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Recognising Achievement
Literature Review and Model for
Managing Recognition Processes



social
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RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

LITERATURE REVIEW AND MODEL FOR MANAGING RECOGNITION PROCESSES

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Introduction – the research and the report

1. This report was commissioned by the Scottish Government from Edinburgh University Centre for Educational Sociology (CES) as part of a project to carry out an independent cross-site evaluation of a series of twelve Collaborative Enquiry Projects into Recognition of Achievement being undertaken as part of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The evaluation was intended to identify and report on effective practice in providing opportunities for achievements of all kinds and in helping young people gain recognition for them.
2. This report constituted the first phase of the commission. It was to identify and review information and research on approaches to recognising achievement and to incorporate the results into an overall analysis. The review was to draw on a range of sources: previous research commissioned by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS); relevant research previously carried out by members of the research team; and other reports on research, policy and implementation from Scottish, UK and international sources.
3. Initial discussions with individuals involved in this area of *Curriculum for Excellence* identified a number of issues of terminology, particularly in relation to the term 'recognition'; the discussions also suggested that this phase of the research should lead to a model of recognition processes which could be used in the evaluation phase. Further investigation therefore focused on establishing clear definitions of types of recognition relevant to the achievements, learning, development and progression of children and young people and these definitions were used to create an inclusive model of recognition processes.
4. The review was based on policy established in *Curriculum for Excellence: building the curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching* (2008) and the principles which had previously been established by LTS and the Scottish Government through consultation with stakeholders to guide work on the recognition of achievement.

Chapter 2: Review of approaches to recognising achievement

5. The sources used, and referred to in the report, come from work in a number of education sectors including adult education (lifelong learning) and higher education as well as the school sector. They included sources identified in previous investigations in related areas by the research team and by researchers at the University of Strathclyde, together with sources identified by new internet searches. Both historical and current research and development work concerned with either 'wider' or 'additional' achievement were reviewed. Through these sources, factors, or combinations of factors, which should be taken account of, drawn on, or avoided were identified.
6. The main starting points were two reviews commissioned by LTS in 2007: *A Curriculum for Excellence: A Review of Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement*, commissioned from The Quality in Education Centre (QIE), University of Strathclyde and a report on e-portfolios commissioned from the AlphaPlus Consultancy. These reports furnished important concepts for analysing the fundamental ideas of achievement and recognition.

7. The review approached the topic of recognition of achievement, by focusing on achievement which is 'wider than' or 'additional to' the specified outcomes of the formal curriculum and national qualifications. Achievement was taken to include knowledge, skills and competences gained at any age or stage as a direct or indirect result of individual, family, social, community, sporting and/or commercial activities, or learning which is attained through the formal curriculum, but is not pre-specified or assessed.
8. The report draws an important distinction between recognition which results in a tangible record and recognition which is given as part of a selection process – the terms *recorded recognition* and *functional recognition* are used to distinguish between them. Also, within the field of recorded recognition the report describes a continuum from the highly systematised and quality assured national awards of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to the kind of commemorative local acknowledgement which may be given by a school or other organisation.
9. In addition to these, recognition of both the achievement and its value by the learners themselves – described in the report simply as *understanding* – is also identified as an important end point for all learners.

Chapter 3: Review of approaches to recording achievement

10. Three forms of record of achievement are examined in the report: certificates based on courses and modules; profiles and portfolios; and group awards, such as Diplomas and Baccalaureates. With the exception of the International Baccalaureate the examples examined in the report all come from initiatives in the United Kingdom over the past thirty years. They include Social and Vocational Skills (SVS), Personal and Social Development, Personal and Social Education and Core Skills; Profiles in Practice, the National Record of Achievement (NRA)/Progress File, and the recognition of prior learning; and the various forms of group award which have been explored or introduced in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK.
11. Each of the approaches is shown to have strengths and weaknesses and the overall conclusion is that any initiative to gain recognition for achievement through some form of record must be very clear in its aim and tailored towards that aim. Key questions which should guide such developments include: what should be recorded; whose recognition it is intended to secure; what the role of the learners in the process should be; and whether, how and by whom the achievement needs to be validated.
12. It is particularly important that the answers to all of these questions are in harmony and examples where there were damaging inconsistencies are cited. Both SVS courses and the NRA were very successful in their own ways in motivating students to engage with learning, but failed to gain status for their outcomes – SVS because it became associated with academic failure and the NRA because it was based on a misjudgement about the extent to which employers and admissions would be prepared to use it.
13. Other issues which arise from attempts to give formal recognition to achievement include being realistic about the demands on teaching staff and the limitations of qualifications and their related assessment and quality assurance processes in relation

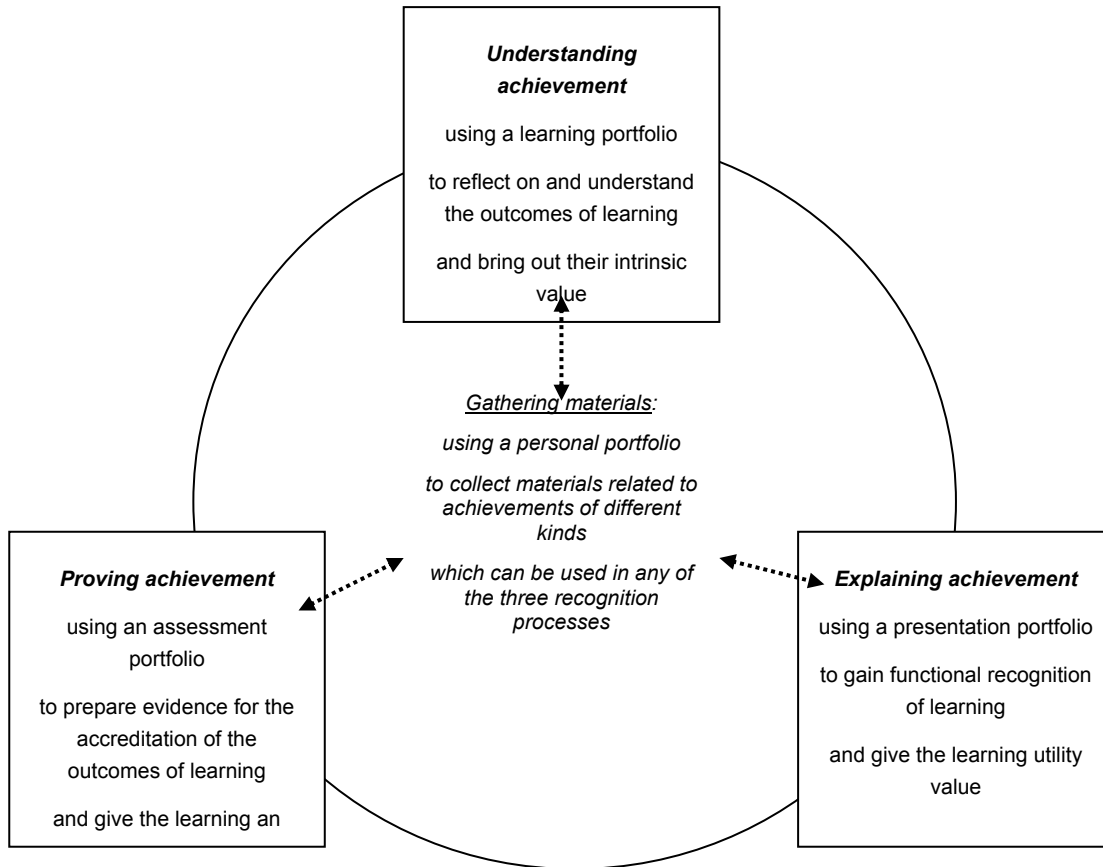
to some of the forms of wider achievement which selectors are known to value and often put under the heading of *positive attitude*.

Chapter 4: A model for recognising achievement

14. Different forms of recognition are appropriate to the different ages and stages included in *Curriculum for Excellence* and all of the forms of recognition described above are built into the model for managing recognition processes. The model identifies three ways in which achievement can be recognised and three kinds of value which can be added to the learning.
15. The first is where the learners themselves come to recognise the outcomes of their achievements by *understanding* what they have learned and applying or transferring it to plan and/or undertake further learning or personal development: this brings out the *intrinsic* value of the achievement.
16. The second is where learners select from among the outcomes of their achievements and transform these into forms of information suited to *explaining* the achievement to particular audiences, particularly selectors and recruiters for education and training courses, employment or voluntary activities: this is aimed at securing functional recognition, which gives the achievement *utility* value.
17. And the third is where the outcomes of achievement are turned into evidence of learning which can be assessed or evaluated against specified criteria, *proving* the achievement of learning outcomes for the purpose of being awarded credit towards a qualification, or being awarded a qualification or part of a qualification, such as a unit awarded by SQA: this is aimed at securing a form of recorded recognition which will give the achievement an *exchange* value.
18. These approaches are derived from a variety of Scottish, UK and international sources in which aspects of these recognition processes are explored or exemplified.
19. This model for managing recognition of achievement is centred on a personal portfolio of materials associated with activities of all kinds and their outcomes. This portfolio provides the materials required for the three processes. Using the model, individuals can be supported to become reflective learners who can gather materials associated with all kinds of achievement and learning in the personal portfolio and can then use this material to achieve the kind of recognition appropriate to their needs and purposes.
20. Each of the three approaches can each be thought of as involving the learner in working through a number of similar stages, such as such as developing understanding, reflecting on learning, establishing aims, putting evidence together and presenting evidence. However, the level of explicitness and formality of these stages will vary according to the contexts of the learning and the individual aims of the learner. The overall process will be spiral or iterative, rather than straightforwardly sequential, allowing for personal development as a feature of all three approaches.
21. With this flexible approach built-in, the model should be inclusive, capable of orientation towards the needs of different learners and applicable to all ages and stages as required by *Curriculum for Excellence*.

22. Proposals are made in the report for a future evaluation of the model, including the establishment of baseline data on areas where improvements should be expected.

A model for managing the recognition of achievement



Chapter 5: Conclusions and considerations

23. The report raises questions about how to secure, increase or improve recognition of achievement, particularly in relation to selection for further/higher education, employment or voluntary or community activities, and raises a number of questions which will need to be considered in adopting and implementing the model. These relate to the nature and extent of recognition of different kinds of achievement and the relationship between recognition of achievement and the individual's ability to explain what he/she has achieved. It ends with a consideration of ways in which achievement might be given recognition through certification where that is the most appropriate approach.

1 INTRODUCTION – THE RESEARCH AND THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is the first phase of research commissioned by the Scottish Government in January 2009.
- 1.2 Edinburgh University Centre for Educational Sociology was contracted to carry out an independent cross-site evaluation of a series of twelve Recognition of Achievement Collaborative Enquiry Projects being undertaken by local authorities across Scotland as part of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The evaluation was to identify and report on effective practice from the projects in order to inform the development of guidance and support for authorities, schools and other education providers in providing opportunities for achievements of all kinds and helping young people to gain recognition for them. The National Evaluation of the Recognising Achievement Collaborative Enquiry Projects http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/The_National_Evaluation_of_the_Recognising_Achievement.
- 1.3 The first phase of this project was to identify and review information and research on approaches to recognising achievement and to incorporate the results into an overall analysis. It was to build on a previous literature review, *A Curriculum for Excellence: A Review of Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement*, commissioned from The Quality in Education Centre (QIE), University of Strathclyde by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) in 2007. This is referred to elsewhere in this paper as the QIE report. The new review would also draw on relevant research previously carried out by members of the Edinburgh University research team and on other research, policy and development literature from Scottish, UK and international sources.
- 1.4 The work started with an analysis of background papers relating to this area of *Curriculum for Excellence* supported by meetings with officials from the Scottish Government, LTS and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and with *Curriculum for Excellence* development officers working on recognition of achievement. This analysis identified a number of issues related to principles and implementation, many of which appeared to derive from terminology, particularly in relation to the term 'recognition'. For example, there was evidence of strong, and sometimes opposed, views on the role of assessment, quality assurance, certification and the ownership of the processes. As a result much of the further investigation was focused on resolving these issues through establishing clearer definitions of types and forms of recognition and relating these to the achievements, learning, development and progression of children and young people at different ages and stages. Also, at an early point, it became clear that the results of the literature search should be accompanied by a model which could be used in the second phase of the research (the cross-site evaluation of the twelve Recognition of Achievement Collaborative Enquiry Projects) and would also have potential for supporting future work on recognition of achievement in *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- 1.5 At the same time attention was given to the QIE report and a second report commissioned by LTS in 2007 – a report on e-portfolios commissioned from the AlphaPlus Consultancy and referred to in this paper as the *AlphaPlus report*. Both these reports are dealt with in some detail in later sections of this paper and each furnished important concepts for analysing the fundamental ideas of achievement and recognition and in structuring a model for the management of recognition.

