



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Evaluation of the Impact of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

Enterprise and Lifelong Learning



**EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE
SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK (SCQF)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Aims

1. This study was commissioned by the Scottish Executive, Enterprise Transport and Lifelong Learning Department and partners in SCQF; Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Universities Scotland, and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), as an evaluation of the initial impact of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The aims of this research were influenced by the fact that while implementation work is well underway, the SCQF is also in a development phase. This research therefore focuses upon the initial impact of the SCQF, the processes of implementation, and plans for the future use of the SCQF, taking account of its aims.
2. A key focus of the project was the gathering of views from a wide range of stakeholders, interest groups, and practitioners.

Background and Context

3. The SCQF was formally launched in December 2001, three months after the publication of *An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF, 2001). This described the formal structure of the Framework and stated that the general aims of the SCQF are to:
 - assist people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential
 - enable employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce
4. The SCQF is also intended to provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and will:
 - make the relationships between qualifications clearer
 - clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression
 - maximise the opportunities for credit transfer
 - assist learners to plan their progress and learning (SCQF, 2001, pp.1-2)
5. The SCQF is a comprehensive framework, and unlike many other qualification frameworks, it includes higher education and academic and vocational qualifications, and it aims to include informal learning. Compared with other comprehensive frameworks the SCQF is distinguished by the leading role the university sector has played in its development.

Methodology

6. The approach to this research has been qualitative, employing a purposive sampling framework involving specialists, practitioners and stakeholders from national organisations, FE/HE institutions, employers and professional bodies.

7. The fieldwork consisted of 69 interviews. 20 with key informants and representatives of national organisations, 5 with UK informants, 34 with staff from further and higher education institutions, 5 with employers, and 4 with professional bodies. Responses displayed a diverse geographical spread. It is important to note however that the key informant interviews acted as scoping study in the early stage of the project. Based on the information gathered at this scoping stage, it was agreed that a substantial part of the research would focus on staff in further education colleges and higher education institutions. This reflects the fact that this is where almost all of the activity involving SQCF is taking place at present. Further details of the participants and the methodological approach are outlined in Section Four.

Knowledge and Understanding of the SCQF

8. The level of knowledge and understanding of the SCQF relates to the extent to which people are involved in using the framework.

9. Knowledge and understanding of the Framework is high within the FE and HE sectors among those who have made use of it, but limited among general staff.

10. A limited amount of staff development activity has been carried out within FE and HE institutions.

11. There are some examples of positive involvement with the Framework amongst other stakeholder groups, but knowledge and understanding is more limited than that in the FE and HE sectors, and this is associated with limited involvement with, and use of, the Framework.

12. Other stakeholder groups have highlighted the need to engage people with the SCQF, to encourage them to view the SCQF as important and relevant.

13. A number of respondents expressed a concern that publicity, and particularly some of the earlier statements, about the Framework had encouraged unrealistic expectations regarding the potential for the Framework to introduce change. This raises questions about the scope and function of the Framework which may require clarification.

Expectations and perceptions of the SCQF

14. Respondents from all sectors reported perceptions of and expectations for the Framework which were positive in a number of ways.

15. The perception of the impact of the SCQF in both FE and HE is that its value has been in building on change such as that introduced by SCOTCATS in helping to enhance provision and clarify structures.

16. Stakeholders from other sectors also expressed the expectation that SCQF would help clarify pathways and progression, create new opportunities for learners and greater cohesion in provision.

17. There was an expectation from stakeholders in sectors such as community based learning and vocational and work based training that the framework could assist with the recognition of learning, and the creation of more opportunities for credit transfer.

18. However, these optimistic perceptions and expectations were balanced by the view that progress towards introducing change had been slow, the impact so far had been limited in many areas, and there was some scepticism about the extent to which expectations for greater flexibility within lifelong learning provision would be achieved.

19. Concerns regarding the slow progress in the development of SCQF was expressed most strongly by employers and those engaged with vocational education and training.

Impact and Operation of the Framework

20. There is evidence that SCQF has already had a considerable impact, particularly within the HE sector. However this has largely been as an enabling tool, facilitating curriculum development and quality enhancement within the HEIs. In this respect it has built on the earlier developments associated with SCOTCATS, modularisation etc.

21. Within the HE sector the SCQF has been described as impacting upon curriculum development and review, validation, admissions arrangements and programme planning.

22. In the FE sector, it is recognized that while SCQF has facilitated changes associated with mapping of provision, and planning of provision and progression, its impact has been more limited because curriculum development takes place largely under the auspices of SQA.

23. Within the FE sector the framework was viewed as having a role in shaping wider developments including the HN Review process, and through this more FE staff were becoming involved with the use of the Framework.

24. It is important to distinguish between the specific contribution of the SCQF and the impact of the sub-frameworks, such as National Qualifications and SCOTCATS, when considering wider changes in the educational system.

25. In this context there is only limited evidence of change which can be attributed to the specific contribution of SCQF.

26. In particular, with respect to the development of articulation and credit transfer arrangements between FE colleges and HEIs, there was little evidence that SCQF had contributed much beyond providing a language and tools to underpin arrangements that would have usually been introduced in the absence of the SCQF.

27. Some respondents, particularly from the HEIs, were happy that SCQF was not forcing the pace of change. Others, particularly from the FECs expressed some ‘cynicism’ or ‘scepticism’ about the extent to which SCQF would help introduce change of the type they had hoped for.

28. With regard to vocational and work based qualifications there was little evidence of progress. This was partly associated with the attempts to undertake these developments in a UK context, but the failure to secure progress was leading to a degree of frustration among employers and those involved with vocational training.

29. Opportunities for developments in the field of community based learning have been welcomed, although limited progress has so far been made, and the scale and complexity of the tasks involved have been noted.

Curriculum Case Studies

30. The curriculum areas identified were Social Services and Engineering.

Social Services

31. Social services is an area where legislation and the work of the SSSC has been crucial in promoting the uptake of the SCQF in formulating qualifications across a range of levels and subjects. There are different levels of enthusiasm about this – from compliance to opportunity – but also different levels of awareness, knowledge and understanding both within institutions and across institutions.

32. The significance of SCQF to developments in the social services can be seen by the existence of a special SCQF development project in this area.

33. The SCQF is viewed as having a positive effect on the structure and organisation of the curriculum within social services.

34. There appears to be limited understanding of the issues faced by different types of institution in relation to credit transfer and articulation, although articulation is seen as both an opportunity and as problematic in relation to SCQF.

35. A requirement for more staff development was highlighted by participants in this area.

Engineering

36. Engineering as a curriculum area has relatively settled patterns of provision, which has accommodated the development of the SCQF, but would appear to have been only affected by the framework to a very limited extent.

37. There is an expectation that SCQF will have an increased impact in the future, this is related to developments in APEL and credit transfer.

38. There is a general awareness of the SCQF but little detailed knowledge. A requirement for more staff development was highlighted by some participants in this area.

39. There are concerns regarding curriculum progression and the expectations of others regarding how the SCQF can be utilised. These concerns are associated with the specificity of credit required for both progression and transfer.

40. Even where the SCQF has been used, this does not seem to have impacted greatly upon those using it, although the end effects entail certain curriculum changes.

The SCQF and other UK Developments

41. The SCQF shares a similar architecture and concept of credit with other UK credit frameworks, with some differences such as the greater number of levels in the SCQF. In purpose, scope and design it is closest to the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). However, the other Frameworks place much more emphasis on the mutual recognition of credits awarded by different awarding bodies.

42. The SCQF was seen to have influenced developments across the UK – not least, by demonstrating that it was possible to have a national credit framework without adverse consequences.

43. Those involved in developing other UK credit frameworks perceive that the SCQF is the most developed. Its perceived strengths include its partnership model, the commitment of higher education, the status of SQA as the single national awarding body, and its comprehensive coverage.

44. However, these features of the SCQF were also perceived to result in less ownership and use of the Framework by providers, and in weaker potential to support credit accumulation and transfer. They contributed to the relatively slow progress in implementing the Framework, although this was recognised as a problem facing other frameworks as well.

45. There are strong pressures for a more coordinated approach across the UK. Cooperation and working relationships among the frameworks are seen to be good, but

some respondents perceive that political as well as technical problems inhibit closer coordination.

The Future Management and Administration of the SCQF

46. The SCQF is led by a loose arrangement, of the four Development Partners (DPs). In addition there is a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) (which often presents the public face of the SCQF), on which other stakeholders are represented, and an Implementation Group whose membership overlaps with the JAC. The executive functions reside in a 'joint secretariat', housed with the DPs. This has no formal status; it cannot, for example, hold budgets or employ staff in its own right.

47. Most interviewees who commented on arrangements for managing and administering the SCQF, including interviewees from elsewhere in the UK, recognised the current arrangements as strength of the Framework, in that they were developed on the basis of agreement and consensus

48. However, several respondents felt that the current structures contributed to what was perceived as the relatively slow progress of the Framework. Respondents recognised that complaints of slow progress were a characteristic feature of credit framework and qualification frameworks across the world. They also acknowledged specific factors that had slowed the development of SCQF. More recently the need to work with other emerging UK frameworks and to contribute to European developments had inhibited more rapid progress.

49. Too little attention had been paid to setting targets for cross sectoral developments or to extending the Framework beyond the FE and HE qualifications to qualifications not owned by the Development Partners. The inclusion of a wider range of qualifications might necessitate some change in the current arrangements, including a register of qualifications which had been credit rated.

