal quality assurance systems;
- External quality assurance

Evidence of the external overview of CRB processes including those for credit rating is essential. This is sometimes referred to as externality.

Such robust internal and external quality assurance provides confidence in the design of credit rated programmes, including the assessment, and provides an external objective perspective on the quality assurance processes adopted by the organisation.

5.2.1 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

CRBs are required to ensure that their own documented quality assurance systems and arrangements are aligned to SCQF principles for:

- Programme design;
- Programme Approval/Accreditation/Validation (depending on terminology used by CRB);
- Assessment and related activities; and
- Internal and external review processes.

5.2.2 EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

There are two different elements of external quality assurance that all CRBs are required to have in place.

1. The external quality assurance of the assessment which can be provided by someone employed by the organisation, but who is external to the assessment process. Such persons are often referred to as internal moderators or internal verifiers.
2. The external quality assurance of the systems, including those for credit rating, which must be carried out by an independent body or someone who is not employed by or part of the organisation. An example of this is the external review of colleges by Education Scotland (formerly HMIE).

Additionally, for external quality assurance required by CRBs in relation to Third Party credit rating please refer to Section 6 **Third Party Credit Rating**.

In accordance with SCQF principles, CRBs require a strong, clear and precise element of externality that includes:

- appropriate and proportionate documented evidence;
- suitably qualified and experienced external persons;
- clear roles, responsibilities and duties of external persons;
- periodic reports from appropriate external persons;
- contribution to programme design;
- assessment arrangements and approaches;
- achievement of learner outcomes; and
- contribution to review processes for credit-rated programmes.

More information can be found in the SCQF publication **Quality Assurance Model for SCQF Partnership Approved Credit Rating Bodies**.

5.3. MAIN PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Note that some principles relate to more than just the **Quality Assurance** Theme. Only aspects of the theme related to Quality Assurance will feature in this section.

principle 1	Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) and the SCQF Partnership have equal responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
principle 9	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.
principle 15	The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.
principle 24	The assessment procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) including credit transfer should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.

5.3.1 PRINCIPLE 1

Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) and the SCQF Partnership have equal responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

A quality assurance system must be in place to safeguard standards, protect the integrity of the programme and to ensure consistent assessment. Publications giving further information on this can be found at the end of this section.

All CRBs have their own quality assurance arrangements but each will ensure that their quality assurance systems and their processes for credit rating align to SCQF principles. Internal and external systems require to be explicit, reliable, valid and available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance.

NOMENCLATURE

It is important that clarity in the use of qualification titles is maintained. Although non-regulatory by nature, the SCQF Partnership is responsible for the governance of the Framework which is central to the education systems in Scotland. The SCQF Partnership therefore requests that Credit Rating Bodies, Awarding Bodies, submitting bodies and others give due consideration to the nomenclature of qualifications and learning programmes that are placed on the Framework.

In Scotland, learning providers, learners and employers are generally aware that the use of the titles Certificate and Diploma typically indicate vertical progression. As this is not always the case in other national qualifications frameworks, the use of these titles at the same level for the same subject within the SCQF could potentially cause confusion. Credit Rating Bodies and submitting bodies who may have their qualifications or learning programmes included in more than one national qualifications framework are therefore strongly encouraged to title qualifications in a manner that will not lead to confusion in a Scottish context.

There is a significant number of qualifications depicted in the SCQF diagram that have 'protected titles'; protected by law and/or trademark. This means that these titles cannot be used by others. Additionally, the only reference to level allowed to be included in any title of an SCQF credit rated qualification is the relevant SCQF level. The one exception to this which is allowed is where a CRB wishes to include the relevant EQF Level in addition to the SCQF Level.

More information can be found in the SCQF publication **Nomenclature Explained: A Guide to Naming Qualifications and Learning Programmes for the SCQF**.

5.3.2 PRINCIPLE 9

Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for the retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.

CRBs must operate a robust quality assurance system for programme design, including the issuing of formal records; evidence that due regard is paid to the role of external judgements and monitoring of assessment procedures, transcripts and/or certificates.

There is no specific quality assurance model required by the SCQF Partnership as the intention is that any additional processes required for credit rating should be developed and integrated into any existing quality assurance model that the CRB has in place.