- 1.6 The third strand of the literature review was based on previous research and involved new internet searches. The main sources identified in this way are listed in the references attached to the report. In this strand historical and current developments were examined in a search for both successful and unsuccessful initiatives in order to identify factors, or combinations of factors, which should be taken account of, drawn on, or avoided. This work focused on the concepts of 'wider' and 'additional' achievement and on types and forms of recognition.
- 1.7 The scope of the sources used, and referred to in the report, was wide and not restricted to practice in the school sector. This approach was adopted for a number of reasons as follows: most of the sources identified were in the adult (lifelong learning) and higher education sectors, rather than the school sector; the QIE report had already set a precedent for drawing on a broad range of references; it seemed appropriate to look for insights and good practice in relation to the recognition of achievement wherever it could be found; and there seemed to be a natural link between the ambitions of *Curriculum for Excellence* to provide a firm basis for continuing education and training and activities related to higher education and lifelong learning.
- 1.8 Following this introduction, the report is organised in four chapters.
- 1.9 Chapter 2 reviews a range of approaches to the recognition of achievement, initially focusing on achievement which is 'wider than' or 'additional to' the specified outcomes of the formal curriculum and national qualifications. Achievement is taken to include knowledge, skills and competences gained at any age or stage as a direct or indirect result of individual, family, social, community, sporting and/or commercial activities, or learning which is attained through the formal curriculum, but is not pre-specified or assessed. An important distinction is drawn between recognition which results in a tangible record and recognition which is given as part of a selection process – the terms *recorded recognition* and *functional recognition* are used to distinguish between them.
- 1.10 Chapter 3 examines three forms of recorded achievement: certificates based on courses and modules; profiles and portfolios; and group awards, such as Diplomas and Baccalaureates. Each of the approaches is shown to have strengths and weaknesses and the overall conclusion is that any initiative to gain recognition for achievement through a formal record must be very clear in its aim and tailored towards that aim. Key questions raised include what should be recorded, whose recognition the record is intended to secure, what the role of the learners should be in the process, and whether, how and by whom the achievement needs to be validated.
- 1.11 Chapter 4 sets out a model for managing approaches to the recognition of achievement. The model brings the different findings and approaches together in a tripartite structure which allows individual learners to collect a variety of information associated with achievements of different kinds and then select one of three ways of using that information to gain recognition as appropriate to their needs and intentions.
- 1.12 Chapter 5 draws the main issues together in a series of considerations and conclusions relating to implementation of the model.

2 A REVIEW OF APPROACHES TO RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

Background – policies and principles

- 2.1 There is a history of concern with the recognition of learning beyond the formal curriculum in the UK which goes back more than thirty years. Most of the initiatives undertaken to address this concern have been concerned with secondary education, where the curriculum is more tightly defined. Examples of initiatives include the action research undertaken by the Scottish Council for Educational Research (SCRE) under the title *Pupils in Profile* and reported on in 1977, the National Record of Achievement (NRA), introduced across the UK in 1991, and the extended Tariff which was developed by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the 1990s – all discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this report.
- 2.2 It has also been a continuing concern in the design and content of the curriculum itself. In the secondary curriculum in Scotland this has been addressed through the development of courses such as Social and Vocational Skills (SVS), Personal and Social Development (PSD) and Personal and Social Education (PSE) and in the design of bigger qualifications (group awards). These initiatives focused on areas of development such as bringing about a better understanding of achievement by the learners themselves, creating effective mechanisms for making this understanding concrete, and finding ways to increase recognition of diverse achievement by selectors and recruiters in colleges, universities and in the labour market. These are also discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.
- 2.3 Selectors and recruiters themselves have consistently claimed that formal education is not providing them with the skills they need, although the lists of deficiencies vary. Perhaps these are best thought of as having a *positive attitude*, as described in the CBI leaflet on work experience and employability *Time Well Spent* (Confederation of British Industry, undated). This lists seven areas which together make up *positive attitude* including most of the skills in the national Core Skills Framework: self-management, team working, business and customer awareness, problem-solving, communication and literacy, application of numeracy and application of IT, all of which can be fostered to an extent in a schools setting, but most of which are not easy to develop fully away from a practical, real-life setting, and are even harder to measure in the valid and reliable way associated with the formal assessment which underpins credible certification.

Policies

- 2.4 In Scotland in more recent times, national policy papers such as *Determined to Succeed* (Scottish Executive, 2002), *More Choices More Chances* (Scottish Executive, 2006), *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life* (Scottish Executive, 2003) and *Skills for Scotland: a lifelong learning strategy* (Scottish Government, 2007) have incorporated and expanded on the idea that education needs to move beyond a focus on the acquisition of formal qualifications to a system which recognises achievement in a range of contexts and activities, including out-of school activities.
- 2.5 The paper which laid the ground for the current reforms, *A Curriculum for Excellence: progress and proposals* (SEED 2006), states that there is a need to develop straightforward and simple ways of giving recognition to a broader range of the

achievements of young people than happens at present in Scotland's schools. It also lays down the principle that any assessment associated with this process must not distort the intrinsic value of the achievements or detract from the satisfaction which young people get from them. It does not, however, give any indication of the kind of recognition which is intended.

- 2.6 *A Curriculum for Excellence: building the curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching* (2008) elaborates this theme. It states that, 'Many young people in Scotland are already involved in a range of activities, both in and out of school and college, and have developed skills and capacities for which they are not currently gaining recognition.' (SG, 2008 p45 – the full section is quoted in Appendix 1 of this report). The paper also sets out the advantages which can accrue from increased recognition as follows:

'Gaining recognition for their achievements, and the skills for life and skills for work that are developed through them, can benefit all young people. It can increase their confidence, raise their aspirations, improve their motivation for learning and keep them engaged in education. In addition the process of planning, recording and recognising achievements can help young people to reflect on their learning and development and can be valuable starting points when it comes to articulating themselves in applications to and interviews with employers, colleges or universities.' (SG, p45)

- 2.7 The paper goes on to invite Scottish educators to consider how they can change this situation on the basis that schools, colleges and other education providers should not only be planning how they can provide young people with greater opportunities for personal achievement, but should also be looking at ways in which greater recognition, beyond formal qualifications, can then be given to these achievements. Examples of ways in which recognition might be given are said to include school certificates and awards, school notice boards, on-line portfolios and awards ceremonies. In the document this is linked explicitly to: (i) practice in personal learning planning to support young people in evaluating their development in terms of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work and (ii) frameworks for recognising personal achievements which motivate and support all young people.

- 2.8 The issues which are being addressed here are neither new nor confined to Scotland. The following paragraph sums up the main topics of debate which emerge from discussions about this aspect of *Curriculum for Excellence* in a succinct and recognisable way:

'... opinion is divided on the way learning achievements should be evaluated, and indeed on whether such achievements should be evaluated at all. Moreover, since people have different interpretations of the concept of evaluation, discussion of this issue tends to be extremely vague. It may be necessary to distinguish between evaluation of knowledge and technical skills that is based on objective criteria ... and evaluation that is used primarily to encourage learning activities. In both cases, however, it is necessary to provide some form of evaluation to people who want it. Given the basic aim of building a lifelong learning society, which is to correct the harmful effects of society's preoccupation with academic credentials, we should also prepare for a more pluralistic approach to the evaluation of learning achievements.'

2.9 The quotation comes from a publication of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan (Japanese Government, 1996).

Principles

2.10 In Scotland, seven key principles for work on recognising achievement were identified following a series of stakeholder events organised by the Scottish Government and held across Scotland in 2007. These are:

- achievements should be as valuable as qualifications;
- the focus must be on learning and reflection, not activities;
- learners must have ownership of their achievements and what they choose to include;
- recognition of achievement must involve talking with and supporting young people;
- any approach must support young people at risk of disengagement and in need of more choices, more chances and must not widen the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged;
- there is a need to develop common understandings and language across wider learning communities;
- the implications and practicalities of recognising achievement for schools and learning communities need to be explored more fully.

2.11 Those involved in the events included practitioners from the teacher unions; headteacher organisations, Scotland's Colleges; voluntary bodies; officers and senior school staff from education authorities; and representatives from the CBI, Universities Scotland, and parent organisations. The seven principles were developed on the basis of their discussions.

2.12 Also, within the *Curriculum for Excellence* structure, twelve collaborative enquiry projects have been established with local authorities. The projects are expected to identify effective approaches to recognising a range of achievements and to explore how barriers to recognition can be overcome. The outcome is anticipated to be guidance and support for authorities, schools and other education providers in providing opportunities for achievements of all kinds and in helping young people gain valuable recognition for them.

2.13 Each collaborative enquiry project is asked to address four questions related to recognition of achievement:

- what should recognition of achievement look like?
- what should it cover?
- who should be involved and how?
- how do we give it currency?

2.14 These seven principles and four questions are used as a basis for this report, which explores the nature of recognition and processes by which the achievements of young people might be given different forms of recognition.

Background - research by the Quality in Education (QIE) Centre

2.15 In 2007, LTS commissioned the QIE Report from the University of Strathclyde, working in collaboration with Open Futures and 3Square, to review evidence in relation to various aspects of recording and reporting the wider achievements of children and young people. This work was carried out in 2007 and was reported on under the title *A Curriculum for Excellence: A Review of Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement*. This section considers the findings of the QIE report.

Stakeholder views

2.16 The work carried out by QIE combined a literature review and research with a range of stakeholders. The review was intended to identify the appropriateness and potential of different approaches to recognising wider achievement. Views of stakeholders were sought through interviews and surveys and through a series of information-sharing events. The stakeholders included teachers, school managers and local authority representatives, students and parents, staff from statutory and voluntary organisations which work with young people, admissions staff in further and higher education, and employers and employers' organisations.

2.17 Responses to the question, 'what is wider achievement?' were reported to be overall consistent across these stakeholder groups. Answers included: success in and out of school; knowledge and skills not normally gained, or gained to a lesser extent, through the formal curriculum; social and personal achievements. They also included personal attributes and things particularly relevant to the individual child.

2.18 Almost all survey respondents and interviewees felt that recognising these achievements is very important and reported that there is already a focus on reward and celebration of achievement in current practice. The research lists a number of 'praise and reward schemes and celebration activities' which were reported by stakeholders:

'Certificates, stars, stickers, pupil of the week or month awards, 'golden moments' were all mentioned. Achievements were highlighted at assemblies, on display boards, in newsletters and on school webpages. Media publicity was sought. Schools organised achievement evenings and showcase events.' (A Curriculum for Excellence: A Review of Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement p 24)

2.19 A smaller number of interviewees had a different interpretation of recognition, focusing on young people recognising and reflecting on their own achievements to identify learning and learning needs.

2.20 The research also found that stakeholders were mainly positive about the idea of recording achievement, but that finding appropriate ways to record achievement was generally viewed as a challenge. Students as a group were less supportive of the idea, with slightly fewer than half of the students interviewed thinking that keeping a record was important and only a minority of students interviewed wanting to see achievements gained outside school included in a school record. There were mixed views across the stakeholder groups on whether the recording of achievement should or should not be a voluntary activity.