50. All of these factors have led to recognition among many respondents, who are involved with SCQF at a national level, that there is a need for change in its management and administrative structures.

51. Two models have been proposed with quite different implications for the future management structures of SCQF:

- A more limited function as an 'enabling' or 'communications' framework, an instrument of change rather than an agent of change. In this view the emphasis is on maintaining and extending the Framework, developing links with other frameworks in UK and Europe, and similar activities of this type.
- The second is a more extensive remit in which the Framework is itself an agent of change, proactively encouraging openness and flexibility.

52. In the first model the central questions are around the ownership and management of the Framework. It has been suggested that this may involve establishing a national qualifications committee, which would in fact be an enlarged "partnership". This committee would be serviced by a relatively small core staff to "maintain" the SCQF.

53. This raises questions regarding the responsibility of the new committee for the development and extension of the framework to a wider range of learning and qualifications, and the associated resource implications.

54. The second model proposes a more proactive role for SCQF as an agent for change, and the implications for this for the management structures have not been clearly articulated by participants. However, it would probably effectively involve bringing together the two sets of issues identified under Model 1 within one national body. This would probably involve establishing an appropriate committee/sub-committee structure, and a significant complement of staff to undertake a further agreed implementation programme. The issues raised under Model 1 would also be significant for this model.

Conclusions

55. Knowledge and understanding regarding SCQF varied considerably within the institutions and organisations included in this study. In general it was good among those who were involved with the framework and its implementation.

56. While the research has only undertaken limited investigations of levels of knowledge among learners, employers, the general public, and within the school sector, all respondents who commented on these issues suggested that knowledge and understanding of SCQF among these groups is relatively limited.

57. A number of respondents expressed concern that publicity, and particularly some of the earlier statements, about the Framework had encouraged unrealistic expectations regarding the potential for the Framework to introduce change.

58. In general, respondents' perceptions of the Framework were positive, and a number expressed high expectations in terms of securing recognition of equivalences in qualifications, and opening up new pathways. However, some also expressed concern that expectations regarding credit transfer would not be met, and there was a perception among many respondents that progress was slow.

59. In many cases, and particularly in the HE sector, there was recognition that the SCQF has had an important role in introducing a common language of credits and levels and that it had acted as a catalyst encouraging institutions to carry out quality enhancement activities.

60. With regard to these forms of internal change and development, many respondents described SCQF as an enabling tool which has facilitated change, and built on other changes such as SCOTCATS, modularisation, quality enhancement, and growing emphasis on widening access and lifelong learning.

61. With respect to wider change within the Scottish educational system, it is important to distinguish between the specific contribution of the SCQF and the impact of the sub-frameworks, such as National Qualifications and SCOTCATS, which were

incorporated within it. There is only limited evidence of change which can be attributed to the specific contribution of SCQF.

62. In particular, with respect to the development of articulation and credit transfer arrangements between FE colleges and HEIs, there was little evidence that SCQF had contributed much beyond providing a language and tools to underpin arrangements that would have usually been introduced in the absence of the SCQF.

63. Some respondents, particularly from the HEIs, were happy that SCQF was not forcing the pace of change. Others, particularly from the FECs expressed some 'cynicism' or 'scepticism' about the extent to which SCQF would help introduce change of the type they had hoped for.

64. The importance of widening the Framework to include qualifications beyond the mainstream of those provided in FE and HE was noted by many respondents. In particular the need for an effective programme of action, which will lead to the inclusion of community learning and development and vocational and work-based qualifications was recognised as a priority.

65. Interviewees involved in developing frameworks elsewhere in the UK perceived that Scotland was ahead of the rest of the UK. There were good relationships among the teams developing the different frameworks. There were strong pressures, especially from employers and labour-market interests, for a co-coordinated approach, and some interviewees felt that this was being inhibited for reasons that were more political than technical.

66. A number of respondents expressed the view that the current partnership arrangements for the control and management of the Framework had been very successful in the development stage. This had helped establish the consensus required to agree the basic principles on which the Framework should be built, and ensure acceptance of and participation in the Framework across all sectors.

67. However, concern was expressed by some respondents that this had limited the range and speed of developments, and that the momentum for change was being lost. The question was raised as to whether modifications are required for the implementation phase, to increase the administrative capacity of the SCQF, to give greater autonomy over day-to-day decisions and ensure more effective progress.

68. There is a need to establish more clearly the role and function of the Framework. It would appear that at present that there are differing views and expectations of the Framework. Two possible models have been identified:

- A more limited function as an 'enabling' or 'communications' framework, an instrument of change rather than an agent of change. In this view the emphasis is on maintaining and extending the Framework, developing links with other frameworks in UK and Europe, and similar activities of this type.
- A more extensive remit in which the Framework is itself an agent of change, proactively encouraging openness and flexibility. In this view the emphasis is not

just on maintaining the Framework, but on considering how it can contribute to a wider agenda of change.

69. Clarification of this type seems important in developing appropriate structures for the control, management, development and administration of the Framework.

70. Respondents recognised that there is now a need to establish new structures for the control, management and administration of the Framework, which will be better suited to enabling it to move forward to its next phase of development.

71. Whatever model is agreed, and whatever structures are established, there is a need to consider how the Framework can contribute most effectively to the agenda of change associated with the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy. At present there is a lack of clarity surrounding these issues and significantly different expectations.

72. There is a view among a number of respondents that the Framework has so far made only limited contribution to developing cross-sectoral agreements and enhanced opportunities for credit transfer. If this is to continue to be an objective associated with the establishment of the Framework, there is a need to consider how it can be achieved more effectively. In this respect it may be useful to establish a longer term action plan with identified objectives, and timeframes. Related resource implications would also need to be considered.

73. In implementing such an action plan the opportunities to use more fully other public sector initiatives, such as those currently under way in the social services sector, should be considered as possible levers for change.

74. There is a need to consider how all sections of the Scottish community can be helped to see the relevance of the Framework to their interests, insofar as it is relevant. This could also contribute to more effective use and implementation of the Framework.

75. The pressures for a more co-ordinated approach across the UK have been noted, particularly with regard to vocational qualifications. Respondents also commented on the need to ensure that developments within Scotland were in line with wider European developments.

CHAPTER ONE AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

1.1 This study was commissioned by the Scottish Executive, Enterprise Transport and Lifelong Learning Department and partners as an evaluation of the impact of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The aims of this research were influenced by the fact that while implementation work is underway, the SCQF is also in a development phase. This research therefore focuses on the initial impact of the SCQF. It focuses on the processes of implementation and plans for the future use of the SCQF and takes account of the aims of the SCQF, which are summarised in the next section. It was agreed with representatives of the Scottish Executive, and partner organisations, that the research would address the following elements:

- An exploration of the knowledge and understanding of the Framework among institutions and organisations providing learning opportunities, employers, professional bodies, information and advice agencies and relevant national organisations
- An investigation of the initial impact of the SCQF on policies, practices and behaviour of the above organisations, including amongst others, the impact on the structure and organisation of the curriculum, institutional planning, the design of programmes and pathways, the presentation of information, and institutional collaboration
- An investigation of factors, which influence, facilitate or hinder institutions' responses to the SCQF and the implementation strategies, and the practical issues that are raised, including amongst others internal factors (institutional mission and organisation, staff attitudes, etc) and external factors (student demand, stakeholder interests, etc)
- An outline of further research required to investigate more fully the impact on learners
- The identification of changes to policy and practice which relate to the Framework, its implementation and future development.

1.2 A key focus of the project was to gather views from a wide range of stakeholders, interest groups, and practitioners.

CHAPTER TWO BACKGROUND TO SCQF

AIMS

2.1 The SCQF was formally launched in December 2001, three months after the publication of *An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF, 2001). This described the formal structure of the Framework and stated that the general aims of the SCQF are to:

- assist people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential
- enable employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

The SCQF is also intended to help describe the programmes of learning that lead to the various qualifications; support the development of routes to progress from qualification to qualification; and maximise the opportunities to transfer credit points between qualifications. It will do this by making the overall system of qualifications and relevant programmes of learning easier to understand. It will provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and will:

- make the relationships between qualifications clearer
- clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression
- maximise the opportunities for credit transfer
- assist learners to plan their progress and learning (SCQF, 2001, pp.1-2).

2.2 The SCQF aspires to become the “national language” for describing qualifications and the relationships between them. It is a key element in lifelong learning policy in Scotland, and this has been reflected in a number of reports and policy documents. These include the Scottish Parliament’s Final Report on Lifelong Learning (Scottish Parliament, 2002), the Scottish Executive Lifelong Learning Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2003a), and the Partnership Document (Scottish Executive, 2003b).

THE FRAMEWORK

2.3 The Framework aims to bring together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. It utilises two concepts: amount or volume of learning outcomes, and level of outcomes of learning. The concepts of volume and level can be used together to describe all appropriately assessed learning, wherever or however achieved; they can also clarify the relationships and links between different qualifications and programmes of learning.

2.4 Volume is measured in SCQF credit points. Credit is allocated on the basis of the amount of time the average learner at a specified level might expect to take in order to achieve the outcomes. One credit point represents the outcomes of learning achieved through a notional ten hours of learning time. This is the same metric as is used in several other credit systems. These credits are allocated to outcomes of learning that are subject to valid, reliable and quality assured methods of assessment. This learning could be delivered through units, modules, group awards or learning gained through experience submitted for assessment. SCQF credit points may be used in programme design, in the setting of entrance requirements, and as a basis for awarding credit for possible transfer.