However, it is expected that any model would include the following aspects:
- Clear description of credit rating process with descriptions of any relevant panels involved, relevant documentation and appropriate personnel involvement;
- Clear description of internal quality assurance processes with regard to assessment, who can deliver the programme and quality improvement; and a
- Clear description of what external quality assurance is in place and how any recommendations from this externality are implemented.

CRBs are required to monitor the delivery and assessment of any programme that they credit rate which they do not own i.e. Third Party Credit Rating. This requirement is expanded in Section 6 **Third Party Credit Rating**. In addition, where CRBs allow delivery by other organisations of a programme they have credit rated, the CRB is responsible for monitoring the delivery and assessment of that programme. This may be carried out directly by the CRB or through the monitoring of the other organisations's own quality assurance arrangements.

ALLOCATION OF CREDIT RETROSPECTIVELY

In certain cases it may be possible for a CRB to consider whether the SCQF credit and level could be applied retrospectively to the qualification/learning programme.

For example, an organisation which has submitted its learning programme to a CRB for credit rating may begin to deliver the learning programme and a number of candidates may then commence the programme prior to the CRB confirming the SCQF level and credit. Having confirmed the SCQF level and credit, the organisation may then wish to be able to apply the credit rating for those learners who commenced the programme prior to the credit rating decision.

In arriving at its decision, the CRB needs to consider the following:
- Have any changes been made to the content of the learning programme as a result of the credit rating process?
- Have any changes been made to the quality assurance arrangements of the learning programme as a result of the credit rating process?
- Have any changes been made to the assessment arrangements as a result of the credit rating process?
- What is the duration of the learning programme and how long has it been running before being submitted for credit rating?
- Have any changes been made to the content of previously delivered programmes which are to be considered for retrospective credit?

The final decision on whether SCQF level and credit can be applied retrospectively rests with the CRB.

Where a CRB permits retrospective credit rating then it must inform the SCQF Partnership that retrospective credit rating has been applied to the learning programme.

More details can be found on the SCQF website www.scqf.org.uk within the **SCQF Policy on Allocation of Credit Retrospectively**.

5.3.3 PRINCIPLE 15

The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.

All Credit Rating Bodies are subject to an external quality review of their systems and processes. Third Party organisations, sometimes known as Submitting Bodies, must also have in place an external review of their systems.

Note that the term submitting body is used in the Handbook to refer both to an internal department within a CRB which has developed the qualification/learning programme and to a Third Party organisation submitting their learning programme to a CRB.

In the case where the CRB is credit rating its own provision it is very important that the credit rating process is independent from the development role.

More details on this can be found in Section 6: **Third Party Credit Rating**.

5.3.4 PRINCIPLE 24

The assessment procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) including Credit Transfer should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.

Note that RPL is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

Credit Transfer is the transfer of SCQF Credit Points from one qualification to another or learning programme into another to minimise the duplication of learning.

RPL should be underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms. Verification of RPL for personal and career development should focus on ensuring that the use of the SCQF Level Descriptors is consistently applied.

RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points must be integrated within a learning provider's existing quality assurance processes and must be available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance, for example by an awarding body or an external auditing body.

The roles and responsibilities of both staff and learners in the RPL process need to be clearly defined.

The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures should be clearly defined and integrated within existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the learning provider.

More details can be found in Section 4: **Recognition of Prior Learning**.

5.4 SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS RELATED TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

The SCQF website has a range of support materials relevant to this section.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION
Quality Assurance Model for SCQF Partnership Approved Credit Rating Bodies
Guidelines to Promote and Support the Credit Rating Process in Colleges in Scotland
Nomenclature Explained: A Guide to Naming Qualifications and Learning Programmes for the SCQF
Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning: Toolkit

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6.0 THIRD PARTY CREDIT RATING

6.0 THIRD PARTY CREDIT RATING

6.1 SUMMARY

This section introduces principles 12 - 19 and provides guidance for Credit Rating Bodies on the process of credit rating qualifications/learning programmes for other organisations. Such organisations are referred to as Third Parties. The credit rating process used here may well be the same as for internal programmes. However, the CRB will need to provide clear information to third parties on how the credit rating process will be undertaken. In addition, CRBs may require some additional quality assurance to be in place.

This section also briefly outlines the process by which an existing CRB can apply for the authority to carry out Third Party credit rating. However, for more detailed information, the CRB should refer to the **Quality Assurance Model for SCQF Partnership Approved Credit Rating Bodies**.