- 2.21 The first of these findings contrasts with the results of previous research commissioned by the Scottish Government into the part-time work in which school students are engaged (Howieson et al, 2006). The principle of making more use of students' part-time work in their schooling was generally viewed positively by students and their parents, by teachers, other educationalists and employers who were respondents to the research. However, although the project offered a number of models by which part-time work could be given recognition in the formal system, as with the QIE research there was no clear agreement on what approach should be taken to bringing this about.
- 2.22 Most respondents to the QIE research thought that records of achievement should be for all young people, but some thought it was more suited to those who lacked support at home, found academic learning difficult or were disaffected. A record was seen as being relevant at all stages, but more significant at later stages when young people were preparing to move towards post-school education and employment. This is an important theme in considering the forms of recognition which are relevant to children and young people.
- 2.23 Respondents to the QIE research also thought that young people should be encouraged to take responsibility for the process, but that they would need support to do this. Support could come from parents, teachers, peers or other adult mentors as appropriate to the age and stage of the children and young people concerned.
- 2.24 Local authorities supported the idea that there should be national guidelines to standardise what should be recorded and teachers thought that national guidelines would be important. However a third of teacher respondents were opposed to guidelines which they felt would create a level of standardisation which they felt was inappropriate to the recognition of wider achievement. This was perhaps linked to the mixed views on formal recognition and certification – issued or endorsed by SQA – reported by QIE, with significant numbers of teachers of the opinion that this would add bureaucracy, stifle individuality and lead to conformity. Those who were in favour argued that formal recognition would give status to informal learning, give it credibility (especially for end users), and add successes to the record of those who might not otherwise be successful. The predicted effects on students were split between those who thought it would encourage greater involvement of young people and those who thought it would put students off. One proposed solution to these differences of anticipated outcome was that individuals should be free to choose whether or not to receive formal recognition of their wider achievements.
- 2.25 Trying to address this tension was an important factor in the development of the model for managing processes leading to recognition of different kinds which is an outcome of this investigation and report.

Challenges identified

- 2.26 The main challenges reported were:
- ensuring that any system is genuinely learner centred;
 - helping young people not just to record but to reflect on and be proactive about what to record (and know why they are recording it);
 - finding ways of transferring benefits from out of school learning to the school context without intruding on the privacy of learners;

- ensuring young people engage in suitable learning contexts which will allow them to develop their wider achievements;
- finding ways of achieving credibility for certification without enforcing conformity and uniformity.

2.27 This report draws on the findings of the QIE research which are set out above and attempts to pick up on these challenges. In doing so it tries to develop a neutral terminology, as well as flexible approaches to development and implementation.

2.28 In the QIE report there is little disagreement among stakeholders over the nature of the achievement which should be recognised or the value of recognising it – although the scope of achievements identified as potentially relevant is wide. However, there is disagreement among those surveyed and interviewed about the form that recognition should take, and the status (in this case the *ownership*) of the processes involved. In particular there seems to be a tension between a formal, standardised, approach, based on identifiable outcomes and probably leading to assessment and certification and an approach which is entirely focused on the personal value to the student, with an emphasis on the inclusiveness of its possible content and its voluntary nature. Given the range of ages and stages of the young people whose achievements are under consideration, this tension is not surprising. In particular there is a significant difference in needs between those young people who are preparing to leave school and go on to further study or work and those who are not yet at that stage.

2.29 This points up the need for a model of recognition which incorporates a range of approaches and can suit the needs of different learners at different stages in their learning, and this is the approach adopted in this report.

Achievement and recognition

2.30 In this section, different kinds of achievement and different forms of recognition are considered, with a focus on learners in schools. Consideration is given to the reasons for seeking to improve or increase recognition and distinctions are drawn between planned and unplanned learning and between *recorded* and *functional* recognition.

Achievement

2.31 The idea of ‘achievements beyond the traditional school curriculum’ achievement which is ‘beyond the formal curriculum’ (*A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group*, Scottish Executive 2004, p45) is worth examining. Some definitions of achievement restrict the term to planned learning – ie achieving previously set goals or targets – but in this paper a broader definition is adopted, to include unplanned learning which may have to be discovered and understood, or interpreted by the learner. This approach has the effect of focusing on the nature, rather than the context, of learning.

2.32 In purely contextual terms, learning which goes ‘beyond the curriculum’ may mean achievement arising from extra-curricular activities or activities which are not defined by nationally defined assessments. It may also come from activities which are beyond the school altogether – from activities undertaken in youth organisations, in

family or community settings, or in work. On the other hand learning 'beyond the curriculum' can imply learning achieved in the context of the formal curriculum, but not specified in any syllabus – knowledge, skills and other competences which may be applied in other subjects or other contexts or may contribute more generally to personal growth. In all these cases the learning may be planned or unplanned, although in the case of personal learning which is an off-shoot of the formal curriculum it is less likely to be planned. *Curriculum for Excellence* is seeking to give a place to the learning which is acquired in these ways and contributes to the four capacities – making for more responsible citizens, more effective contributors, more successful learners and more confident individuals.

- 2.33 QIE respondents, cited in the previous section, suggested a range of ways in which schools celebrated or recognised achievement and anecdotal evidence suggests that wider learning is often understood and prized by schools, even where it is not given recognition. Achievements gained 'beyond the curriculum' are sometimes contrasted with certificated or 'accredited' achievement, but that interpretation hardly does justice to the many organisations which already to record the achievements of their members measured against their own pre-set standards. In particular organisations such as Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides, the Prince's Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme have arrangements for giving formal recognition to a wide range of achievements, from practical knowledge and skills to leadership. In addition, SQA's portfolio contains many awards and units which are capable of capturing achievements and many of these have been used by schools to accredit achievements by older students which go beyond the outcomes of the formal curriculum.
- 2.34 In each of these cases, however, the recognition is based on matching the achievement to some form of specified outcomes and criteria and may, therefore, be tangential to the achievement as understood by the learner. This factor of the directness of the relationship of the recognition to the learner's perceptions of it may be an important one in developing a definition of, and an approach to, recognition.

Recognition

- 2.35 This leads to a consideration of the reasons why recognition of achievement is seen as important. There appear to be two main reasons: recognition for reinforcement and recognition for progression. The former is relevant at all stages, but the latter, as noted by respondents to the QIE research and cited above, is more significant at later stages when young people are preparing to move towards post-school education and employment.
- 2.36 The focus of this report has to be on processes which can be applied systematically at all ages and stages within the scope of *Curriculum for Excellence*, and systematic recognition of achievement can take a number of forms. In every case, however, the kind of recognition being dealt with here is given by an organisation or individual with an authority to do so and leads to a tangible record: for this reason it is referred to in the report as *recorded recognition*. It may be national or local; the achievement may or may not have been subject to some check on authenticity or quality; the nature of the achievement which is recognised may be defined by objective standards or by personal aims or targets; and the recognition may or may not take the form of certification. Thus, for example, an SQA award gives recognition through national, quality assured, systematic certification based on validated national standards, while

recognition in the 'praise and reward schemes and celebration activities' cited in the QIE report is local and based on specific contexts and is likely to feature achievements for which quality assurance is inappropriate. Recorded recognition of achievements given by national and local youth organisations may tend towards either of these models.

- 2.37 A useful distinction can be drawn between this recorded recognition and recognition of a practical kind, which might be thought of as *functional recognition*. This distinction is similar to a typology of recognition defined by the European Union's Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in a recently published glossary *Terminology of European education and training policy: A selection of 100 key terms* (Cedefop, 2008). In this document a contrast is drawn between 'formal' and 'social' recognition, the former being a process of granting official status to knowledge, skills and/or competences through the award of exemptions, credits or qualifications, and the latter being the acknowledgement of the value of specific knowledge, skills and/or competences by 'social and economic stakeholders' (ibid, p152).
- 2.38 This is adapted for the purposes of this report, in which the term *recorded recognition* will be used to refer to a systematic process for creating a tangible record of achievement, and *functional recognition* will be used to refer to a situation whereby account is taken systematically of a form of achievement by an individual or organisation involved in selection for further education, employment or involvement in voluntary activities.
- 2.39 The important point in this distinction is that the relationship between recorded and functional recognition is not straightforward and involves an interplay of factors such as the nature of the achievement and the reputation of the body giving the recorded recognition. Not all recorded recognition results in functional recognition and there can be functional recognition where there is no recorded recognition. This is partly, but not fully, dependent on the nature of the recorded recognition. The most formal kinds of recorded recognition of achievement, in Scotland notably awards made by SQA, will gain a high level of functional recognition, whereas the most informal kinds are least likely to be associated with functional recognition. However, while SQA Highers, for example, are specifically designed to be used in selecting learners for entry to university courses, not all Highers are recognised by all universities. At the same time, some less formal recorded recognitions, such as the awards made by well known and highly regarded youth organisations or schools, appear to gain a high level of functional recognition. It is also likely that certain activities or achievements for which there is no recorded recognition will be given functional recognition (although there may need to be some form of authentication) – significant family or community responsibilities, work experience and voluntary activities are examples of this.
- 2.40 It must also be true that what is given functional recognition will vary between end-users according to their needs, but also to their knowledge (eg local knowledge) of and personal or corporate attitudes to the achievement(s) concerned.
- 2.41 There is a third form of recognition which needs to be taken into account. This is recognition of achievement and its value by the learner him/herself, described in this report as *understanding*. This kind of recognition, which the individual may require support to achieve, is particularly important at stages where recorded recognition is

more limited and functional recognition has little or no role to play, but it can also be vital in pursuing recorded recognition and in securing functional recognition for achievements, which may or may not have recorded recognition.

2.42 These considerations raise questions about the extent to which the wider achievements of young people are, in fact, given recognition of different kinds and about the best ways of increasing recognition.

Conclusions – linking achievement and recognition

2.43 From the analysis above, it is clear that the nature of the recognition being sought is as important as the nature of the achievements. There is a range of ways in which achievement can be recorded or commemorated, whether the achievement is the result of planned or informal learning. For example:

- the outcomes of wider achievement could be matched to the outcomes of existing or new SQA units, allowing certification or credit transfer;
- wider achievements may already be given recorded recognition by youth and community organisations;
- the contribution of wider achievement to personal development – expressed as knowledge, skills and/or wider outcomes – could be given recognition in the shape of certificates or testimonials issued by schools or other organisations;
- the contribution which additional achievements make to an individual's personal development could be brought out in a range of ways which a young person could draw on in seeking to progress in school, into other sectors of education, or into work.

2.44 Many of these forms of recognition may already be given functional recognition, but there is no guarantee that increasing the extent of recorded recognition will improve the functional recognition of specific forms of achievement. However, there may be ways other than seeking recorded recognition in which young people can be helped to gain further functional recognition of their achievements.

Sources for a model for recognition

2.45 The link between formal school education and the development of lifelong learning policy in Scotland has tended not to be strong and in recent years the policy emphasis has been focused on establishing continuity throughout the stages of schooling, especially through *Curriculum for Excellence*. However, lessons of policy and practice can be drawn from adult and continuing education and training because one current concern in these sectors in the UK, in the EU and beyond, is on means of giving value to non-formal and informal learning, which relates closely to the idea of recognising wider learning. The use of sources relating to adult and continuing education may also be seen as appropriate if we consider that the wider achievement to be explored within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence* may be an important foundation for lifelong learning.

2.46 In this section, two sources from the field of lifelong learning and one from research commissioned by LTS are identified as bases for a model for describing and managing the processes associated with the recognition of achievement in the school sector.