2.5 All learning in the Framework is allocated to one of the twelve SCQF levels, which range from Access 1 (level 1) to doctoral study (level 12). Increases in level reflect such factors as:

- Complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding
- Links to associated academic, vocational or professional practice
- The degree of integration, independence and creativity required
- The range and sophistication of application/practice
- The role(s) taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks.

2.6 The levels can provide comparisons between learning and qualifications achieved in different contexts such as the workplace or formal academic study. There is no automatic relation of level to the year of study or mode of study.

2.7 The level descriptors relating to the SCQF are described in relation to outcomes under five broad areas:

- Knowledge and understanding, which is mainly subject based
- Practice (applied knowledge and understanding)
- Generic cognitive skills, for example evaluation or critical analysis
- Communication, numeracy and IT skills
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

2.8 The descriptors have been designed in such a manner as to allow broad comparisons to be made between learning outcomes.

2.9 The framework does not demonstrate equivalence of qualifications. The positioning of two or more qualifications or programmes of learning at the same level indicates that they are broadly comparable in terms of the general level of outcome; it does not indicate similar purpose, content or endpoints.

2.10 Most of the mainstream qualifications in the Framework have been developed on a credit basis with design rules related to the volume and level of credit required. For example, the achievement of an Honours Degree requires the accumulation of 480 credit

points, at least 90 of which must be at level 10, while a National Course at Higher level requires 24 points at level 6.

2.11 The SCQF is a descriptive and enabling framework rather than a regulatory one, and institutions delivering qualifications are not required to use only those that are SCQF credit rated. The allocation of credit points to qualifications or learning programmes provides an indication of general credit. It is the responsibility of receiving institutions to decide how much specific credit to give to an individual who wishes to transfer credit from one programme to another. These decisions are based upon the relevance of the content, the outcomes, the assessment mode, and so on. Through the utilisation of the SCQF, the processes involved in making these decisions should become clearer, more consistent and more public.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCQF

2.12 The SCQF is the latest step in an incremental process to develop a unified qualifications system for Scotland. It started by bringing together two existing sub-frameworks, the National Qualifications (NQs) awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (SCOTCATS) for higher education which links HN qualifications with university awards. A third sub-framework, Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), is still being placed in the framework. These sub-frameworks are themselves the product of earlier qualifications reforms, including the Action Plan which modularised vocational education in the 1980s, the unification of HN awards from 1989, the subsequent launch of SCOTCATS in 1991 and the Higher Still reforms which introduced new National Qualifications in 1999.

2.13 The SCQF is the product of a voluntary partnership of the bodies which awarded these sub-frameworks, respectively the SQA and the Scottish higher education institutions, represented by Universities Scotland and The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Together with the Scottish Executive, these bodies comprise the four Development Partners who have led the development of the framework. The SCQF has no central bureaucracy; its development and management are taken forward by a 'joint secretariat' comprising senior officials of the Development Partners and a very small number of full-time officers housed with (and employed by) one of the Development Partners. In 2000 a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was established to advise on the development and strategy of the Framework and to represent a wider range of stakeholders, including colleges. The JAC is chaired by Dr Andrew Cubie and it often presents the public face of the Framework.

2.14 By 2002 the main design principles of the SCQF had been established and the Framework moved into its implementation phase. An Implementation Group (IG) was established, to represent the main stakeholders involved in this process. In December 2002 a *National Plan for Implementation of the Framework* was published (SCQF 2002). This outlined the next steps as follows:

- informing learners, the public and employers of the implementation and features of the new national framework for education and training
- agreement by SQA, HEIs (Higher Education Institutes) and others on some SCQF-wide arrangements and guidelines for credit rating and levelling
- agreement between various key national, regional and local bodies, Scottish Executive Departments and Agencies on the timetable for full adoption of the SCQF in their varying sectors
- the development of arrangements by which all other assessed learning outcomes can be recognised for credit
- the development of clear routes for progression and credit transfer, and articulation of programmes
- the main sectors of education and training bringing their qualifications and programmes into accordance with the SCQF, and describing all provision and learner achievement in terms of the national framework. (SCQF 2002, pp.8-9).

2.15 The Plan outlined objectives, targets and activities for the period 2003-6, including targets for the incorporation of the qualifications of the main awarding bodies in Scotland - the SQA and higher education institutions. The Plan also included targets for widening the Framework to other forms of learning including experiential learning.

THE ADDITIONALITY OF THE SCQF

2.16 We have described how the SCQF has built incrementally on the sub-frameworks introduced through earlier reforms. Many of the objectives shared by national qualifications frameworks in other countries had already been achieved, wholly or in part, by these sub-frameworks before the SCQF was established. This raises the question of additionality. For example, most school and non-advanced college provision is covered by the NQ sub-framework. If the SCQF's objectives in promoting access and progression have already been achieved, *within* this sector, by NQs, should we expect to find an additional effect of the SCQF of which NQs are now part? Conversely, should the achievements of NQs be attributed to the SCQF? It is significant that when commentators have used the SCQF to draw lessons for the development of qualifications frameworks internationally, they typically refer to the whole sequence of policies since the 1980s rather than to the specific contribution of the SCQF itself (Tuck *et al.* 2004, Young 2005).

2.17 The question of additionality thus poses an issue for this evaluation: to what extent should we evaluate the SCQF in isolation from the sub-frameworks and the earlier policies on which it has built? A related issue concerns knowledge and understanding of the Framework. Many higher education staff are more familiar with SCOTCATS than with the SCQF (for example, several interviewees referred to SCOTCATS levels rather than SCQF levels). Similarly, many school and college staff know NQs intimately, but not the SCQF. Does it matter that they are unaware of the SCQF, if they are fully informed of the sub-framework which embraces their own practice?

CHAPTER THREE EXISTING RESEARCH ON QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS

3.1 At least three areas of research literature are relevant to the SCQF, in addition to the existing research and development on the SCQF itself.

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

3.2 Several other countries have introduced qualification frameworks, or are in the process of doing so, and there has been interest from international organisations including the Commonwealth, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union. Much of the literature on qualifications frameworks consists of analyses, evaluations and supporting studies for particular national frameworks. The countries which have been most intensively studied include New Zealand (Mikuta 2002, Philips 2003, Strathdee 2003), South Africa (Cosser 2001, Allais 2003), Australia (Keating 2003), Ireland (NQAI 2003) and the countries of the United Kingdom, where the most important frameworks include National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (Raggatt and Williams 1999), the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) (ELWA 2003), the planned Framework for Achievement (QCA 2004a, 2004b) and earlier Scottish sub-frameworks such as the Action Plan (Black *et al.* 1991, Croxford *et al.* 2001) and National Qualifications (Raffe *et al.* 2005) as well as the SCQF itself. Some of these national case studies have been collected in volumes for an international readership edited by Young (2003a) and Donn and Davies (2003). In a series of papers Young (2001, 20002, 2003b, 2005) has attempted to synthesise some of the evidence from the experience of national qualification frameworks in different countries. Deane and Watters (2004) review some of the issues in a paper prepared for a European Union conference hosted by the Irish Presidency. The OECD (2004) has investigated national qualifications frameworks as one strand of its activity on *The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning*. UK participation in this activity has involved England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not Scotland.

3.3 Deane and Watters (2004, p.85) draw on the OECD work to define two types of qualifications frameworks: 'A conceptual... framework may include a philosophical rationale underpinning the approach to qualifications, core principles and operating guidelines... A technical... framework usually includes a classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved.' They note that 'while all countries have a qualifications system and many have at least a conceptual qualifications framework, not all have developed technical frameworks'. A later publication of the OECD used this definition of a technical framework to define all qualifications frameworks (2004, p.6). Young (2005, p.16) refers to a broader range of criteria, in addition to levels of learning. These include: a single set of criteria for describing or defining qualifications; the use of learning outcomes to describe qualifications; benchmarks for assessing learning; classification in terms of occupational fields; units; and volume measured by notional learning hours. He notes that not all frameworks possess all these features.

3.4 An important theme of the international research is the range of different purposes which qualifications frameworks may pursue. A distinction is commonly made between enabling frameworks (or frameworks of communication) and regulatory frameworks. Enabling frameworks such as the SCQF may provide a tool for change but do not themselves mandate change. The purposes of national qualifications frameworks may include:

- to reform qualifications, for example so that they meet labour market needs more effectively;
- to enhance the quality of education and training;
- to promote parity of esteem and the integration of academic and vocational learning;
- to bring coherence to systems or sub-systems of qualifications (especially vocational qualifications), and to make the relationships among qualifications clearer;
- to support lifelong learning by promoting and clarifying opportunities for access and progression, and identifying alternative routes of entry, progression and exit;
- to facilitate the recognition of skills and competences and support mobility of learners and workers;
- to facilitate the involvement of stakeholders in learning, and especially in vocational education and training; and
- to promote social and economic reconstruction. (Granville 2003, Deane and Watters 2004, Isaacs and Nkomo 2004, OECD 2004, Young 2005).