6.2 GENERAL INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

HEIs, Colleges and SQA were given the authority to conduct Third Party credit rating during the initial setting up of the Framework. All other CRBs must apply for this authority separately after they have become an SCQFP approved CRB and demonstrate that they meet Criterion 4 of the **SCQF Quality Assurance Model - Providing a Credit Rating Service for Third Parties**:

Criterion 4: The organisation will have to demonstrate that it has the capacity, commitment and experience to operate as an SCQF Credit Rating Body for Third Parties and has the structures and systems to carry out this function.

As an approved SCQFP CRB, the organisation will already have demonstrated that they meet the other three criteria required by the SCQF Partnership:

- Criterion 1: The organisation is a body of good standing, demonstrating a commitment to and a successful track record in the design and delivery of learning provision for Scotland.
- Criterion 2: The organisation already has in place a documented quality assurance system for programme design, approval, validation, accreditation, assessment or other related activities and has evidence through internal and external reviews, that this quality assurance system is valid and reliable.
- Criterion 3: The organisation has the capacity and commitment to operate as an SCQF Credit Rating Body (CRB) and ensures that its credit rating processes and procedures link to, and function within its existing quality assurance system as already defined under Criterion 2.

The CRB's application for approval to offer Third Party credit rating will only be reviewed against Criterion 4.

In order to have its remit extended to allow Third Party credit rating, the organisation will have to demonstrate that it has the capacity, commitment and experience to operate as an SCQF CRB for Third Parties and has the structures and systems in place to carry out this function. The CRB must ensure that its systems link to and operate within its existing credit rating processes and procedures and quality assurance system, as already defined under Criterion 2, and that they comply with the requirements of the SCQF Handbook and SCQF principles related to Third Party credit rating.

Full details of the application processes to become either a CRB or to have a current CRB's remit extended to allow Third Party credit rating are available from the SCQF Partnership along with details of charges which can vary according to individual applications.

6.3 MAIN PRINCIPLES THAT RELATE TO THIRD PARTY CREDIT RATING

principle 12	Credit Rating Bodies must assure themselves, as far as is practically possible, of the good standing and credibility of the Third Party organisation prior to any submission for credit rating.
principle 13	Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating Third Party submissions.
principle 14	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that Third Party organisations submit information, and documented evidence of, their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to the internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions.
principle 15	The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.
principle 16	Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that the Third Party organisation submits regular (e.g. annual) reports of progress in the delivery of any credit rated qualifications/learning programmes and is aware that they must inform the CRB if any significant changes to these are made which may affect the SCQF level or credit points.
principle 17	Credit Rating Bodies must agree an appropriate review date for the credit rated qualification/ learning programme(s) with the Third Party organisation.
principle 18	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all Third Party qualifications/ learning programmes which they have credit rated to the SCQF Database.
principle 19	Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for issuing the SCQF logo and Brand Guidelines to the Third Party organisation and ensuring that they are aware of the requirements for certification as outlined in principle 10.

6.3.1 PRINCIPLE 12

Credit Rating Bodies must assure themselves, as far as is practically possible, of the good standing and credibility of the Third Party organisation prior to any submission for credit rating.

CRBs have an obligation to protect the integrity of the SCQF therefore it is important that CRBs consider this when accepting applications from a Third Party organisation. The processes therefore should consider the standing and credibility of the Third Party as well as the nature and type of learning programme being submitted for credit rating. It is important that the CRBs provide clear guidance on the processes involved and the reasons for these. In each case, the CRB and the Third Party organisation should engage in discussions at an early stage to help clarify the expectations on both sides.

CRBs will need to seek information from the Third Party such as:

- documented quality assurance systems;
- capacity for independence in appeals and marking decisions;
- quality reports or audits by appropriate Quality Assurance Bodies;
- facilities and support for staff development;
- evidence of stability of the organisation; and
- facilities and support for centres and/or learners.

It is a matter of professional judgement for each CRB as to the amount and type of information it requires to satisfy itself of the good standing of the Third Party organisation and its learning programme as this may vary dependent on the type and structure of each organisation.

This could mean that a CRB wishes additional aspects to be present to assure itself of the nature of the qualification/learning programme. These could take the form of additional quality assurance; compliance with specific aspects of the CRB's policies in terms of design rules; or a requirement for validation/accreditation as part of the credit rating process.