Learning contexts

- 2.47 A web search for research and development work relating to the recognition of extra-curricular and/or experiential learning suggests that most work is taking place in higher and adult education rather than in the school sector. Much of it is concerned with the recognition of prior learning (RPL). Many examples of this activity come from England or other countries of the European Union (EU), but it is an issue in most countries which are undertaking reform of their vocational education and training systems. A detailed analysis of RPL practice in Scotland is given in section 3 of this report.
- 2.48 Some of the most fully developed sources relating to the recognition of wider or additional learning, relate to the validation of *non-formal* and *informal* learning by adults – for example the *European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning* (Cedefop, 2009). These terms, together with ‘formal learning’ are defined by the European Commission (2001b, pp32f) as follows:
- **formal learning:** Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective;
 - **non-formal learning:** Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective;
 - **informal learning:** Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or ‘incidental’/random).
- 2.49 These definitions relate to some of the distinctions already drawn in this report: most extra-curricular activities and involvement in youth organisations, for example will offer non-formal learning and the distinction between formal/non-formal and informal learning corresponds to the distinction made in the previous section between planned and unplanned *learning*. This correspondence should mean that principles and conclusions arising from research and development in this aspect of lifelong learning should be broadly applicable in the schools sector.

Giving value to learning

- 2.50 The QIE researchers drew on work by Swedish researchers into the recognition of prior vocational learning in adult education in Sweden (Andersson et al, 2004). The QIE team used this to bring their own findings under three headings which refer to the kinds of value which can be given to learning: *utility value*, *exchange value* and *intrinsic value*. The original formulation created by Andersson et al and the variant developed for the QIE report are attached as Appendix 2.
- 2.51 For the purposes of this report the typology of value which can be given to learning has been further adapted to incorporate the distinction between recorded and functional recognition as follows:
- **intrinsic value:** value to the individual who can recognise and use achievement for personal development, further learning or other activities;

- **utility value:** value to the individual in communicating with others, notably recruiters and selectors in education, employment and the voluntary sector to achieve *functional recognition* by others;
- **exchange value:** value to agencies which can give *recorded recognition* - by accrediting the individual's learning, by awarding credit in some form, or by using learning as evidence to make an award of some kind.

2.52 At the earlier stages, young learners will be more concerned with having the intrinsic value of their achievements recognised; at the later stages the utility value will become much more important for most young people. Exchange value will be sought at any stage where the young person has the opportunity to gain recorded recognition – eg from the school, the community, or a youth organisation; but exchange value related to the SQA or other awarding bodies of this kind will only come into play in the later stages.

Types of portfolio

2.53 This three-item typology can be matched with other analyses, including, importantly, the report on the use of e-portfolios in the management of the processes associated with the recognition of achievement commissioned by LTS (AlphaPlus Consultancy, 2007). The AlphaPlus report gives good reasons for using information technology in this area – including practical and motivational advantages – however, this report is not concerned with the nature of the portfolio, which could be electronic or paper-based or combine both approaches.

2.54 The AlphaPlus report identifies four distinct purposes for e-portfolios. These purposes have significance in terms of the intentions and engagement of learners, referring to personal learning space, transition between stages of learning or institutions, progression in learning, and evidence for assessment. This typology is attached as Appendix 3.

2.55 With some slight adjustment, three of the AlphaPlus portfolio types can be matched with the value typology above. The three main adapted portfolio types used in this report are:

- **learning portfolio:** an inclusive collection of information about achievements which assists the learner to create, manage, reflect on and develop their work, including personal learning planning;
- **presentation portfolio:** a collection of information about learning and achievement which has been selected and adapted to make it suitable for a particular user, especially one who can give functional recognition to the learning;
- **assessment portfolio:** a collection of evidence of learning and achievement designed for submission to a body which can give recorded recognition for formal, summative and external assessment against specified external criteria.

2.56 The AlphaPlus report refers to a *personal learning space portfolio* which is used both as a repository – ie a place for gathering information relating to activities or evidence about achievement before it is processed – and as a tool for reflecting on and evaluating achievements and learning. In this report these two functions are separated. The instrumental aspect of the *personal learning space portfolio* is invested in the learning portfolio above, while the repository aspect becomes the *personal portfolio*.

- 2.57 This *personal portfolio* acts as a repository for all kinds of evidence of achievement and may be used as a basis for developing any or all of the other types of portfolio. It is different in kind from the other three and therefore is not included in the typology.
- 2.58 The final AlphaPlus portfolio is the *transition portfolio*, used to transfer administrative and educational information about the learners from one institution to another. The AlphaPlus report notes that ‘the learner has little direct influence in shaping the content or structure of this information’ (AlphaPlus Consultancy, 2007, p11). Insofar as individual learners might have an involvement in aspects of the transition portfolio, it seems likely that their contribution would take the form of a small presentation portfolio as defined above.
- 2.59 A portfolio might contain any or all of the following, to be used or adapted as appropriate for inclusion in the other portfolios:
- self-generated written material, such as accounts of training undertaken or work completed or transcripts of accounts given by the claimant;
 - authenticated written evidence from others, such as written statements in support of the claims being made from trainers, supervisors, or managers who have worked with the claimant;
 - documents produced by the claimant in the course of his/her work (eg procedures, reports, work plans, training plans, budgets or financial forecasts);
 - completed projects and responses to/commentary on case studies;
 - records of the outcomes of practical tasks, photographs of the products of work;
 - the results of formal assessments;
 - documents giving recorded recognition of achievement, such as certificates of different kinds.

Conclusions - reflecting on learning

- 2.60 From these different sources, a model for the recognition of achievement can be developed which provides an inclusive structure for dealing with the main issues: the nature of recognition, learner ownership and choices, and the role of assessment and certification. In this model, the recognition associated with learning is of three kinds which align with the different kinds of value and types of portfolio:
- recognition, or understanding, of the learning by the learners themselves;
 - functional recognition of the learning by others – particularly selectors for different kinds of progression;
 - recorded recognition in the shape of accreditation of some kind by bodies which can make awards or grant credit towards awards (eg SQA qualifications, Youth Organisation awards, and college or university courses).
- 2.61 Within this framework, learners can be supported in understanding both the value which can be given to specific achievements and the different ways in which outcomes of learning in general can be used to their advantage. Learners can also be supported to select from the different ways in which learning can be analysed and interpreted and, where appropriate, evidence can be gathered to support their aims.
- 2.62 The three forms of reflection on learning which lead to recognition, called *approaches* in this report are:
- ***Understanding: bringing out the intrinsic value of achievement***

Learners recognise and understand the learning in which they have been involved, leading to improved self-esteem and motivation, personal development and enhanced learning.

- ***Explaining: identifying the utility value of achievement***

Learners understand the value which their achievements may have in contexts such as seeking entry to further learning, employment or volunteering, and gain an improved ability to present important information about achievements orally and in writing.

- ***Proving: gathering evidence to give achievement an exchange value***

Learners are able to develop a portfolio of evidence for formal assessment or other evaluation leading to credit towards an award, or an award and certification.

3 A REVIEW OF APPROACHES TO RECORDING ACHIEVEMENT

3.1 In this chapter three forms of recorded achievement are examined. These are courses and modules; profiles and portfolios; and group awards, such as Diplomas and Baccalaureates. With the exception of the International Baccalaureate the examples drawn on all come from initiatives in the United Kingdom over the past thirty years. Most are schools-based, but examples from higher education and lifelong learning are also included.

Recorded recognition using courses and modules

3.2 In Scotland the idea of recognising young people's learning by extending what is formally accredited through national certification goes back at least to the reforms which followed the raising of the school leaving age in 1972, and many developments in that time have both changed the formal curriculum and widened the range of courses available to learners. In this section the successes and failures of three areas of development of this kind are examined to try to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the approach.

3.3 A useful summary of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of qualifications is given in a recent Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance briefing published by the Careers Guidance Service for England (Connexions 2009). The arguments are developed in relation to a specific area of learning, but are general in application. Posing the question, *Is it a good idea to use qualifications to reward career learning?* the briefing offers the following summary of the arguments.

For the use of qualifications	Against the use of qualifications
They help young people to recognise and 'own' an important area of their learning.	Young people are already over-assessed and it encourages 'credentialism'.
They give young people something to aim for in their career learning.	Assessment for learning is more important than assessment of learning.
They help young people to prepare more effectively for entering the next stage of their learning or working lives.	Young people are not motivated by qualifications that are not demanded by employers and which have a low status and currency in the real world.
They provide opportunities for success, especially for young people at risk of becoming NEET or who have learning difficulties and can benefit from learning in small steps.	They encourage teaching to the test and important careers topics could be marginalised.
They provide evidence for the centre's evaluation of its careers provision.	They are being adopted by centres to earn performance points.

3.4 Almost all of these issues can be illustrated in the history of attempts to provide national certification for wider achievements in Scotland through the use of the basic schools qualifications – National Courses and National Certificate modules (now referred to as National Units).

Social and vocational skills

- 3.5 Following the Munn and Dunning reports (both published by the Scottish Education Department in 1977), which respectively reviewed curriculum and assessment in the third and fourth years of secondary education in Scotland, - a new kind of National Course, the Standard Grade was introduced. Insofar as it was intended in part to recognise the achievements of young people whose learning had previously been given no recognition, it can serve as a positive example of recognition through qualifications since it is generally regarded as having been an extremely successful qualification since its introduction in 1984.
- 3.6 Although Standard Grade was mainly designed to cover the formal curriculum, the need to go beyond traditional subject learning was recognised in the Munn report and this need was responded to in the development of a Standard Grade course in Social and Vocational Skills (SVS), which offered schools a new flexible area of learning which would lead to assessment and certification. This course was designed to allow students to develop practical and social skills in a range of contexts and to build the confidence, initiative and self-esteem of young learners and encourage them to work with others in a co-operative and productive way. The central themes of SVS are 'home', 'work' and 'community' and it is intended that students should take part in a range of activities including an out-of-school activity (working, providing a community service or taking part in a residential stay), planning and running a community event, making an item, or providing a service. Over the twenty years of SVS, a small minority of schools have steered a full range of students towards the subject or even made it a compulsory course, but overall SVS does not appear to have acquired strong functional recognition or a high take-up and it has tended to be used with students who have not achieved academic success.

Personal and social skills

- 3.7 The development of a modular system following the publication of the *Action Plan* by the then Scottish Education Department in 1983 offered a number of opportunities for widening the curriculum and for recognising a wider range of achievement and many of these opportunities were promoted vigorously by those responsible for implementing the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in Scotland. Later evaluations of the initiative (eg Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1998) point to the extent to which there was an effort to promote a more integrative approach to the curriculum and dissolve the barriers which young people often find, or erect, between subjects. This was done in two ways: firstly by creating learning and teaching programmes which drew on or brought together different subjects or disciplines; and secondly by encouraging reflection on knowledge, skills and competences which relate to, or underpin, more than one subject or discipline.
- 3.8 In particular, the range of process-based Personal and Social Development (PSD) modules introduced in 1985 offered a means of certificating skills for learning, life and work and giving them recognition under headings such as *Life and Work*, *Work Experience*, *Enterprise Skills*, *Community Involvement* and *Local Investigation*, each available at a number of levels. These were popular provision and at one point the *Work Experience* modules had the highest uptake in schools of all National Certificate modules in the Scottish Vocational Education Council (Scotvec) catalogue. These modules used a model of learning and assessment which required learners to reflect on their experience and build portfolios of evidence of achievement to be evaluated against specified outcomes. However the outcomes were broad in nature, with a focus on learning processes.

- 3.9 Aspects of this approach still remain in some areas of the SQA Portfolio – particularly in elements of the Personal and Social Education (PSE) units and courses, which were developed as part of Higher Still in a direct line from PSD, and in other units at different levels of the portfolio which include reflection on learning and personal planning for development or further learning. It would be true to say, however, that the extent of functional recognition of these short courses has been very varied and that they were often seen as low status qualifications by learners and end-users alike. Their use varied from school to school and, where they were used and valued in the curriculum, they tended to be used with students who were not academically successful.
- 3.10 The fact that perceptions of this area of accredited learning were not significantly improved by this development is shown by the 2004 review of PSE which was undertaken as part of a review of all National Courses. The findings were based on both consultations and investigations. These showed that PSE was repeating the pattern set by SVS, remaining the province of enthusiast teachers and less academic students and failing to secure high uptake (SQA, 2004, p1):
- while the Courses were introduced with the aim of reflecting the importance of personal and social development for young people, the low uptake and the small number of centres offering the Courses shows that they are not meeting users' needs;
 - PSE is recognised as a very important area and there is a small but highly committed group of teachers and lecturers who have developed programmes in their own centres. In most centres, PSE is being delivered in other ways and many people do not believe it is an appropriate area for external assessment/certification;
 - there has been a series of separate, high-profile initiatives in areas related to personal and social education, but the current assessment and certification systems are not addressing these effectively.
- 3.11 PSE was one of the few subjects emerging from Higher Still which was widely rejected by universities as an entry qualification, so although PSE was giving formal recorded recognition of wider achievement, this was not being matched by functional recognition.