3.5 National qualifications frameworks vary according to their comprehensiveness and their tightness. The SCQF is a comprehensive framework: unlike many others, it includes higher education and academic qualifications and it aims to include informal learning. It is also a loose framework: the design rules or criteria which qualifications must satisfy to be in the SCQF are much looser than for most other frameworks (although its sub-frameworks such as NQs and SVQs are tighter). Qualifications frameworks designed as tight frameworks have usually been met with resistance, especially if they have also aimed to be comprehensive (for example by covering higher education as well as vocational training). They have typically responded by becoming either less tight, or less comprehensive, or both (Raggat and Williams 1999, Mikuta 2002, RSA 2003).

3.6 The OECD working group on national qualifications frameworks identified four conditions for their successful development and implementation: a legislative basis (possibly less relevant to an enabling framework such as the SCQF); co-operation among stakeholders; effective communication to the general public; and time (OECD 2004, p.9). A recurring theme of the literature on qualifications frameworks is the long time they take to introduce, especially if they are based on co-operation and partnership. Successful frameworks tend to develop in an evolutionary and incremental way and to emphasise continuity and past experience. They must respect the dependence of qualifications upon 'communities of trust' and informal relationships which develop over a period of time (Young 2002, Granville 2003).

3.7 The Action Plan (SED 1983), which modularised Scottish non-advanced vocational education in the 1980s, is perceived to be one of the earliest sources of

inspiration for the current development of national qualifications frameworks (Young 2003b). Research into its impact on young people suggested that the ‘intrinsic logic’ of the modular reform, which encouraged flexible pathways and credit transfer, was often weaker than the ‘institutional logic’ generated by educational institutions, the labour market, funding and regulatory arrangements, and so on (Croxford *et al.* 1991, Raffe *et al.* 1994). Consequently the immediate impact on participation and on gender and other inequalities was limited. Recent writers have drawn on the distinction between intrinsic and institutional logics to argue that qualifications frameworks need to be complemented by measures to reform the institutional logic - for example, local institutional agreements to promote credit transfer, or encouragement to employers to reflect credit values in their selection processes. This is an illustration of another common theme in the international literature, the importance of policy breadth. This is defined as ‘the extent to which the establishment of the framework is directly and explicitly linked with other measures to influence how the framework is used.... [T]he future policy breadth of the SCQF is a contested issue’ (Raffe 2003a, p.242).

3.8 Several qualifications frameworks, notably those of New Zealand and South Africa as well as Higher Still in Scotland, have aimed to unify or integrate education and training. This has typically been a source of friction (Mikuta 2002, RSA 2002). Smithers (1997) and Ensor (2003) have argued that integrative qualifications frameworks fail to take account of epistemological differences between different knowledge structures and different forms of learning. However Raffe (2005) has argued that barriers to integration which are presented as epistemological may in fact often be political or institutional in character. Writing of the South African context, Heyns and Needham (2004) identify three sets of issues: the political power struggle between departments of education and labour; philosophical and epistemological issues; and the different understandings of an integrated framework by practitioners of education and training.

3.9 Some researchers have identified qualifications frameworks as an example of a more general trend towards the unification of academic and vocational learning. Raffe (2003b) distinguished a wide range of national strategies and unifying policy measures, but argued that they responded to three main pressures: the demands of economic competitiveness, social pressures, and internal systemic pressures arising from the need to coordinate increasingly complex education and training systems. He identified three main types of unification which he called curricular (developing integrated curricula), organisational (reducing the differences between tracks) and longitudinal (promoting seamless pathways through lifelong learning). Some qualifications frameworks have aimed to promote all three types of unification; others, including the SCQF, have been primarily concerned with the last type (longitudinal). The CES study of *The Introduction of a Unified System of Post-Compulsory Education in Scotland* examined Higher Still as an instance of the trend towards unification (Raffe *et al.* 2005). It concluded that Higher Still’s attempt to introduce a unified system in Scotland was only partially successful, especially in post-school education, where the more rigid framework of new National Qualifications made it difficult to achieve full coverage. Instead many of the expectations for Higher Still have been transferred to the SCQF.

CREDIT

3.10 The UK research on credit systems has remained largely separate from the research on qualifications frameworks. In the early 1990s the concept of credit received a boost from the Further Education Unit's (FEU) (1992) *A Basis for Credit* and the Robertson Report on credit in higher education *Choosing to Change* (HEQC 1993). The Robertson Report was based on a series of research studies which mapped current institutional policies for credit in higher education. In a later article Robertson (1996) discussed the evolution of the concept of credit transfer from 'soft' to 'hard' and from 'minimalist' to 'maximalist' versions.

3.11 The FEU report was followed by a collection of articles which described current developments, mainly in post-16 education, and discussed how a more established national credit system might build on them (Tait 1993). The Learning and Skills Development Agency has continued the work of the FEU and the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA), its predecessor bodies, in developing the concept and principles of credit systems and to review progress internationally and within the UK. The announcement that England would join the other countries of the UK and develop a credit framework for adults has given a further boost to this work (QCA 2004a, 2004b, QCA/LSC 2004). Tait (2003a, p.15) reviews UK developments, including the SCQF, and concludes that a 'single framework encompassing all achievement, from the basic levels to degrees and higher professional qualifications, is the logical way to proceed'. He identifies 'risks associated with credit developments and, in particular, concerns about complexity, proliferation of qualifications and units, management of information embracing expectations of entitlements for credit transfer' but concludes that 'the positive aspects outweigh the risks and perceived disadvantages'. He notes that current UK developments are converging on an agreed set of principles, namely that there should be:

- several levels from entry to higher education,
- credit based on achievement of learning outcomes,
- credit values based on 'notional learning time',
- units and qualifications varying in size, and
- recognition that the credit framework does not by itself establish credit accumulation and credit transfer.

He also argues for central leadership to establish a common approach to credit across different sectors of education and across the countries of the UK (Tait, 2003b).

3.12 Whether credit accumulation and transfer occur may depend on the specific or general character of the credit: that is, on whether an individual's learning covers the specific outcomes required for these purposes or merely meets the general criteria of level and volume. It may also depend on the confidence that is placed in the assessment and quality procedures associated with this learning, and on whether there are relationships of trust between the bodies which award credit and those which are asked to recognise it. The importance of trust as the basis of credit systems has been recognised by many current developments, including that of the European vocational credit system. In a project commissioned to support the European system, Coles and Oates (2004) have

developed the concept of ‘zones of mutual trust’ and explored the conditions necessary for such zones to be effective. By contrast the Framework for Achievement being introduced in England aims to make credit recognition and transfer automatic (QCA 2004).

3.13 Research on credit systems has tended to focus more on the design and development of credit systems than on their impact. An exception is Davies and Bynner’s (1999) study of the effects of credit systems on learners, with a particular emphasis on the London Open College Network. They confirmed that such credit arrangements attracted a large number of ‘non-traditional’ learners. The main focus of the project was the impact of credit-based systems on learning cultures; they found evidence of positive effects on cultures at both learner and institutional levels. They also found no evidence of negative effects of the nature of learning outcomes on the learning experience. Some commentators have raised fears about the commodification of learning in credit systems (Ainley 1997).

3.14 In the 1990s one of the most developed credit systems in the UK was the CREDIS framework in Wales (Reynolds 2001), a forerunner of the current Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). As far as we are aware CREDIS has not been the subject of a systematic, independent evaluation.

3.15 Qualifications frameworks, and especially credit frameworks, have often been based on a unitised structure of qualifications. A recent review of unitisation by Hart and Howieson (2004) found that there was relatively little hard evidence on its impact. Some of the claimed benefits of unitisation, such as making learning more attractive to adult learners and supporting qualifications development, were supported by their review. Others, such as rationalisation and simplification, were not.

FE-HE LINKS

3.16 Compared with other comprehensive frameworks the SCQF is distinguished by the leading role which universities have played in its development. Much of the debate surrounding the use of the SCQF for credit recognition and transfer has focused on the interface between Further and Higher Education (FE/HE). A distinctive tradition of higher education has developed in the FE colleges in Scotland. This has been built up around Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) rather than franchised degrees and now over 20% of all full-time undergraduate level students study in FE colleges (Sharp and Gallacher, 1996; Gallacher, 2003). It has also been established that these colleges have considerable success in attracting students from areas of social and economic deprivation and the proportions of students from these areas are far higher in the FE colleges than in universities (Raab and Small, 2003). There is evidence that many students now progress from HNC/Ds to degrees, and there are strong links between the further education colleges (FECs) and HEIs, and the recent Mapping Tracking and Bridging Project has shown the extent of the links between the FE colleges and HEIs. However despite an increasing policy interest in strengthening the links between the two sectors (Scottish Parliament, 2002; Scottish Executive, 2003a), these developments have been largely unplanned, their impact continues to be uneven

(Gallacher, 2002), and a number of barriers have continued to make progression difficult for students (Maclennan et al, 2000). As a result some critics have described these developments as creating an academic ghetto, in which opportunities for disadvantaged 'non traditional' students continue to be limited (Osborne et al. 2000; Field, 2004). In this context there has been considerable interest in the potential impact of SCQF on improving articulation links between colleges and universities and creating enhanced opportunities for credit transfer.

RESEARCH ON THE SCQF

3.17 There are several published accounts of the SCQF and its development, many of them mainly descriptive in focus. Menmuir (2003) describes the development of the SCQF and the challenges it presents for initial and continuing teacher education. Ponton (2003) describes the SCQF for a Commonwealth audience, and lists challenges for the next three years.