However it is important that the CRB makes it clear to the submitting body that these are requirements specific to that CRB and not to the Framework.

6.3.2 PRINCIPLE 13

Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating Third Party submissions.

The CRB should appoint an appropriate person to be the principal link between it and the Third Party. This person should not be the person responsible for the final credit rating decision.

The usual approach to Third Party credit rating is that the Third Party would include an estimate of the level and credit value for its qualification/learning programme at the point of submission. The CRB would then use its credit rating processes to determine the level and credit value and either confirm the level and credit value or propose an alternative. This approach means that the CRB is able to see how the Third Party has come to a view on level and credit and demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of the level descriptors. Some CRBs may accept a submission without a level and credit value being estimated in which case, the CRB would use its credit rating processes to determine the level and credit value and inform the Third Party of the outcome. However, it is good practice for Third Party to estimate the level and credit points to demonstrate their understanding of the SCQF and its processes.

The documentation required by the CRB from the Third Party will include as a minimum:

- The principles, procedures and processes of the assessment of outcomes. These must be explicit, valid and reliable and involve appropriate elements of external quality assurance procedures beyond the submitting body's delivering staff;
- Evidence that the assessment criteria and processes are appropriate to the defined learning outcomes;
- Evidence that the assessment arrangements are as secure as they can practically be against plagiarism, cheating and other forms of fraud;
- Effective procedures for approving, supervising and reviewing assessment strategies and assessment decisions, including taking into account views and recommendations from external person(s) used in the quality assurance procedures;
- Clear criteria for marking assessments, particularly for distinguishing between a pass/fail;
- The arrangements for re-examination/assessment;
- Details showing the appropriateness, effectiveness and rigour of any system of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in order to ensure that learners have demonstrated achievement of the outcomes;
- Methods of proper and secure recording of learner achievement including the issuing of formal records; and
- Evidence that due regard is paid to the role of external judgements and monitoring of the submitting body's assessment procedures,transcripts or certificates.

A flowchart outlining the possible stages of a Third Party credit rating process can be found in Annex 3 at the end of the Handbook. CRBs may wish to use this as guidance, however each CRB will design and develop a credit rating process which links to their own internal structures and processes.

6.3.3 PRINCIPLE 14

Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that Third Party organisations submit information, and documented evidence of, their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to the internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions.

The CRB must satisfy itself that the Third Party provides clear evidence of how the learning programme will be assessed and be assured that the assessment methodology is robust and appropriate for the nature and level of the learning programme.

The CRB must also ensure that the Third Party provides clear evidence of how the learning programme will be quality assured, both internally and externally. In particular, the CRB must satisfy itself that the level of independence in the external quality assurance model is sufficient and appropriate.

Therefore the CRB will require evidence from the Third Party that appropriate external evaluations will be made regarding the assessment of outcomes. This will include evaluation both of the validity of the judgements made and of the appropriateness of the assessment instrument(s) in relation to the specified outcomes.

6.3.4 PRINCIPLE 15

The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.

All CRBs are subject to an external quality review of their credit rating systems and processes. Third Party must also have in place an external review of their systems and CRBs must ensure that this external review covers the review of systems in place for the design, development, delivery and quality assurance of the learning programmes.

This process is sometimes referred to as Externality and the system in place will depend on the type and size of the Third Party making the submission.

The external body must be independent of the Third Party and may be a separately negotiated service supplied by the CRB.

6.3.5 PRINCIPLE 16

Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that the Third Party organisation submits regular (e.g. annual) reports of progress in the delivery of any credit rated qualifications/learning programmes and is aware that they must inform the CRB if any significant changes to these are made which may affect the SCQF level or credit points.

There are four possible outcomes of the credit rating process for third party provision. These are to:

- credit rate unconditionally;
- credit rate conditionally;
- defer a decision on credit rating, subject to amendments being made to the proposal; or
- decline to credit rate.

Where provision is credit rated with conditions the CRB must ensure that the requirements to lift those conditions are clearly set out and communicated to the Third Party.

It is the responsibility of the CRB to ensure that they have a system that requires the Third Party to provide the CRB with a regular report regarding the credit rated qualification/learning programme. The report should consider the performance of the qualification/learning programme, including any quality assurance issues which may have been identified. The CRB and the Third Party should agree the frequency of the reporting and the frequency should be appropriate to the type and nature of the programme.