Core skills

- 3.12 The introduction of core skills in 1993 formalised a significant part of this underpinning learning. The origins of the Core Skills Framework lie in government sponsored training schemes for young people, developed to address the high unemployment of the 1980s, notably the Youth Training Scheme. This programme sought to develop and capture the kind of 'additional' skills which employers were said to be looking for – including integrity, effective communication, application of numeracy, ability to handle technology, personal and interpersonal skills, problem-solving and positive attitudes to change (Confederation of British Industry, 1989). This is an area which is still being researched and developed, with mixed results, around the globe.
- 3.13 The introduction of core skills certification in Scotland provided a framework of outcomes at different levels against which many different kinds of evidence from

different contexts could be assessed. The framework was based on those aspects of employer requirements which seemed to be capable of quality assured assessment – communication, use of numbers, problem solving, use of IT and working with others. However, while the outcomes were fixed, there was enough flexibility in the framework to allow the process of building a portfolio of evidence for certification to be tailored to individual achievements and learning. By and large, however, this tailoring did not happen in the schools sector and the core skills framework was often seen in that context as bureaucratic and unnecessary, sometimes requiring re-assessment of what had already been learned. The Higher Still initiative tried to address this issue by allowing for the recognition of core skills where they were embedded in other subjects, but this led to a situation where young people were being certificated for outcomes which they didn't know they had achieved, or, in some cases, didn't want recorded. It also encouraged a box-ticking approach to the recording of core skills achievement (Hart and Howieson 2008).

Conclusions – advantages and disadvantages

- 3.14 As suggested by the Connexions analysis cited at the beginning of this section, there were clear advantages and disadvantages to the recorded recognition of the broader skills areas covered by SVS, PSD/PSE and core skills. They did help some young people to aim for standards and prepare for the next stages of their lives; they did provide a structure for learning and teaching and gave young people new opportunities for success. However, they had low levels of functional recognition and were often associated more with academic failure than non-academic success. The overall conclusion would seem to be that this kind of recognition (using courses and units) can be valuable to individual development, but is likely to be limited in its value and needs to be used with care.

Recorded recognition using profiles and portfolios

- 3.15 In this section, examples of alternative forms of recorded recognition – the profile and the portfolio – are examined and related to the emerging model for supporting and managing the recognition of achievement.
- 3.16 The difference between *profiles* and *portfolios*, as the terms are used here, lies in the ownership and the content. In this report, a profile is understood to be a form of recorded recognition in which the individual's achievements are matched to a standardised list of outcomes recorded by someone other than the learner who has the authority to do so. A portfolio, on the other hand, is a collection of descriptions of and/or evidence for achievements recorded by a learner on his/her own behalf. The portfolio may be structured by someone other than the learner and parts of the portfolio may be authenticated by someone other than the learner, but these are not always requirements.

Profiles

- 3.17 The earliest work on profiling identified for this report was undertaken by the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) between 1973 and 1977. This project, *Pupils in Profile*, had among its objectives the assessment of non-formal learning, giving teachers the opportunity to record assessments of students in school activities

which went beyond the formal curriculum such as community service, arts-based activities, sports, etc. The project sought to include a range of affective factors and non-cognitive behaviours, such as humour, resilience, adaptability, sensitivity, perseverance, and reliability. A grid was to be completed by teachers on as many occasions as possible for both curricular and extra-curricular activities using a 1 to 4 grading for each field and the gradings were then averaged. It proved to be over-ambitious and unproductive, for it was very time-consuming and did not yield information of a kind or in a form which was particularly useful to the young people being profiled.

- 3.18 In the 1990s, schools in England began to be concerned that, while they were using a range of new qualifications to capture a wider range of achievements than could be done through A-levels, universities were not giving functional recognition to these awards. These qualifications included new BTEC awards, GNVQs, ASDAN awards,¹ and even, in a few cases, Scotvec modules. Headteachers called on UCAS to formalise, revise and extend their tariff, which at that time was an unofficial UCAS system which gave a points score only to A-levels, but was widely used by admission officers. In responding, UCAS attempted to create a new official tariff for use throughout the UK which included a dimension in which wider achievements were calibrated and presented in the form of a visual profile. The intention was that university faculties and college departments would identify any skills or experiences which were actually being used as required or preferred conditions for entry to courses and which would also be represented visually, allowing the individual profile to be compared with the entry profile. The visual representation was shown to be impracticable in the developmental phase of the tariff project, but UCAS attempted to retain wider achievements as part of the tariff arrangements – both as information to be recorded by applicants and as part of a more transparent system of admissions by the institutions. However it was not supported by universities and colleges and was dropped from the tariff before it was introduced in the late 1990s.

Portfolios

- 3.19 The main thread of development in this field is the sequence of portfolios used throughout the UK which started with the National Record of Vocational Achievement (NROVA) in 1988, replaced by the NRA in 1991, and turned into Progress File in 2002.
- 3.20 The NRA was designed to give young (and older) learners control of the process of recording their achievements and building up a portfolio of evidence for the skills and attributes nominated by employers and employer organisations as what they were looking for in recruits. Its predecessor, the NROVA, was closely linked to government training schemes, but there was space within the NRA for all kinds of record - from the certificates issued by national awarding bodies, through formal and informal records issued by national and local youth organisations, voluntary organisations, local authorities and schools, to affidavits, references and the individual's own records. There was a lot of positive response to the NRA process – improved self-esteem and increased motivation in learners were commonly cited – but schools reported it was very demanding to support (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1996). The main problem with the NRA, however, was that most employers and selectors were not interested in it and anecdotal evidence

¹ Online at <http://www.asdan.org.uk/>

suggests that school leavers who trustingly took their NRAs to interviews would find themselves invited to put the record aside and focus on responding to the interview questions and explaining their achievements in their own words. It can be argued that this response, based on the realities of selection processes, should have been foreseen. Again, the system had found a way of recognising achievement, but one which was not given recognition by external stakeholders.

- 3.21 The move to Progress File throughout the UK, which started in 1997, signalled a shift of focus towards planning and managing learning rather than simply building up a portfolio of evidence of achievement. Progress File was and is marketed as *guidance and working material, in an attractive magazine format, which helps young people and adults make the most of their opportunities. It gives them a method of recognising, recording and evaluating their achievements, and planning and progressing their own learning. It also allows them to present their skills and achievements to others. One aim is to help them develop the skills and confidence to manage their own learning and development.*²
- 3.22 In addition, while the NRA was seen to focus on transition from school, Progress File actually comes in versions for all stages of school education, for college learning and for non-formal learning. Forms of Progress File are also widely used in Higher Education.
- 3.23 Progress File has a very wide range of objectives, including promoting a positive attitude to lifelong learning. It was piloted across England between 1999 and 2002 and there is some evidence (Hall and Powney, 2003) that Progress File has enhanced users' self-awareness, and helped them to plan and manage their own learning. It also appeared to improve users' motivation, confidence and attitudes, to encourage them to recognise the value of their wider achievements and to present themselves more effectively, although these latter effects were mainly evidenced outside mainstream school-based education.

Conclusions – positive and negative features

- 3.24 These developments occupy points on a continuum from highly structured forms of record with little or no learner ownership to relatively unstructured forms with high learner ownership. Within the typology of this report, based on the AlphaPlus work, the proposed UCAS profile was to link to a presentation portfolio which would be used by college and university admissions officers, while the NRA/Progress File combines the characteristics of both the learning portfolio and the presentation portfolio.
- 3.25 Given the clarity of purpose of the UCAS approach its lack of success in achieving functional recognition might be seen as more surprising than the lack of success of this kind of the less clearly focused NRA/Progress File. Admission processes, particularly in the University sector, can vary considerably, not only between institutions, but also within institutions, and for that reason it was disappointing to UCAS that there was enough combined resistance to and lack of engagement with the profiling approach to lead to its withdrawal. This experience is more than a decade old, but there is no evidence to suggest that an approach to securing functional recognition of wider achievement which depended on the engagement of

² Department for Education and Skills – online at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/local/excellence/nlett5/news5_progress_file.html

the university sector – a crucial factor in this area, as was seen in relation to SVS and PSE – would be any more successful today.

- 3.26 With regards NRA/Progress File, it may be the case that the confusion of purposes was a reason for its failure. The model developed for this report tries to make a clear distinction between three different kinds of portfolio and what is involved in developing them. The key feature of the presentation portfolio is that it is designed with a user in mind, and that user is *not* the learner; while the focal point of the learning portfolio *is* the learner. Supporting young people to understand and use that distinction is, on its own, a valuable and important development.

Recorded recognition using group awards

- 3.27 This section considers attempts to incorporate wider achievements in Group Awards together with other issues related to the use of these qualifications. The kind of Group Award referred to in this report is a modular qualification with a credit value which signifies a norm of one or two years' full-time study. They are commonly called Certificates, Diplomas or Baccalaureates.
- 3.28 The use of Group Awards of different kinds to organise the curriculum has been more of a feature in the rest of the UK than in Scotland and in most of the initiatives in this area part of the aim has been to accredit some kind of wider learning or skill additional to what is acquired in the formal curriculum. The reasons for this thread in English policy and its limited success are many and varied, but three related factors appear to be:
- (i) the dominance of standard academic provision when it comes to securing stakeholder support and ensuring widespread uptake;
 - (ii) difficulties in securing agreement on what constitutes wider achievements that can be effectively developed and credibly measured;
 - (iii) difficulties in finding approaches to recorded recognition of these achievements which will encourage users to give them functional recognition.

In Scotland

- 3.29 The incorporation of 'wider activities' into Group Awards (General SVQs, School Group Awards, the ScotCert and ScotBac of the proposals of the Howie Committee (published by the Scottish Office Education Department in 1992), Scottish Group Awards (SGAs), National Certificates, etc) has not been a major issue in Scotland. Instead, attention has been given to core skills and to integration, with all of these awards requiring the achievement of a core skills profile and a number of them requiring the completion of an assessment exercise which brings together the different strands which make up the award. However, centres have been able to use the extensive flexibility of the SQA portfolio to give recognition to such activities through existing units.
- 3.30 A number of Scottish schools have addressed the issue by offering *non-standard* provision (ie provision not awarded by SQA) which does incorporate wider provision, and it has been possible to use a number of these as evidence for the core skills requirements of group awards, but not to gain specific credit towards 'standard' awards. The 'non-standard' provision is often delivered in partnership with other agencies such as Careers Scotland, the Prince's Trust, the ASDAN award scheme,

the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, the Children's University³ and both statutory and voluntary youth groups. It may lead to recorded recognition by these bodies. It is also true to say that this provision tends to be targeted at young people with low levels of *standard* achievement, with the negative consequences described in the previous section.

- 3.31 In addition a new qualification, Scottish Baccalaureates in Science and Languages, with an Interdisciplinary Project focusing on the development of generic skills such as research and investigation, collaborative working and information management was introduced in 2009.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland

- 3.32 In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, on the other hand, the recognition of wider achievement in group awards has been an issue.

- 3.33 Proposals for a so-called 'British Baccalaureate' – influenced by the International Baccalaureate – were published in 1990. It proposed a new modular qualification called an Advanced Diploma which would include core, specialist and community-based learning.