3.18 Raffe (2003a) has described the introduction of the SCQF from the perspective of 'unification' as part of the IUS project described earlier, up to the launch of its implementation phase. Its early development was characterised by incrementalism, voluntarism, partnership and pragmatism. However, these characteristics would be placed under pressure during the implementation phase and especially when the framework expanded to include a wider range of qualifications. This has been associated with a number of development projects which has included work with the FE colleges, the social services sector, professional bodies, community based adult learning, and on the recognition of prior learning (RPL). There has also been the associated Mapping, Tracking and Bridging Project, undertaken under the auspices of the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA), which has been designed to strengthen links between the FE colleges and HEIs.

3.19 Finally, the literature includes international perspectives on the SCQF. Young (2005) identifies the SCQF as one of the 'success stories' of national qualifications frameworks, and argues that it demonstrates 'the importance of continuity and building on past experience'. Three features of the SCQF have contributed to this: its incrementalism, its policy breadth and the leading role of universities. Writing for a southern African audience, Tuck *et al.* (2004) claim that the development of qualifications frameworks over the past 20 years in Scotland has greatly improved progression routes, made the system more flexible and improved the status of vocational education and training. Tait (2003a) identifies the SCQF, along with other UK frameworks, as a source of lessons for England.

CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY

4.1 The approach to this project has been largely qualitative, employing a purposive sampling framework. The project has involved a number of phases. The fieldwork consisted of 69 interviews. 20 with key informants and representatives of national organisations, 5 with UK informants, 34 with staff from further and higher education institutions, 5 with employers, and 4 with professional bodies. Responses displayed a diverse geographical spread.

PHASE 1: SCOPING STUDY

4.2 The SCQF is currently at a relatively early stage of implementation. Considerable work has been undertaken in order to establish the Framework, but associated work to implement and develop the Framework is still in progress. Given this early stage in development, the primary course of action for the research project was to undertake a number of interviews with key informants. Contact was established with individuals who had a knowledge and understanding of the work undertaken so far in the development of the Framework, the issues which this raises for their organisations, institutions or sectors, and issues associated with future implementation. Interviews were conducted to establish the informants' perspectives on the Framework. These interviews were designed to assist the research team to illuminate and clarify the central issues for further investigation and to assist in the drawing up of the sample of respondents for the next stage of enquiry. Nine interviews were completed in this phase of the project.

4.3 Areas of enquiry at this initial stage include:

- The knowledge, understanding and expectations of the SCQF
- The impact of the Framework on policies and practices
- The operation of the Framework
- Factors which have influenced institutional and organisational responses
- Individuals, institutions and organisations that are considered to be important to contact as part of the evaluation of the Framework.

PHASE 2 INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDIES

4.4 Based on the analysis of data collected in Phase One, it was agreed with the advisory group that the research would focus on staff in further education colleges and higher education institutions. This reflects the fact that this where almost all of the activity involving SQCF is taking place at present. It was also agreed that other areas such as schools, community based further education and vocational education and training would be followed up through interviews with representatives of key stakeholder groups. (The Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning (CRL) were also completing a scoping study for the Scottish Executive regarding a possible learning and assessment framework for community based adult learning, and this could inform the SCQF study).

4.5 Within the study of FE and HE the subject areas of engineering and social care/social work were selected as case study examples. Analysis of data from Phase 1 suggested that social care/work represented an area in which there has been considerable amount of development in relation to the SCQF, and that engineering represented an area with more limited development and use of the Framework.

4.6 This stage of research explored the knowledge, impact, operation and future developments with respect to the SCQF in these subject areas within institutions. Six institutions were selected to act as case study institutions. These include three universities; one ancient, one 1960s, and one post 1992, and three FECs which have courses in Engineering and Social Care/Work. These institutions were selected on the basis that they provided courses in both the fields of Social Care/Work and Engineering, taking into account geographical spread and to include rural and urban areas. Six interviews were undertaken in each institution, with the exception of third case study further education college (FEC). The identification of a third case study FEC proved challenging, two institutions declined participating in the evaluation due to internal restructuring. The third approached agreed but the commencement of fieldwork was delayed until the completion of a HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) inspection. Due to such delays it proved difficult to complete all interviews before the end of the academic session with the result that interviews with two course based engineering staff were not completed.

4.7 Case study interviews were carried out with institutional leaders, guidance staff or those engaged in quality assurance, and programme or course based staff largely in the fields of Social Care/Social Work and Engineering, comprising a total of 34 interviews.

4.8 The case study approach was adopted in order to explore the impact of the SCQF at the institutional or subject level, including the consideration of particular changes or developments underway that may have been stimulated, influenced or shaped by the SCQF, with a particular focus upon the subject areas of Social Care/Social Work and Engineering.

PHASE 3: STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND UK INFORMANTS

4.9 Individuals were identified for interview from 12 organisations which represent the key stakeholder groups likely to be affected by SCQF. This has included schools based education, further education, higher education, community based learning, vocational education and training, information and advice agencies, employers and trade unions.

4.10 Areas for enquiry at this stage included:

- The knowledge, understanding and expectations of the SCQF
- The impact of the Framework on policies and practices, including amongst others staff development, collaboration, continuing professional development and work based learning
- The operation of the Framework
- Factors which have influenced organisational or sectoral responses.

4.11 Interviews with 4 key informants regarding elsewhere in the UK were also undertaken as part of this phase.

PHASE 4: EMPLOYERS AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES

4.12 This phase of the fieldwork involved interviews with related employers and professional bodies or sector skills agencies. 5 interviews were carried out with relevant employers from the sectors of engineering, social care and computing education company. Employers and professional bodies proved more difficult to engage with than representatives from national organisations and institutions. It was initially hoped that 6 employer interviews would be carried out. Unfortunately one identified employer did not participate due to difficulties in communication and with timescales. 4 interviews were carried out with 4 professional bodies at this stage from the fields of social care, engineering, teaching and accountancy. It is also worth noting that a representative from a professional body was interviewed in the scoping phase of the study.

4.13 Areas of inquiry at this stage of the fieldwork included:

- The knowledge, understanding and expectations of the SCQF
- The impact of the Framework on policies and practices
- The operation of the Framework
- Factors which have influenced organisational responses.

PHASE 5: FINAL PHASE INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS

4.14 The research team decided to undertake a final phase of fieldwork interviews with key informants in order to consider pertinent issue arising from the evaluation process. A total of four interviews were carried out at this stage. Areas of enquiry at this stage include:

- Progress towards the implementation of SCQF
- Main challenges facing the SCQF
- Structures for the management and direction of SCQF.

CHAPTER FIVE EXTENT OF KNOWLEDGE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCQF

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

5.1 Within the HE sector there is evidence of considerable variation in the level of awareness and understanding of the SCQF. In general the level of knowledge and understanding of the Framework relates to the extent to which people are involved in using the framework. There is a good knowledge and understanding of the Framework at the strategic level. Participants operating at the strategic level within institutions can be split into two categories for the purpose of this piece of work. The first category, institutional leader, is obvious and includes those responsible for the overall development and direction of the institution and operate at the highest level. The second category of specialist refers to those individuals within institutions who have responsibility for the implementation of the SCQF, or they have overall responsibility for quality assurance or curriculum development. In general there was evidence that both specialists and institutional leaders possess a detailed knowledge of the Framework, its development and implementation. In some instances, specialists and institutional leaders indicate that this detailed knowledge relates only to those aspects and processes of the Framework that they are most acquainted with which are related to their sector. They indicate that despite possessing an in-depth knowledge of the Framework gaps may persist, in relation to qualifications outside mainstream Scottish qualifications systems.

5.2 Knowledge and understanding of the Framework amongst programme or course based staff is varied. Those staff that are engaged in processes such as curriculum review, quality assurance, guidance and admissions are identified as being likely to have a good knowledge and understanding. Whereas this is likely to be more limited in staff predominantly engaged in teaching. The following quotations from respondents illustrate these points.

I think admissions tutors have a good knowledge and understanding of it [SCQF], I think programme leaders have good knowledge and understanding of it, I think probably the lecturers who are involved in ... the general delivery of it will have less of an understanding of it, unless it's an understanding of the impact and the importance of level they're teaching their subject and they're not looking at the entire big picture, they're not dealing with students who are transferring from other universities into ours (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

I would say mixed. I think part of, well there are mainly 2 issues and one I think its mixed, I think that there's still quite a lot of misunderstanding about what is involved, just to give you an example in a meeting just last week I was kind of taken aback when one of my colleagues hadn't grasped that our post graduate diploma in social work was at level 11, which, well, I don't know it's kind of complicated on that, but that surprised me because that seemed to suggest, to me, that there was a lack of fairly basic understanding of what the framework was (Senior Lecturer, 1960s institution)

I suppose with the wider institution, I suppose, it's fair to say there's a fair degree of knowledge and understanding. Within the subject area (social work) I would say that was very limited. The only folks who really have any ongoing acquaintanceship with it [SCQF] or it's in their consciousness are those who are involved admissions decisions, but apart from that I think it doesn't directly impinge on the main group of staff in the subject area. (Senior Lecturer, Ancient Institution)

5.3 Many programme or course based staff express an awareness of the SCQF only in relation to internal institutional processes and internal discussions, for example within the context of discussions relating to programme planning, levels, admissions and progression, or as useful tool in aspects of student guidance. Amongst other teaching staff who are not involved in using the Framework in these ways knowledge and understanding is often limited.