The CRB must ensure that the Third Party is aware that they have to notify the CRB of any changes to the qualification/learning programme such as changes to the content of a unit, which could potentially impact upon the SCQF level, credit or both. The CRB should have a procedure in place which details what actions may be appropriate in circumstances where it is not notified of changes and those changes have impacted on the SCQF level and/or credit. This may include the removal of any qualification/learning programmes which are no longer considered to be fit for purpose as originally approved.

6.3.6 PRINCIPLE 17

Credit Rating Bodies should agree an appropriate review date for the credit rated qualifications/learning programme(s) with the Third Party organisation.

The maximum duration of credit rating before review is normally 3 - 5 years. It is open to a CRB to specify a lesser amount of time if it thinks that this is more appropriate, for example, if its relationship with the Third Party is new or if the nature of the outcomes is liable to more rapid change.

6.3.7 PRINCIPLE 18

Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all Third Party qualifications/learning programmes which they have credit rated to the SCQF Database.

Only approved CRBs have access to the SCQF Database for uploading and editing purposes. It is therefore their responsibility to upload the details of all Third Party qualifications/learning programmes credit rated by them and to maintain the accuracy of those entries.

As already outlined in Section 3: **Credit Rating**, further information on uploading to the database can be found in the SCQF publication **The SCQF Database Explained - A Guide for Credit Rating Bodies**.

6.3.8 PRINCIPLE 19

Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for issuing the SCQF logo to the Third Party organisation and ensuring that they are aware of the requirements for certification as outlined in principle 10.

CRBs must ensure they issue Third Parties with the correct SCQF logo and Brand Guidelines and it is the responsibility of the CRB that they use the SCQF logo in accordance with the terms and conditions of use for the SCQF Logo. Full details of these are to be found in the SCQF publication **Brand Guidelines: The Official Logo of the SCQF**.

CRBs must also ensure that any certificates issued by themselves or the Third Party have all the necessary information included as outlined in principle 10.

6.4 SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS RELATED TO THIRD PARTY CREDIT RATING

The SCQF website has a range of support materials relevant to this section.

TITLE OF PUBLICATION
Guidelines to Promote and Support the Credit Rating Process in Colleges in Scotland
Brand Guidelines: The Official Logo of the SCQF
The SCQF Database Explained - A Guide for Credit Rating Bodies
Quality Assurance Model for SCQF Partnership Approved Credit Rating Bodies