- 3.34 This idea of a baccalaureate-type award has continued to be a serious strand of policy thinking in England since the coming to power of New Labour in 1997. At the turn of the century, for example, a Matriculation Diploma, or Graduation Certificate, was proposed by ministers and explored by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). In response to this proposal, QCA gave serious consideration to the identification and recognition of wider achievement, producing a report (QCA, 2001) which sets out the issues in some detail. This remains a useful source. It includes sections on: providing a workable model of quality standards that can be used for the wider activities; developing a model for a transcript recording a young person's achievements; developing a mechanism for collecting, storing and collating information for the certificate; and a framework for the wider activities contributing to a Graduation Certificate. This award was not developed.

- 3.35 In 2004, a Working Group on 14-19 Reform, chaired by Mike Tomlinson, proposed a new school qualifications structure made up of 'overarching' Diplomas. And finally, although Ministers did not fully accept the Tomlinson proposals, it was decided to develop what were then described as 'Specialised Diplomas' – now simply 'Diplomas' – to sit alongside (and where appropriate include) A/AS levels and GCSEs. The Tomlinson Group had tried to give significant breadth to their proposed group awards. All 14-19 programmes were to include *main learning* and *core learning*, indicative of a real attempt to change the basis of the 14-19 curriculum. *Main learning* was concerned with recognised academic and vocational subjects and *core learning* would include common knowledge, skills and attributes, an entitlement to wider activities, and support for learners in planning and reviewing their learning. The Specialised Diplomas (now Diplomas), on the other hand, incorporate academic and vocational content and work experience and foster the development of an extended range of generic skills, which includes independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-management and effective

³ Online at <http://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/>

participation. They also include an integrative project designed to show breadth and independence of learning (QCA, 2008). Through its design, therefore, the Diploma incorporates a number of types and aspects of wider achievement, but does not seek to foreground these in distinctive awards or profiles.

- 3.36 Proposals for a Welsh Baccalaureate, also based on the International Baccalaureate, were first published in 1993.⁴ In 2000, the Assembly Government decided to pilot a Welsh Baccalaureate, but chose not to adopt the original proposals and instead to use existing qualifications as a basis for the new qualification. The core of the Welsh Baccalaureate is intended to provide breadth and balance and ensure that candidates develop generic skills through activities and pursuits which complement the knowledge and skills gained in the options, drawn from existing qualifications.
- 3.37 Core components include Personal and Social Education, as part of which candidates are required to engage in an activity in the local community. There is also an Individual Investigation – an opportunity to carry out personal research into an area of interest from the core programme or the optional studies. Assessment methods for these components are varied and include diaries or other records of activities and experiences, ‘verification and evaluation’ statements completed by supervisors or leaders in community and employment settings, and portfolios of evidence for key skill outcomes.

The International Baccalaureate

- 3.38 The International Baccalaureate, already cited as a model for UK developments in England and Wales, is a composite award consisting of study in six subjects, the completion of an extended essay of up to 4,000 words, participation in a component entitled *Theory of Knowledge*, and a requirement to undertake at least 50 hours in each of three broader areas of activity – labelled *creative*, *action*, and *service*. These include undertaking creative and/or design or planning activities, participating in sport or other physical activities, including expeditions and international projects, and doing community service or social work. According to the International Baccalaureate Organisation (2002), these are likely to be co-operative activities and are intended ‘to educate the whole person and foster a more compassionate and active citizenry’. The IBO uses a system of self-evaluation which ‘encourages students to reflect on the benefits of these activities to themselves and to others, and to evaluate the understanding and insights acquired’. These activities are a requirement of the award, but do not make a quantitative contribution to the assessment and grading. Using the value system explored at the beginning of this report we could say that these activities are recognised for their intrinsic, and perhaps their utility value, but have no exchange value.

Higher Education

- 3.39 Work on awards of this kind continues elsewhere. A current example is the development of the Nottingham University ‘Advantage Award’, described as ‘the centrepiece of a new framework for student skills, employability and personal and academic development’ (Dudderidge, 2008). The aims of the framework and the award, are to:

⁴ John David & Colin Jenkins: *The Welsh Baccalaureate: Matching International Standards*

- recognise personal qualities and abilities, beyond the purely academic, as demonstrated through group-based activities;
- articulate their extra-curricular learning;
- enhance independent, intentional learning behaviours likely to strengthen both academic performance and employability;
- deepen reflective learning;
- develop IT skills through the use of online tools to plan and evidence activity.

Conclusions – previous and current developments

- 3.40 In England, group awards have been proposed many times as a means of changing the curriculum. Those who argue for these qualifications, in their different guises, appear to seek two main changes: promoting vocational education in the final stages of secondary school and broadening out a curriculum based on two or three A-levels in the post-compulsory curriculum. In Scotland these issues have been tackled in different ways. Potentially, Highers and Standard Grades / Intermediates offer a reasonable broad curriculum because students can readily take between five and eight courses in a year. Also, the range of subjects available is quite broad, and has recently been extended in new ways by the introduction of *Skills for work* courses. Stakeholders seem to accept the idea that the content of these courses can be very varied, but appear to want to stick to the idea of courses which last around 160 hours and are separately certificated.
- 3.41 Thus, in Scotland, group awards have not had strong uptake in the schools sector so far, although they are popular in the college sector. And where they have had some success, this has tended to be with the same students for whom SVS and certificated PSE have been seen as offering a suitable curriculum – those who are less academically successful. Consultation on Scottish Group Awards (SGAs), developed as part of the Higher Still initiative, produced some very negative responses, with higher education bodies in particular making it clear that they saw these qualifications as unnecessary and would not support them or use them for entry purposes. By and large schools have not found them particularly useful, and students have not seen an added value in them. What SGAs add to programmes of national courses is a core skills profile, but, as we have seen, core skills have not been consistently supported by teachers, students, parents, gatekeepers or other end-users. This may be because SGAs do not offer the kind of flexible credit transfer arrangements which would allow wider achievements to count towards a qualification without being matched to the outcomes of existing units.
- 3.42 From August 2009, however, two new qualifications have been available in schools which aim to encompass and encourage wider achievement of a kind in high-level academic awards for the schools sector. Scottish Baccalaureates in Science and Languages will comprise two Advanced Higher courses, one Higher course and an Interdisciplinary Project which will comprise 80 hours of study at Advanced Higher level. The Interdisciplinary Project will focus on developing generic skills such as research and investigation, collaborative working and information management. Students will carry out an investigation or practical assignment – the examples given by the SQA for the two qualifications are *Employability and using languages in the Scottish market* and *Testing energy options for sustainable solutions*. This involves the students working in contexts other than school, such as college, university, in the community or in a workplace. The Interdisciplinary Project is intended to help

students to develop and show evidence of initiative, responsibility, and the ability to work independently.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Scotland

- 3.43 As indicated above, a lot of development work around the world has gone into, and is going into, RPL and in particular to the recognition of prior learning which has taken place non-formally or informally – ie learning which is not structured according to a curriculum or learning plan designed to lead to assessable standards. Scotland is relatively advanced in this area and good practice in a number of institutions and contexts has been brought together by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership. This section explores the guidance given in the SCQF Handbook and identifies areas where it can be related or adapted to more generic processes of recognition of achievement of different kinds.
- 3.44 Volume 2 of the Handbook defines RPL as: '*All prior learning which has not previously been assessed or credit-rated*'. The Handbook goes on to say that this includes, '*prior learning achieved through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained in non-formal contexts through community-based learning; workplace learning and training; continuing professional development; and independent learning*'. (SCQF Partnership 2007, p3)
- 3.45 The Handbook also interprets *recognition* in a broad way, including the following:
- recognition by self, and by others (peers; colleagues; employer; community) of the value of strengths and skills gained through prior learning to increase learner self-confidence and motivation;
 - a more supported transition from an informal to a formal learning context in a college, SQA-approved centre or university as part of a bridging process;
 - a mapping or notional levelling of an individual's learning within the context of the SCQF in order to help identify possible progression routes;
 - planning of individual learning pathway; personal/career development plan; or personal learning plan which will build on this learning in order to achieve goals;
 - preparation of RPL claims for either general credit or for specific credit to gain entry to, or credit within, a formal programme of study or qualification.
- 3.46 The ultimate point of the SCQF process is securing recorded recognition – what has been called the *proving* approach in this report. It is significant that, in spite of this, the SCQF list of forms of recognition takes account of recognition by the learner, identification of progression routes, and personal planning – these relate to the *understanding* and *explaining* approaches.
- 3.47 The Handbook also offers a set of principles for RPL which may be adapted to the recognition of achievement, as follows:
- the process should be learner-centred – 'a gateway and not a barrier' – with the learner's reasons for seeking recognition leading the process and designed to promote the positive aspects of the individual's experience and learning;
 - the process should be flexible and capable of responding to the diversity of learner needs, goals and experiences;
 - it should be the learning which results from experience, not the experience itself, which is given recognition;

- the process should distinguish between learning which is context specific and learning which is transferable – in most (if not all) cases, it will be transferable learning which has most value;
- the processes of RPL should be designed to give the learning and the recognition a high value relative to the purpose – ideally, comparable with the outcomes of formal, assessed learning;
- this means that the process has to have approaches to quality assurance which can provide reliability, transparency and consistency at levels appropriate to the form of recognition being pursued.

3.48 The SCQF Handbook also states that RPL should be a voluntary activity on the part of the learner.

3.49 Of these principles, the first three are applicable to all three approaches to the recognition of achievement identified in this report – ie *understanding*, *explaining* and *proving*. The second three relate most clearly to the *proving* approach. However, they also relate to the *explaining* approach: persuading gatekeepers and other end-users to give functional recognition to achievements requires careful and customised selection and presentation of information about the achievements. Also, although the requirements of functional recognition will be less structured than those of recorded recognition, claims for functional recognition will normally need to be backed by valid and authentic evidence.

3.50 As far as possible, these concerns have been taken account of in the model set out in the next part of this report.

4 A MODEL FOR RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

4.1 In this part of the report a model is proposed which can be used to support learners to gather evidence of their achievements and to select from three different ways in which learning can be analysed and interpreted. The model is intended to ensure that young people can be supported to make the most of all their learning in pursuit of the capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence* – to improve their learning, to secure appropriate progression in education, to gain suitable employment or to undertake other roles in society.

Structure

4.2 The model of recognition which is proposed here is derived from the forms of recognition and analyses of added value identified and discussed in this report (especially in Andersson, P, et al, 2004 and Boyd, B, et al, 2007). It also draws on the analysis of the main uses of portfolios identified by the AlphaPlus Consultancy (AlphaPlus Consultancy, 2007). These bases of the model are discussed in part one of this report and relevant passages from the original sources are attached as Appendices 2 and 3.

4.3 In this section, the idea of a personal portfolio and three approaches to recognition are explored in more detail.

4.4 This model for managing recognition of achievement is centred on a personal portfolio of materials associated with activities of all kinds and their outcomes.