I'm talking about out of 70 academic staff probably 10-15 maybe realise that the levels are actually not just university levels but go beyond with regards to SCQF. (Director of teaching - engineering, ancient university)

5.4 Such limitations in understanding are linked to the use of the Framework. Knowledge amongst such staff is described as “growing” in the context that they may not think in terms of the Framework but they will be aware of the “regulations” associated with it. Evidence suggests that provided the SCQF has been adopted within the institutions, and is in use, this lack of knowledge or confusion with certain elements becomes irrelevant. In this sense staff are referred to as understanding elements of the Framework, but not necessarily possessing a detailed understanding of the SCQF, or even directly relating their knowledge relating to credit or learning outcomes to the Framework itself.

They (staff) might not know SCQF, they'd just say it's a 20 credit module (Director of quality, 1960s institution)

A number of staff are not fully aware of what I'd term the underpinning philosophy and concepts within the framework (Director of quality, 1960s institution)

They (staff) probably don't think about it as the SCQF, they just know those are the regulations (Head of quality, post92 institution)

5.5 This understanding of credit and learning outcomes outside of knowledge of the SCQF in general is linked to the manner in which the Framework becomes “embedded” in institutional policy and practice. In this sense the SCQF has been described as:

On a day to day level I would say it's [the SCQF] not something that bothers me unduly, it's something that's there and if I'm checking a students record I can instantly see in the students record what levels the courses are the students

taking...it's helpful from that point of view, but it's not something that I go out of my way to say well what level is that course? (Senior lecturer, ancient institution)

5.6 Key members of staff are described as acting as a resource for information and clarification regarding the framework amongst colleagues. In this case, such staff describe how their knowledge and understanding of the SCQF has resulted in other staff viewing them as experts, and describe being encouraged to provide awareness raising or training activities to other members of staff within their institution.

People come to me and think I'm an expert on SCQF, in fact I've been asked to do a presentation next month to another group of staff in here, you know I'm not an expert on it but I know a little bit about it and I read the document and I went to the launch conference and that kind of makes you an expert (Head of quality, post92 institution)

THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR

5.7 It would appear that the level of knowledge and understanding of the SCQF among FE staff is also varied. In general staff who had been actively engaged with the Framework in some way were likely to have a good knowledge and understanding. This included most of the senior staff whom we interviewed, staff with management responsibilities and those who have been involved in curriculum development. This was commented on by a Deputy Principal:

...where the greater understanding is being built up is with the staff that are currently active in terms of the HN revision of programmes because what they'll be getting involved in is the levelling of different units and I think it's through that HN revision programme that the most understanding will filter down to the average lecturer... (Depute Principal FE college 1)

5.8 Evidence of this was also provided by one of the Social Care senior lecturers interviewed who stated that:

...within Social Care section itself it's [knowledge and understanding] quite good...because we're involved in rewriting an HNC, so we're actively involved, so we know. (Senior lecturer in social care FE college 2)

5.9 However the general view was that knowledge and understanding was limited:

I think generally I would say it's very limited. I think people have an appreciation of the basic 12 levels, but that's about it (Associate head of division FE college 3).

5.10 Or apparent only at certain levels or groups of staff:

Heads of department, the quality and staff development manager, it's [SCQF] part of what we do, but I think if you went, even at senior lecturing level, in some departments, it very much depends on the kind of programmes and construction and engineering the level of knowledge would be less (Deputy Principal FE college 4).

5.11 This limited or patchy knowledge is generally associated with the fact that many staff do not have a great deal of need to use the framework on a regular basis:

...there is a limited knowledge because we don't use it [SCQF] on a day to day basis...(Curriculum leader electrical engineering FE college 2)

If you ask an ordinary lecturer they will say well they've probably seen it [SCQF], but it was a while ago and they don't relate it to what they do on a daily basis, whereas someone like me would realise that it's something that we always have to take on board when we're reading out information to students and when we're designing a course, we know we have to level it, we have to say right this is..., you know we cannot now devise an NQ programme without taking into account what level of units we're putting into it, from that point of view, but again its head of department and above. (Deputy Principal FE College 4)

5.12 Where staff are involved with programme development through SQA they are more likely to have increased knowledge. However even within the social care area where development work was reported, a number of staff commented on the need for more information and support:

...I think it would be good to have somebody come to visit and talk about what the implications are, and actually have more direct contact with the people that are involved... (Senior lecturer in social care, FE college 2)

Well basically I think there is a lack of knowledge about the framework and particularly how it relates to the Social Care, I know there's a consultation going on, but I'm not actually aware of the outcomes of that.

(Associate head of division FE college 3).

5.13 A number of staff commented on the relatively low level of staff development associated with SCQF, and the limited amount of information which they had received about it. In some cases senior staff recognised that there was a need to focus upon raising awareness of the Framework within their institution.

It's in our operational plan that we need to raise awareness and it was one of the things that I'm afraid has not received a great deal of attention except that we did put it on the college website (Deputy Principal FE college 4)

5.14 However respondents generally indicated that there was an adequate amount of information available about SCQF, but that it was only accessed when people had good reason to seek it out for use.

5.15 Staff also reported a relatively low level of knowledge about the implementation processes associated with SCQF, and one respondent who had a planning role within her institution, and was generally knowledgeable about SCQF, described these processes as ‘mysterious’. This relative lack of knowledge within the FE sector may be associated with the role of SQA in programme development within the FE sector, and this was recognised by some respondents.

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS AND INTEREST GROUPS

5.16 When respondents from the wider stakeholder and interest groups were questioned about the extent of knowledge and understanding of SCQF, those who have a direct interest in the development and implementation of the Framework reported high levels of knowledge among staff. In other organisations it was reported that while those most directly involved with SCQF had some knowledge, this did not extend to the wider membership. This was reported by a range of organisations, but was particularly the case among organisations involved with work and vocational training. This was summed up by a respondent who suggested that:

....I would suspect that there is still a fairly wide spread degree of ignorance amongst the business community generally about the SCQF and how they could use it and what it might mean for their organisation (Rep of national organisation/department)

5.17 One respondent, with a responsibility for workforce development in local authority social care department, and who was herself very engaged with the Framework reported that:

....apart from some members of my own staff, I think the understanding is pretty limited at the moment, I mean some people are trying to get their heads around it [SCQF]. But quite honestly they think, in general, people within the organisation neither know nor care, that’s probably putting it a bit strongly but it doesn’t impact on them at the moment (Local authority workforce development manager)

5.18 This led one respondent who is involved with SCQF at a national level to suggest that:

The demand side, it strikes me, remains woefully low in terms of knowledge and understanding (Rep of national organisation/department)

5.19 Among professional bodies, while there are examples where extensive use is being made of the Framework, and knowledge is high among those directly involved, in other cases it was reported that there would be almost no knowledge among the general membership.

....As I said earlier I’m not sure that the broad membership of the [professional body] are aware of the SCQF, those who are involved in education know of it, but those from within companies are probably unaware of it or have very sketchy knowledge of it. (Representative of professional body)

5.20 Again the issue here did not appear to be the availability of information, although some questions were raised about the complexity of the information available, and its suitability for a wider non-educational audience. However the key issue appeared to be the one of engaging people with the Framework, of getting them to see this as an initiative which was relevant and important and with which they should become engaged. A representative of a national organisation described potential plans for such an activity, pointing out the need for active engagement as opposed to desk based activities:

The intention is if we get funding...that one of the key principles of it (engaging employers), as a piece of work, would be that it wasn't desk research, it was about actually involving employers to aid understanding and that it would result in producing a tool for employers to aid understanding via probably a DVD or a CDROM rather to do that, so I don't think there's been much impact on the employers individually at all as yet. (Rep of national organisation)

5.21 Since our initial interviewees reported that awareness of the SCQF in the school sector was still minimal, we planned our further interviews on the assumption that there was relatively little to be observed within the school sector. This meant, of course, that we could not put this assumption to a rigorous test. We did, however, interview a representative head teacher who had been involved in national developments, and a senior policy-maker in the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED).

5.22 The head teacher considered that awareness of the SCQF within the sector was slight, and largely restricted to senior managers. This reflected a more general problem that developments in Scottish education were not well communicated. It also reflected the trend, which we have observed in other sectors, for people to become aware of the SCQF only when it related to their immediate practical concerns:

The most frequent response I get from parents and from staff is 'OK I understand you've explained the framework, but what's it for? What am I going to do with this?'... Teachers are very much practical people and if you're going to give them something then they need to know 'well is it any good in the classroom?' and the SCQF isn't something that's any good to them in a classroom at the moment. (Rep of head teachers)

SUMMARY

5.23 Overall then it appears that knowledge and understanding of the Framework is high within the FE and HE sectors among those who have made use of it, but limited among general staff. Among the wider stakeholder groups, while there are examples of positive involvement with the Framework, knowledge and understanding is even more limited, and this is associated with limited involvement with, and use of, the Framework.