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ANNEX 1-3

ANNEX 1

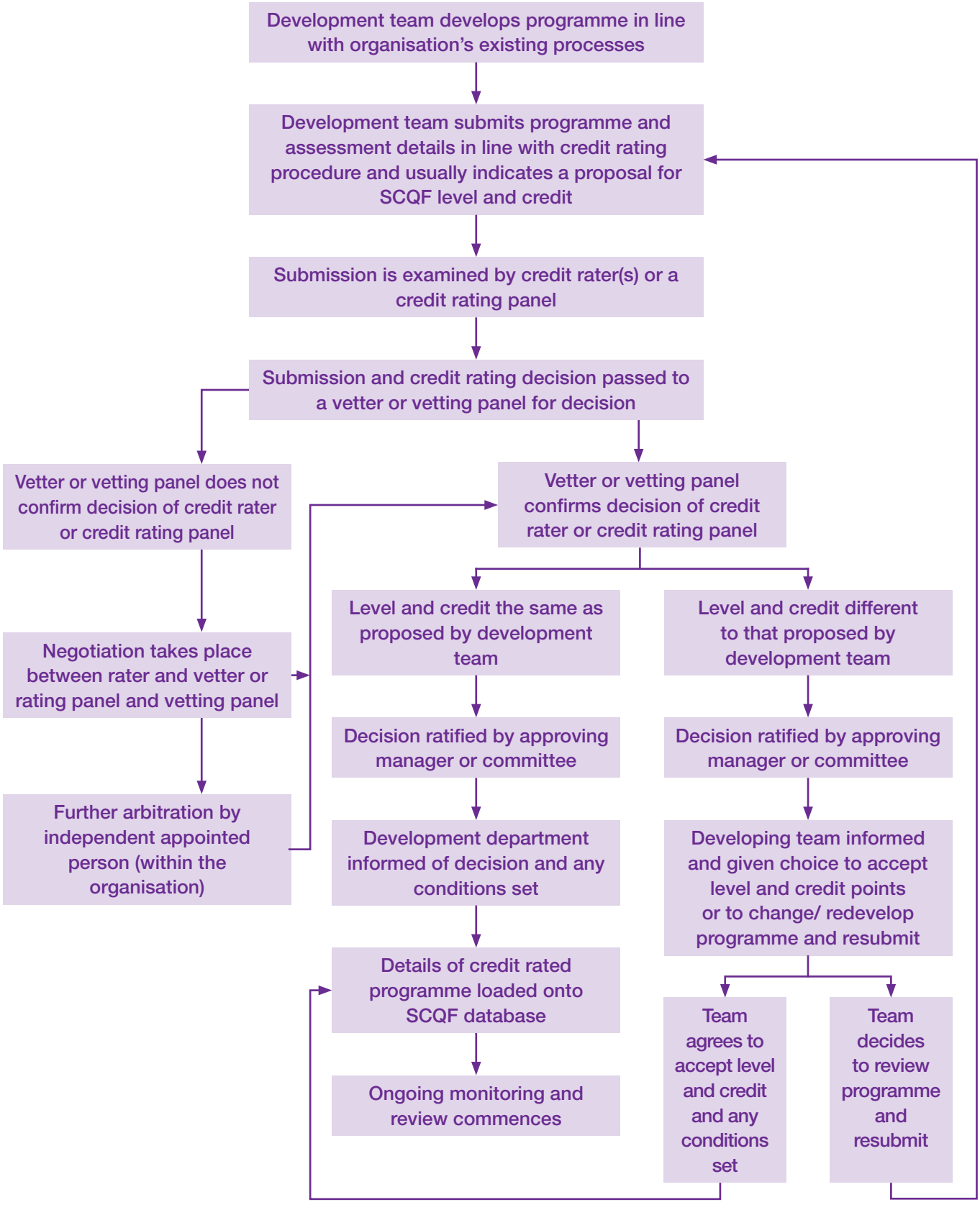
GLOSSARY

TERM	EXPLANATION
Credit Rating	The process of allocating SCQF Levels and Credit Points to qualifications and learning programmes, including formal and non-formal learning.
Credit Rating Body	An organisation that carries out credit rating for the SCQF. These are: Scotland's colleges; Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs); Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); and other organisations that have been approved by the SCQF Partnership.
Credit Transfer	The transfer of SCQF Credit Points from one qualification/learning programme into another to minimise the duplication of learning.
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	A common European reference framework which acts as a translation device to make qualifications/learning programmes more understandable across Europe. Its two main aims are to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate lifelong learning.
Externality	An external, independent Quality Assurance check. This can take place at two levels: at the point of assessment decisions at programme level; and at the system level, such as an independent Quality Assurance check of an organisation's own Quality Assurance systems.
Formal Learning	Formal learning takes place within the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers; it is assessed and leads to recognised qualifications.
Informal Learning	Informal learning can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning.
Learning Outcomes	Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.
Learning Providers	Organisations across all education and training sectors that provide formal or non-formal learning.
Meta Framework	A higher level framework relating to other frameworks – in this case, other national frameworks.
Non-Formal Learning	Non-Formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification; for example, learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and through community-based learning.

TERM	EXPLANATION
Notional Learning Hours (NLH)	The time required for a typical learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes. It includes all the learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes, as well as the assessment.
Professional Judgement	A decision reached by those qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of skill.
Receiving Institution	The education, training provider or awarding body to which the learner is seeking entry to a particular qualification or learning programme.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	RPL is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.
SCQF Credit Points	One SCQF credit point is equal to 10 hours of notional learning. (see Notional Learning Hours definition above). Credit Points are a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that has been achieved or is required to achieve the learning outcomes of a programme or qualification.
SCQF Specific Credit Points	These are Credit Points which are recognised as being directly relevant for entry or transfer to a particular qualification or learning programme.
SCQF Levels	The SCQF Framework has 12 levels. The complexity of learning and level of demand increases from Level 1 through to Level 12.
SCQF Level Descriptors	These define the generic outcomes for the characteristics for each of the SCQF Levels.
SCQF principles	The SCQF principles embed and implement the Framework across all sectors of lifelong learning in Scotland. There are principles on SCQF Credit Rating, Quality Assurance, Credit Transfer, Recognition of Prior Learning and Third Party Credit Rating.
Submitting body	Either an internal department within a CRB which has developed a qualification/learning programme or a Third Party organisation submitting their learning programme to a CRB.