4.5 Using this model, the individual can be supported to become a reflective learner who can gather materials associated with all kinds of achievement and learning in a personal portfolio and can use this material in three ways:

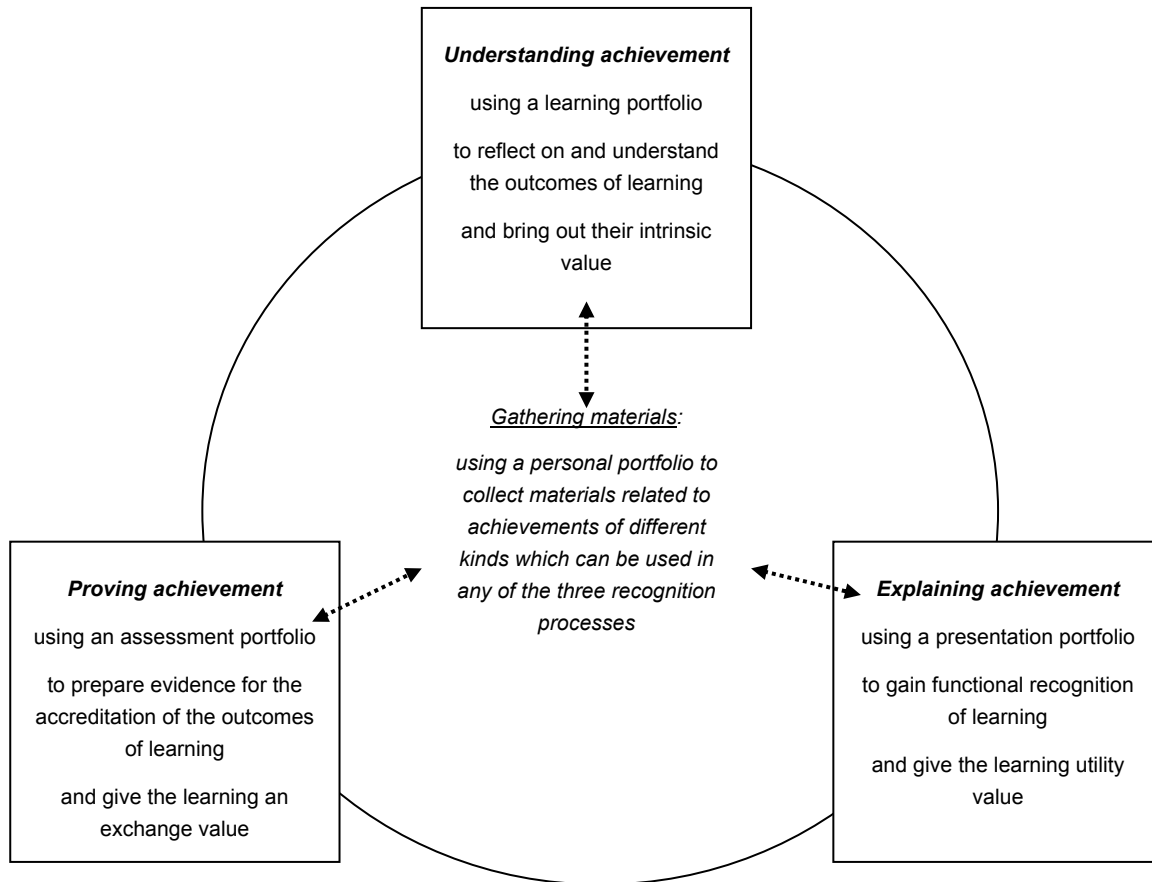
- **understanding**: by reflecting on materials in his/her personal portfolio, the individual learner can better understand the learning which the materials represent with a view to improving personal development and/or further learning;
- **explaining**: reflecting on materials in his/her personal portfolio with a particular end in view, the individual learner can select and adapt the materials to explain what has been learned to others (such as those who are responsible for selecting for the next stage of education or training, for employment, or for involvement in the voluntary sector) and securing functional recognition from them;
- **proving**: with a view to gaining the accreditation of previous learning, the individual learner can select and prepare the materials which give proof of achievement against standards set by a body which gives recorded recognition – ie awards certification of some kind or awards credit.

4.6 Success in implementing the model will be closely related to effective teaching, learning and assessment.

4.7 The three approaches in the model are intended to be iterative and linked through the personal portfolio. Each time materials from the portfolio are used to follow one of the approaches the process will modify or enhance the contents of the personal portfolio in some way, making it more useful for further work in any of the three approaches.

4.8 Each of the approaches in the model is described in more detail below. This brings together the different aspects of each process from the earlier sections of the report.

A model for managing the recognition of achievement



Understanding – bringing out the intrinsic value of achievement

4.9 In this approach, learners are supported to review their activities and experiences and to identify and understand the learning which has resulted from these. The process brings out the intrinsic value of the learning, ie the direct value to the learner. The approach involves using a learning portfolio in which individuals manage, reflect on and develop records of their achievements. The outcomes of the approach should be improved self-esteem and motivation, personal development and enhanced further learning through personal learning planning.

Explaining – identifying the utility value of achievement

4.10 In this approach learners are supported to understand the value which their achievements may have to selectors, or gatekeepers, in education, employment and the voluntary sector. The process brings out the utility value of the learning, ie the value to selectors and gatekeepers. The approach involves the development of a presentation portfolio in which learners select and transform information about learning and achievement to make it suitable for a particular audience – this might take the form of a CV. The outcomes of the approach should be an improved

understanding by the learner of what specific selectors and gatekeepers are looking for and an ability to select and present information about achievement, communicating effectively in writing, orally and appropriately to these end-users' requirements and concerns. This approach should assist individuals making applications or going through selection processes.

Proving – gathering evidence to secure the accreditation of achievement

4.11 In this approach learners are supported to understand the value which their achievements may have to bodies which can accredit their learning. Accreditation may take the form of an award of credit, or the award of a qualification or part of a qualification. The process brings out the exchange value of learning, ie the value which the outcomes of learning from one context can have in another. The approach involves the development of an assessment portfolio for which learners select or generate information which can serve as evidence for the assessment of prior learning against specified standards. The outcomes of the approach should be an improved understanding of standards and assessment processes by the learner and the accreditation of previously unrecognised learning. The approach should assist individuals seeking an alternative route to a qualification based on their prior learning.

Stages

4.12 In this section principles which should guide the work of implementation are suggested and the stages which individuals using the model will have to go through are set out in detail.

4.13 The model will have to be supported by quality principles for implementation. The Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2004) has established principles to govern the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and these are reproduced in Appendix 4 of this report. For this model, these principles can sit alongside the seven principles developed by the Scottish Government and inform the development of an approach to the recognition of wider/additional achievement. They have been adapted for the purposes of this report to apply to the recognition of wider/additional learning and provide a basis for implementation as follows:

- the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should be a voluntary matter for the individual;
- there should be equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals;
- schools should establish systems and approaches for the identification and validation of wider/additional learning;
- these systems and processes must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms;
- schools should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.

4.14 With these principles in mind, each of the three approaches can be thought of as consisting of the following stages, which are drawn from a number of RPL studies and guidelines including the SCQF guidance, the national principles of the Qualifications Frameworks of Australia and New Zealand, the policy of the Danish government, the Learning and Skills Council 2003 report on recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning, and the staff guidelines of the University of the West of Scotland (McKay, 2008).

4.15 The level of explicitness and formality of each of these stages will depend on the age or stage of the learners, the contexts of their learning and their individual needs. The process will be spiral or iterative, rather than sequential, as learners apply the principles and model in different contexts; indeed learners may often make use of more than one stage simultaneously.

a) Developing understanding

Learners are supported in developing their understanding of the idea of *recognising achievement* and of how they can make use of the model. They are also supported in developing their understanding of the model, particularly the benefits which can accrue from the different approaches to the recognition of achievement and what they have to do to follow each of the approaches.

b) Reflecting on learning

Learners are supported in thinking about their activities and experiences to identify their achievements and to understand and describe the knowledge, skills and attributes they have developed.

c) Establishing aims

Learners consider why and in what way(s) they want to pursue the recognition of achievement and the outcomes they want to achieve. They are supported to ensure that their aims are realistic in the light of their findings in stage (b).

d) Putting evidence together

Learners build up a body of evidence of achievement over time in a personal portfolio. This may involve gathering together evidence which already exists, or setting out to generate new evidence. The nature of this evidence is likely to vary according to the aims established at stage (c) and according to the age of the learner. It might include:

- self-generated material, such as learning logs or diaries, summary accounts of learning (in any medium or format), records related to personal learning planning;
- evidence of peer- and self-evaluation exercises (in any medium or format);
- authenticated evidence from others, such as: reports from teachers, youth workers, or employers; testimonials from those responsible for out-of-school clubs and groups; testimonials from those running community events or classes in areas such as sports, music or dance; or statements from social and community contacts;
- the authenticated outcomes of tasks or projects, such as folios, reports, electronic files or physical products;
- the results of formal assessments in or out of school.

e) Presenting evidence

The ways in which this evidence is used and presented will depend on the balance between understanding, proving and valuing. This will lead to a number of activities depending on the student's intentions.

The most common activity is likely to be when children and young people will work with their teacher, their peers or others to understand their achievements, identify learning to date, and plan further learning.

At relevant points they may consider their learning against requirements for participation in some activity. For older individuals these may take the form of formal entry requirements, job specifications or the profiles of potential employers.

At some points they may evaluate their evidence of learning against the standards of particular awards in which they have an interest.

In each case they should identify useful ways of presenting the evidence and any weaknesses or gaps in the evidence relative to their purpose. This might lead to planning and undertaking additional activities or generating further evidence.

Evaluation

- 4.16 In this section some of the implications of adopting the model are considered, in particular planning for the future evaluation of the model should it be adopted.
- 4.17 If this or a similar model were to be adopted it is recommended that an independent evaluation of its effectiveness should be undertaken after a suitable period of implementation – it is likely that at least three years would be required to introduce a system of this kind and produce effects which were not affected by implementation issues.
- 4.18 Dymock & Billett (cited in Dymock, *Tutor Tips*, undated publication of the Queensland Council for Adult Literacy) carried out a worldwide review of studies of wider learning in adult education and identified seven areas in which positive outcomes were reported. These were improvements in:
- self-confidence and personal competence – the extent to which learners have a positive sense of self and a belief that they can put their capabilities into action;
 - engagement with others – the extent to which learners interact with other individuals in the family, at work and at sites such as schools, government offices, and shops;
 - attitudes to learning – learners' attitudes towards current and future learning, and their willingness/ability to learn how to learn;
 - agency/pro-activity – the extent to which learners actively access and negotiate or shape experience and can learn from it;
 - life trajectories – learners' goals, ambitions and expectations;
 - personal growth/personal change – the extent to which learners perceive they have grown and/or changed as a person;
 - social capital – the extent of learners' participation in community activities, involvement in networks and clubs, and engagement with other social situations.
- 4.19 If the model is to be adopted and implemented, it should be considered whether baseline data relating to outcomes such as these should be established. A further area of potential improvement relating to functional recognition, forms of recorded recognition other than SQA awards, and the use of alternative routes to the awards

of SQA and other bodies (ie the use of RPL and portfolios of evidence) might also be included in the establishment of baseline data.

- 4.20 The extent to which the introduction of the model was contributing to improvements in the achievement of these or similar outcomes should form the basis of any evaluation following implementation.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Overall conclusions

- 5.1 Internationally, as illustrated by the Japanese example, most of the development work related to recognising achievement is associated with a perceived need to create a lifelong learning society (Council of the European Union 2006). This may translate as a concern to develop a more active citizenry or a more effective or attractive workforce.
- 5.2 Most of the activity which relates to the recognition of extra-curricular and experiential learning appears to be taking place in higher and adult education. Indeed some of the most useful sources relating to the recognition of wider or additional learning, relates to the validation of the non-formal and informal learning of adults. Although this is a different sector of education, the sources can be seen as appropriate if we consider that the 'additional learning' to be explored within *Curriculum for Excellence* may be an important foundation for lifelong learning, defined by the European Commission as follows: *In addition to the emphasis it places on learning from pre-school to postretirement, lifelong learning should encompass the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The objectives of lifelong learning include active citizenship, personal fulfilment and social inclusion, as well as employment-related aspects.* (European Commission, 2001, p3f).
- 5.3 The most important issues to emerge from the literature are the following, all linked to credibility:
- In practice there tends to be a perceived link between the need to recognise wider achievement and lack of achievement within the formal curriculum. Within the school sector, this can mean that the recorded recognition of wider achievement may be seen as a compensatory award and at worst as a badge of failure.
 - Recognition of achievement tends to be associated with bureaucracy rather than learning, although there is anecdotal evidence from the implementation of core skills that some of the bureaucracy can be self-imposed, ie the process of capturing achievement can be turned into an administrative, rather than an educational, exercise.
 - There are at least two levels of recognition involved: recognition of young people's achievements within the system and recognition which is external to the system: the link between the two is not straightforward. While the system may seek to measure and recognise the knowledge, skills and competences which end-users identify as requirements for progression, this does not guarantee that the end-users of recorded recognition will give weight or credence – functional recognition – to the outcomes.
- 5.4 The model for managing the recognition of achievement requires learners – individuals or groups – to reflect on their experiences and analyse these to identify and evaluate what they may have achieved in circumstances where these outcomes were not previously considered, or not apparent. Reflection of this kind should be a learning process as well as an analytical one. Students should be encouraged to examine their own attitudes and abilities, strengths and weaknesses as well as identifying and recording the outcomes they have achieved and in this way to pursue personal development. It may be said that, while they are trying to identify current competences and capabilities, they are also developing new knowledge,

understanding and skills. There is evidence that many adults and young people find this liberating, motivating and confidence-building, improving self-esteem and leading to a desire for further learning (eg Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1996; and Whittaker, S. et al (2006) 'Understanding the transformative dimension of RPL', cited in Dukevot and Konrad (2007)).