CHAPTER SIX EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

6.1 A number of respondents from within the HE institutions expressed generally positive views about the contribution of the Framework. It has been described as acting as a useful tool and reference point in the resolution of inconsistencies in practices, to assist with curriculum planning and to encourage openness, clarity and accountability in qualifications and processes associated with them.

if we didn't have the SCQF I think we would be grappling to come up with our own words (Head of quality, 1960s institution)

I think there's a general support that we need something to make us think in a more structured way (Senior Lecturer, Ancient Institution)

the SCQF Framework sits high on our agenda (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

6.2 Within the HE sector generally the structures associated with SCQF are seen as being complementary to those associated with the requirements for quality enhancement, and this has helped ensure that SCQF has become embedded in institutional frameworks. It has been described as useful in the context of dialogue between quality assurance staff and academics. In this context the Framework acts both as a common language for discussions centred on quality assurance, and as a reference point through which to show academic or programme staff the origin of developments and procedures, and decisions.

....the likes of faculty secretaries or programme teams who are preparing new developments and part of my role is working with them and actually using the qualifications framework as a reference point and actually a tool to help them design new, particularly new developments. (Director of Quality, Institution)

...almost everyone agrees that once they started discussing student load in terms of points it actually simplified things. (Depute Principal, Ancient Institution)

6.3 Within the HE sector it is perceived as building on the developments associated with SCOTCATS and contributing towards a more orderly, consistent and transparent system.

....the preceding SCOTCATS structure has just fed neatly into the SCQF for us. (Dean, post92 institution)

....people still talk about SCOTCATS points and some of the previous level descriptors, but across the board there is now more of a recognition of what the SCQF framework is trying to do and my view is that people see it as fairly useful to have something that's pretty transparent. (Professor, 1960s Institution)

6.4 In some cases participants have highlighted a general confusion between SCOTCATS and SCQF.

...there will be people who use the points and really don't know what they mean and they still hear the points referred to as SCOTCATS points. (Depute Principal Ancient Institution)

6.5 Within the post 1992 institution, expectations were expressed that the Framework will be an important agent of change and will help with the creation of more flexible routes for credit transfer.

I would like to think that the new system would make it easier for the students to be able to go with their academic transcript, their record of credit, and be able to change institution, change a programme and still have some award of credit for what they've already done. (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

6.6 Respondents with this view expressed some disappointment regarding the limited progress, which has been made to achieve these objectives.

6.7 However a number of respondents among the programme based staff suggested that the framework was perceived as having more limited influence.

I don't think it's (SCQF) perceived as having very radical implications. I think the issues are perceived in terms of how are we going to allow entry of mature candidates with other qualifications into our programmes given the mismatch between the SQA qualifications and our own understanding of honours degree education? That's really the issue. They probably therefore don't have strong perceptions of the SCQF (Dean, post92 Institution)

It's hard to see how it (SCQF) is perceived to be honest, other than a framework within which we've had to plan our new degree programme..... But I mean as a general rule I would say that the framework is not perceived as an active factor in life. (Senior lecturer, ancient institution)

6.8 In some cases institutional leaders and quality assurance staff indicated that some of their programme or course based staff viewed the Framework as another piece of bureaucracy or set of rules and guidelines to be adhered too, or as yet another thing thrown at them by administration.

Across the institution I guess there is this issue of initiative fatigue...You know people are being asked to understand the Bologna process and the Quality Enhancement framework and PDP's, SCQF and to know all the acronyms and you know they ... feel it another pressure, another burden when they've got a lot of marking to do. (Head of quality, post92 institution)

6.9 There were also indications that groups of staff may feel “antagonistic” towards the “higher education agenda” in the context of quality assurance:

there is still a group of academic staff who are antagonistic to the whole higher education agenda and will either sign up or just try and avoid it (Director of Quality, 1960s Institution)

6.10 In some cases competing priorities led to the framework becoming deprioritised: *we've perhaps paid more attention to the requirements of the new degree at this point than we have to the fine details of the framework (Programme Director, Ancient Institution)*

6.11 There were also views expressed, particularly within the ancient institution, which were critical of the 'rhetoric' and hype associated with the Framework. The institutional representative of the ancient institution is quite clear in his convictions with regard to the useful yet limited nature of SCQF. He links over expectations of the Framework with early promotional activities.

at the opening ceremony of the SCQF in the Glasgow Conference Centre...the Minister compared it to the discovery of penicillin and landing on the moon - it's a qualification framework (Vice principal, ancient institution)

6.12 This respondent suggested that the focus for the Framework should be on the opportunities which it provides for restructuring of the curriculum along more consistent lines. He had more limited aspirations regarding articulation and credit transfer, and was wary of pressures towards more radical change. Associated with this are issues regarding the capacity of the Framework to resolve issues such as the relationship between specific and general credit, which will be considered more fully below.

6.13 In some instances, expectations have been expressed in relation to improvements in the learning experience through the development of coherent programmes, where the differences between course levels can be clearly distinguished.

I think it [SCQF] has crystallised a few things in terms of expectations, what is meant to be done at each level, and also I think there's been some changes in terms of the regulations for things like ordinary degrees. We had our own number of points that you needed to get for an ordinary degree, but I think probably standardising that has helped. I think it's probably fairly clear what these words, honours and so on, but I think some of these it's probably made things a little bit more homogeneous across the university and across universities (Director of Teaching, Ancient Institution)

THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR

6.14 Perceptions of SCQF also varied considerably among staff within FE colleges. A number of the senior staff commented on the positive perceptions of the framework within the colleges, and one described his college as being 'big fans... in all attempts that are made of that nature to make the curriculum of the institution transparent, logical, coherent' (Depute Principal, FE college 3). However among some senior staff this positive perception was also qualified by a degree of 'scepticism' about the extent to which the Framework would deliver change unless wider issues were addressed.

.....I think there's a lot of positive views about the potential of SCQF, but some scepticism about whether it really will be followed through, but it's not going to deliver what it sets out to deliver unless the whole range of lifelong learning providers buy into it and it's all very well for us to be levelling everything and telling everybody that what's worth what, but if the universities for example don't

then recognise that and do something about it, we haven't really moved much further forward, but also the same in terms of community learning and whether there's scope to accredit more community learning and provide routes in, we can't do it on our own as a sector and I think in FE there's a feeling that, yes, it's great but we actually need more of a push, that the other parts of lifelong learning need to make it happen effectively, to make it deliver what it could deliver. (Principal, FE College 1)

In one particular institution senior staff indicated that there were perceptions of a lack of relevance of the SCQF to the operation of their institution:

in practical terms I don't see what its use is within an institution and in the delivery of an award I don't see what the SCQF really brings to that process at all (Depute Head of Department, care and supported learning, Fe College 4)

This perception was linked to a view that the Framework was attempting to “do the impossible”:

It's a case, I'm afraid, of most people that I know thinking that the framework is really attempting to do the impossible in the sense that it seems to me meaningless to say that, for instance, any SVQ 4 is equivalent to any HND, you know never mind trying to maintain that any 2 Ordinary Honours or Masters or Doctorates are the same, you know what subject are we talking about? What university are we talking about? You know if we take an Honours Degree and I'm sure any of the professions, they would look very carefully at where someone had applied for a position, they would look very carefully at where the Degree had been obtained from and that's indicated really that you can't say that 2 Honours Degrees are at the same level, I just don't think it has an real meaning, I'm afraid. (Depute Head of Department, care and supported learning, FE college 4)

6.15 Among the staff who expressed positive perceptions one important idea which was expressed was that this would be a ‘tool’ which would be useful in a number of contexts. One curriculum leader in childcare education and social care suggested that the framework was being perceived in the following way.

Well I think probably they think it's (SCQF) very, it's useful, you know it's actually going to be something ..., once it becomes recognised and people understand it that's important, it will actually be a very useful tool in a lot of the work that we do.

(Curriculum leader in childcare education and social care, FE college 2)

6.16 In this case she suggested that it will help staff make sense of the range of qualifications which they provide. This theme was also echoed by other respondents who emphasised the value of the framework in mapping provision:

I think in terms of the mapping of the levels there's a high opinion of it (SCQF)... (Planning officer, FE college 2)

6.17 A related issue is the perceived role of the Framework in clarifying the range of provision in colleges, a view expressed by one of the social care staff:

I think very positively. I think people see it (SCQF) as a real opportunity to clarify training and to re-establish what has been very vague before and that we do a lot of short course work and I think it's a real chance for us to put it onto the framework. (Senior lecturer, social care FE college 2)

6.18 Another respondent who admitted she had relatively little knowledge of the Framework nevertheless expressed a positive perception of its role with respect to guidance for students.

I think it's a positive thing because it gives you a framework with which to work from, you know guidance. (Lecturer social care, FE college 3)

6.19 However, despite these positive perceptions a number of staff expressed the view that the Framework only had a relatively limited contribution to make. Thus the planning officer who expressed a positive view with regard to its contribution to mapping went on to suggest that 'I'm not sure in its broadest sense that there's that much recognition of it.' This view was reinforced by other respondents who suggested that it was 'not high on anybody's agenda', a view also expressed by one of the engineering staff.

...it would be perceived as something that if they have to use it they will but it's not something that they talk about in everyday language. (Curriculum leader, motor vehicles FE college 2)

6.20 The main expectations of staff were expressed in terms of its role as a 'tool' which would be of value in a number of ways. In the first place it was suggested that this will help staff clarify the range of provision which they have, its role in meeting student needs, and the gaps which exist.

I think that it should help clarify what qualifications people need, what kind of training opportunities should be around, where the gaps are in training and help us really get quite a coherent framework together of what we offer and how we respond to people. (Senior lecturer in social care, FE college 2)

6.21 It was suggested that this clarification will be valuable for students, and for employers. With respect to students it was suggested that this could be a guidance tool, while with employers it would help to clarify the level and role of qualifications.