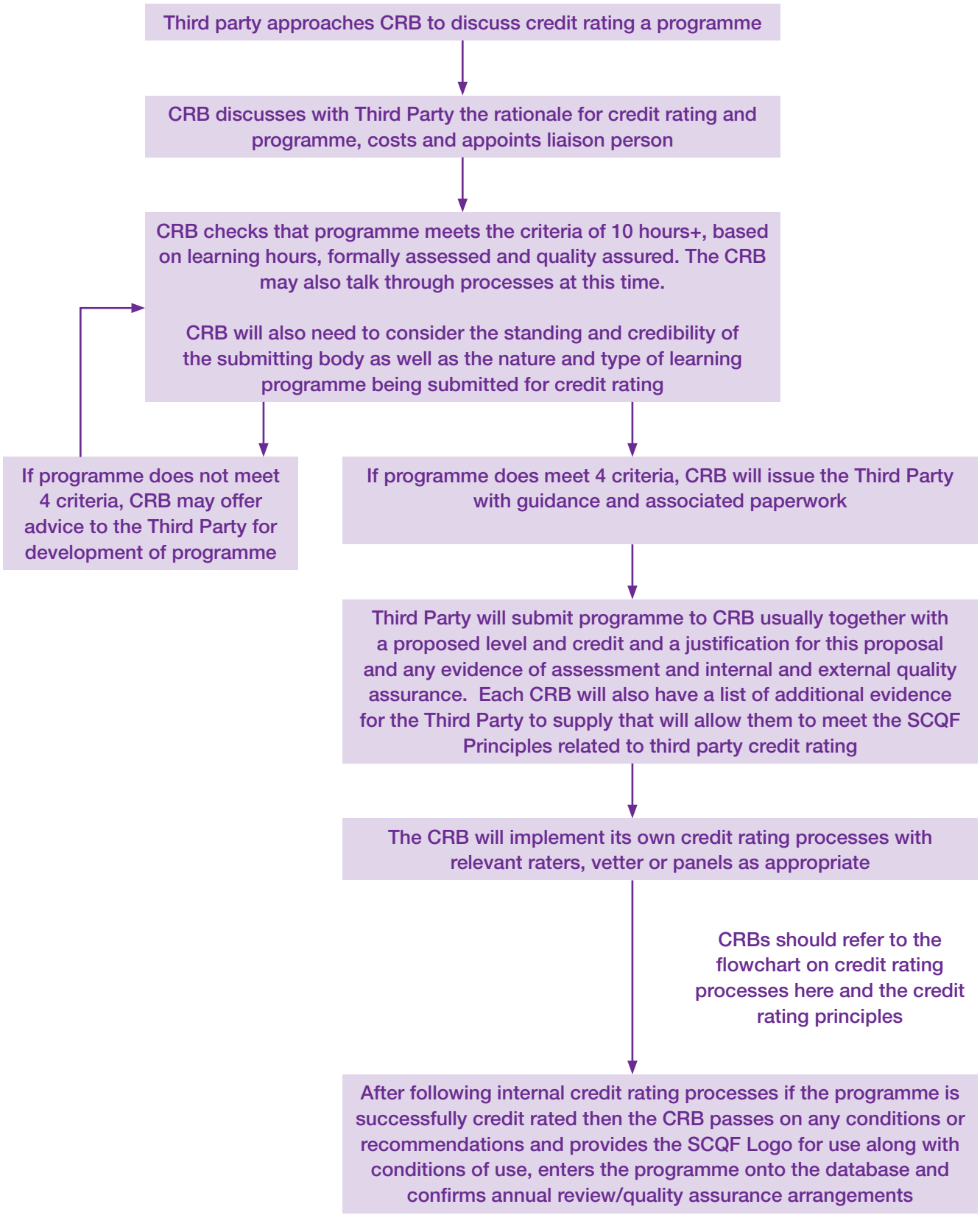
ANNEX 2

FLOWCHART - CREDIT RATING PROCESS



ANNEX 3

FLOWCHART – THIRD PARTY CREDIT RATING



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