- 5.5 The approach used will be determined by the purpose for which the model is being used. If an individual is looking to achieve a deeper understanding of their own achievements, eg for personal development or to decide on appropriate future learning goals, the process will not require the learner to produce the kind of evidence which is necessary for formal evaluation. However, if an individual is looking for recorded recognition, the evidence gathered will have to be stronger and more exactly matched to the learning outcomes or competences of existing programmes or awards. If an individual is looking for functional recognition, then something between these approaches will be required. What will be most important is the individual learner's ability to set down in writing (eg in a CV) and to explain (eg in an interview) what their achievements are and why they are relevant to the course, job or role they are seeking to enter or take on. Inevitably, some of their own testimony will require to be supported by evidence of authenticity provided by a credible signatory, but this does not imply the establishment the kind of quality assurance associated with recorded recognition at a national level.
- 5.6 The idea of functional recognition, which is part of the model, is important. It raises some questions about how to interpret the statement that, '*Many young people ... have developed skills and capacities for which they are not currently gaining recognition*' (Scottish Government, 2008 p45). And, as has been shown in the report, it also raises questions about how to tackle the issue of increasing, improving or securing functional recognition, given that most efforts to date to bring about more recognition of different kinds of achievement – including better understanding by the learners themselves, effective mechanisms for making this concrete, and increasing recognition by selectors and recruiters in colleges, universities and in the labour market – have not been sustained or, ultimately, successful.

Considerations for implementation

- 5.7 A number of questions arise from the starting point of the investigation in *Curriculum for Excellence* and the subsequent review of research and development reports and underlie the rationale for the model set out above. These questions do not directly affect the model proposed here, but are among the issues to be considered in adopting and implementing it.
- 5.8 The questions are:
- **How important is recognition of achievement and how does it relate to the individual's understanding of his/her achievement?**
- One theme which pervades this report is the link between achieving and learning. Sometimes learning is achievement, sometimes learning is a by-product of achievement and sometimes it is implicit in the achievement, but requires reflection, which may have to be supported, to make it explicit. Recognition of all kinds can contribute to learning, and it can give it value. Particularly with younger children, where learning may have no utility value or exchange value, recognition by others, often in their milieu (ie parents, teachers and peers) will reinforce the intrinsic value of achievement and should contribute to understanding, which can be seen as recognition by the learner. For young people wanting to use their

achievements to secure some new role or entry to work or further study, particularly those moving towards the end of their school years, recognition by others outside the milieu (recorded recognition by awarding bodies and functional recognition by selectors) will have increasing importance and should help individual to reaching an understanding of the different kinds of value which their achievements can have.

- **How true is it that the wider achievements of young people for which there is no recorded recognition are not recognised?**

The question of what constitutes recognition is complex. In this report important distinctions are drawn between recorded and functional recognition and between different kinds of recorded recognition, and it is suggested that the links between these are relatively complex and will vary from context to context. Achievements which gain recorded recognition may not always gain functional recognition, and functional recognition may be given to achievements for which there is no tangible record. These points are fundamental to the model for recognition of achievement.

- **How far does the degree of functional recognition of young people's achievements relate to their ability to explain these achievements?**

This brings together the answers to the first two questions. For many educationists there will be an issue about the extent to which action associated with the model should try to work with the norms of recruitment and selection and how far implementation should try to change these. The model gives due place to the intrinsic value of achievement alongside potential utility value and exchange value. Applicants for courses or jobs are likely to have to submit a CV of some kind and/or undergo an interview and their success will depend on their ability to explain what they can do in terms which will persuade the selectors. This suggests that implementation of the model should give full weight to all three kinds of value built into the model and should aim to develop the ability of young people to secure the three related forms of recognition.

- **If recognition by others is appropriate, what kind of provision is most likely to be valuable for young people?**

It has been shown that recorded recognition can have a particular value, but does not guarantee functional recognition. There is also anecdotal evidence that employers and academic gatekeepers can be slow to adopt new provision in recruitment and selection. Securing recorded recognition through RPL and portfolios of evidence can also raise issues of management, assessment and quality assurance. These considerations suggest that recorded recognition is not always the best approach and should be used selectively. However, there is a possibility that new forms of recorded recognition could be developed, for example in the form of records of outcomes achieved in programmes other than those leading to national units, or flexible credit awarded for wider achievement.

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APPENDIX 1

Extract from Scottish Government (2008): *Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3*, p.45

- A1.1 Gaining recognition for their achievements, and the skills for life and skills for work that are developed through them, can benefit all young people. It can increase their confidence, raise their aspirations, improve their motivation for learning and keep them engaged in education. In addition the process of planning, recording and recognising achievements can help young people to reflect on their learning and development and can be valuable starting points when it comes to articulating themselves in applications to and interviews with employers, colleges or universities.
- A1.2 Many young people in Scotland are already involved in a range of activities, both in and out of school and college, and have developed skills and capacities for which they are not currently gaining recognition. As well as planning how they can provide young people with greater opportunities for personal achievement, schools, colleges and other education providers should be looking at how greater recognition can then be given to young people's achievements beyond formal qualifications.
- A1.3 A number of education authorities, schools, colleges and other education providers across Scotland have already developed ways of recognising their students' achievements, through the use of certificates and awards, school notice boards, on-line portfolios and awards ceremonies.
- A1.4 Many, however, do not have such arrangements in place or are looking to develop their approach to this. As part of the *Curriculum for Excellence* programme, the Scottish Government is actively considering how to support local authorities, schools and other education providers in doing this. In addition, links are being established with universities, colleges and employers to ensure they are fully involved in this area of work.

Reflective Questions

- How can you build on your practice in personal learning planning to support young people in evaluating their development in terms of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work?
- A summary of personal achievement should be supported and informed by a variety of partners. How could you develop partnership working to build a shared picture of achievement particularly in literacy and numeracy?
- How could you ensure that frameworks for recognising personal achievements motivate and support all young people?

APPENDIX 2

Extract from Andersson, P, et al (2004): 'Recognition of Prior Vocational Learning in Sweden' in *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 36(1), Spring 2004, pp.67-68

A2.1 We may well ask whether the RPL initiatives are worthwhile. In order to say yes to this question, RPL should achieve its aim of making the real but formally invisible competence and knowledge visible, and the results of RPL should be accepted in society. The results of RPL are expected to have utility value, exchange value and intrinsic value. When individuals realise their real competence and knowledge and acquire greater self-esteem, we can say that RPL has achieved intrinsic value. We can also say that competence and knowledge have not only utility value in the different contexts but also exchange value when people become employed or gain admission to higher education as a result of recognised competence and knowledge. Formal competence and knowledge have a strong position here. We have already pointed out that RPL is a process that translates real competence and knowledge into formal competence and knowledge. An important part of RPL is that the participants acquire documentation of their competence and knowledge. To realise the exchange value of RPL, it is important that the employers and the educational system trust in the formalisation of real competence and knowledge through RPL. RPL is not an established system in Sweden. It is expected that it will take time for RPL to earn the trust commanded by an established system.

Extract from Boyd, B, et al (2007): *A Curriculum for Excellence - a Review of Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement – Final report*, pp10-11

A2.2 A further question concerns the establishment of value for assessment and recognition of wider achievement. In this context, it has been noted that there is a need to further describe the nature of value that is being assessed. In the development of processes to recognise prior learning in Sweden (Andersson *et al*, 2004), several different kinds of value were defined:

- **Exchange value:** recognition of competence and knowledge for employment or admission to further/higher education
- **Intrinsic value:** when individuals recognise their competence and knowledge and acquire greater self esteem
- **Utility value:** recognition of competence and knowledge by the assessment system itself.

APPENDIX 3

Extract from AlphaPlus Consultancy (2007): *Recognising Wider Achievement - Using Portfolios and e-Portfolios*, pp.3-4

- A3.1 In understanding current practice it is helpful to look at the distinct types and uses of e-portfolios: this single term is used to describe very different activities.
- A3.2 Modern e-portfolios can be **general** or **specific**.
- A3.3 **Specific e-portfolios** (by far the most common) are designed for a particular and relatively narrow purpose (e.g. to meet assessment requirements for a single qualification or to transfer information with a learner as they move from one institution to another) and support roles (e.g. learner, peer learner, class tutor, assessor, verifier, admissions tutor), and processes (assembling, revising, submitting, marking, moderating) to that end. They contain only a portion of information relating to the learner's journey in terms of scope and time, relating to a single area of study.
- A3.4 **General e-portfolios** aim to provide a store for all the learner's information, allow all the necessary roles to interact with it, and support a wide variety of processes over a lengthy period. Providing 'lifelong e-portfolios' successfully is more challenging, and while much research exists, examples of successful practice are harder to find. This is of course particularly pertinent to a wider achievement e-portfolio.
- A3.5 E-portfolios are used for four distinct purposes, noting that particular systems may aim to serve more than one of these.
- The **transition e-portfolio**: transferring learner information (both administrative and educational from one institution to another as a learner progresses (eg transfer of internal and external assessment information from primary to secondary school, the UCAS application process, transfer of transcripts and credits when a student moves from one HE programme or institution to another).
 - The **assessment e-portfolio**: assisting the learner in assembling and submitting evidence of work undertaken and achievements for formal, summative and external assessment against specified external criteria (eg for a qualification, award, etc).
 - The **presentation e-portfolio**: assisting the learner in selecting and presenting personal information and achievements for a particular audience, with the purpose of showcasing the individual or particular aspects of work. The presentation e-portfolio has much in common with traditional portfolios used by artists, designers, architects and engineers, but has broader application in employment application and professional certification.
 - The **personal learning space e-portfolio**: assisting the learner, throughout their learning programme, in creating, managing, reflecting on and developing their work, including formative assessment from teachers and peers, action planning and progress monitoring. There is great diversity in current implementations of the personal learning space. In addition to the core repository, distinct functions include initial assessment tools, formative assessment tools, curriculum structure, assessment criteria, programme information, PDP/ILP tools, social software allowing learners to collaborate, workflow tools, to help manage and record the

education processes of submitting work, receiving feedback, reflecting and revising, storing new versions, etc.

- A3.6 It is important to note that this vision of the personal learning space is more than simply an ICT-enabled vision of current teaching and learning practice. By placing ICT at the heart of the pedagogy, with the form and function of the ICT potentially greatly influenced by (and influencing) teaching and learning approach, the challenges of ICT implementation, e-maturity, and transforming teaching and learning become intertwined.

APPENDIX 4

Extract from the Council of the European Union: *Draft Conclusions on Common Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*

A4.1 The common European principles reflect the cooperative work at European level in follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration, the Council Resolution of 19 December 2002, the work programmes on the Future Objectives and, in particular, the Joint Interim Report 'Education and Training 2010', February 2004. The principles are set out under the following main headings:

- **Individual entitlements**

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should, in principle, be a voluntary matter for the individual. There should be equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals. The privacy and rights of the individual are to be respected.

- **Obligations of stakeholders**

Stakeholders should establish, in accordance with their rights, responsibilities and competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These should include appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Stakeholders should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.

- **Confidence and trust**

The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.

- **Credibility and legitimacy**

Systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders.

A4.2 The process of assessment should be impartial and mechanisms should be put in place to avoid any conflict of interest. The professional competence of those who carry out assessment should also be assured.

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