6.22 A number of respondents also suggested that the framework may be of value in providing opportunities to strengthen lifelong learning provision.

...it won't just be about HNC's and National Certificate modules and diplomas, it'll actually be a way of crediting people for other kinds of things that they've done in terms of their lifelong learning and I think that is a big expectation and hopefully that will materialise. (Curriculum leader social care, FE college 2)

6.23 In this respect the arrangements for APEL/RPL (Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning/Recognition of Prior Learning) were emphasised, although it was noted that these arrangements have still not been finalised.

I think the bits about accreditation for prior learning and so on are perhaps the most interesting, but as far as I'm aware they've not actually been worked out, finally published, this being in relation to Social Work

(Associate head health and social sciences, FE college 3)

6.24 A number of respondents also referred to the expectation that the Framework may be of value in facilitating credit transfer and articulation, however in almost all cases this was qualified by a view that this was a hope rather than an expectation.

I think the other hope for it is that it helps with articulation arrangements to university, but I'm not sure that there's that much evidence of that at the moment and there still seems to be a lot of power in the hands of the higher education institutions to whether or not they accept credits because they'll just take specific credits and some really don't accept things at all. And so I think the credit transfer arrangements haven't really progressed as much as we'd like, so I suppose that's a hope for us, not an expectation.

(Planning officer, FE college 2)

OTHER STAKEHOLDER AND INTEREST GROUPS

6.25 Many of the respondents from the other interest or stakeholder groups whom we interviewed expressed positive perceptions of, or expectations regarding the Framework. These respondents described it as 'very important', 'very helpful' and 'vital'. A number of themes emerged here. One of these was around creating new opportunities for learners and opportunities for progression this was associated with greater cohesion in provision

I think it's going to be a very useful ...in opening doors for people because obviously we want to ensure ...ease of progression and promoting qualifications and learning experiences for everybody in Scotland. So we expect that SCQF will help to achieve that in some way, you know, we don't expect it to work miracles but we do expect it to make things a lot easier and a lot more understandable for students themselves, but also for employersand so we expect it to be a sort of positive step towards, but not the final measure, but a step in the process. (Rep of national org/department)

Well I hope it would be a helpful unifying approach which can be developed further (Rep of national org/department)

6.26 It can be noted that this was expressed as a hope for development, rather than a perception of current achievement, a theme which emerged in a number of responses.

6.27 An employer representative from a local authority social services department also expressed the perception that the framework will become of considerable importance to

them, but qualified this by suggesting the delays with VQs were perceived as important limitations at present.

Well our expectation is that we will design all our qualification pathways, progression routes, based on the framework, so that we're sure that we're hitting the right level for people to be able to articulate, I mean that's our expectation, but as I say we can't fully do that at the moment because we can't get anybody to tell us what the credit rating is for a VQ. (local authority workforce development manager)

6.28 A representative of a professional body expressed the expectation the Framework would be of value in enabling people to move from one level of membership to another.

I think they see it as they'll have clear building blocks, ... the SCQF framework will be useful in helping people understand where they are within these different levels and what they need to do to move from one level of membership up to another level...(Representative of professional body)

6.29 However he also suggested that at present most members of his professional body had no real expectations or perceptions, as they did not understand how the Framework applies to them.

6.30 A second theme was around the idea of parity of esteem for different types of qualifications, including vocational qualifications. This was a strong theme in many responses, particularly among those representing organisations involving employers or vocational education and training.

We don't see it as a panacea to deal with all things and to bring any sort of equity in itself to the various streams of learning, but we do see it as contributing towards those goals. In short, it should contribute to helping all kinds of vocational learning to be seen equitably alongside other types of learning. So we've got great expectations of it. (Rep of national org/department)

6.31 Associated with this was the idea that the Framework could be of value in the recognition and accreditation of various kinds of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). However it was recognised that this was difficult because of the informal nature of much of this provision.

Well I think the important thing for us, for the future that the framework is intended to include all learning that takes place and of course in our professional workthere's an awful lot of training takes place and some of its fairly formal, some of its very informal and the challenge I think will be for us as a professional body ...to find ways of making sure that all the types of learning that take place ... come into the framework, but instinct tells me however that we're a good way away from that....(rep of professional body)

6.32 A third theme which emerged was a possible link to the funding of education. This was expressed only as a tentative issue for future consideration by a number of respondents, and it was recognised as a potentially highly contentious issue which could

lead to considerable tension within the partnership, particularly on the part of higher education.

6.33 Positive perceptions of the Framework and its potential impact were expressed particularly by representatives of the community learning and development sector:

Well I think it would be fair to say that we have very high expectations of it, I mean its more than that, it's a fundamental part of the Scottish educational scene of which we're a part, if it wasn't there we'd have to set about inventing it...(rep of national org/department)

6.34 This view reflects the perceived importance in this sector of developing systems for the assessment, recognition and accreditation of community learning and development. These views were also reflected in the recent scoping study for a learning and assessment framework for community based learning undertaken by CRLI for the Scottish Executive (Duncan & Gallacher, 2004). However respondents, both in the current study and in the earlier study, reported concerns about bringing an 'overly formal approach to learning'. It was recognised in the earlier study that introducing assessment into community based learning could be "a lot of work for both the provider and the credit rating body" (Rep of NatOrg) and that the implications of this for smaller providers could be very demanding. Nevertheless, while it was recognised that 'inappropriate assessment' could be negative, the opportunities for credit rating were viewed as valuable for many learners. On this basis the introduction of SCQF is warmly welcomed in this sector.

6.35 Within the schools sector the headteacher whom we interviewed thought that the SCQF was 'a good clear neat way of drawing everything together, but no more than that'. He contrasted it with the stronger currency of the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) tariff.

6.36 More generally a number of our respondents expressed concern about the relatively slow progress in the development of the Framework. This was most clearly expressed by those concerned with employers and vocational education and training.

It's been a long time in development and it's sort of could drift off the radar a little bit ...you know, is there a perception that, is it struggling a little bit? (Rep of national org/department)

6.37 This was also associated with the view that to date it had had little impact on employers or trade unions.

SUMMARY

6.38 Respondents from all sectors reported perceptions of and expectations for the Framework which were positive in a number of ways. A number of participants expressed a concern that publicity, and in particular early statements had resulted in "hype" regarding the Framework. In their view such "hype" had encouraged unrealistic

expectations regarding the potential of SCQF to influence change. The perception of the impact of the SCQF in both FE and HE is that its value has been in building on change such as that introduced by SCOTCATS in helping to enhance provision and clarify structures. Stakeholders from other sectors also expressed the expectation that SCQF would help clarify pathways and progression. There was also an expectation from stakeholders in sectors such as community based learning and vocational and work based training that the framework could assist with the recognition of learning, and the creation of more opportunities for credit transfer. However these optimistic perceptions and expectations were balanced by the perception that progress towards introducing change had been slow, the impact so far had been limited in many areas, and there was some scepticism about the extent to which expectations for greater flexibility within lifelong learning provision would be achieved.

CHAPTER SEVEN IMPACT AND OPERATION OF THE FRAMEWORK

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

7.1 The SCQF has been accepted and implemented in each of the universities acting as case studies in this research although the extent of the impact is varied by institutional type. The post 1992 university has embraced the Framework and describe it as “sitting high” on their agenda. The 1960s institution describe their approach as “embedding” the Framework in basic academic policies and procedures. Within the ancient institution the Framework although in use is referred to as not being “a big thing in our lives”.

7.2 The SCQF is described as impacting upon curriculum development and review, validation, admissions arrangements, and programme planning. In some cases respondents describe the matching of assessment policies with the SCQF.

Institutional Developments

7.3 Specialist and institutional leaders across all institutions describe the Framework as becoming embedded within programme planning and curriculum review. The use of the Framework in this way is visible in the university sector. However the universities included in the study reported distinctly different approaches to curriculum redesign within the context of the Framework. In some cases the institutions have used the Framework to clarify progression across the four levels, whilst in other cases institutions have grouped provision at two levels.

I think that consistency of practice is really important and knowing that if somebody has got a level of study at a particular level that we really have that level of study at that particular level. (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

There was a decision taken centrally that as far as possible all our pre honours courses should be allocated to level 8 and all our honours courses should be allocated to level 10, so it means that at [ancient] university there are very few level 7 courses, there are very few level 9 courses, clearly there are some level 11 ones because of the undergraduate masters and I think that in science and engineering we are still not very happy about that because we would see progression from 7 to 8 to 9 to 10. (Senior lecturer, ancient institution)

.....it [SCQF] is the de facto reference point for all our curricular structures, regulations and policies, and it is defined in our quality assurance processes, procedures, policy, and procedures for design and approval for the awards within the modular structure and for collaborative activities, so it is the.. primary reference point for all academic activities. (Director of quality, 1960s Institution)

7.4 In instances where progression was mainly across two levels some staff, particularly in science and engineering, expressed concern that this did not recognise the progression of students through their disciplines.

7.5 In general activities associated with modularisation, semesterisation, credit and levelling are viewed positively.

We now have a clear rule that courses can only be 10, 20 or 40 credit points because that allows you to, well for obvious reasons, it allows you to swap and people to make their programs up in different sorts of ways ... There's no question that the thinking of it in terms of credit points has been helpful. (Vice principal, ancient institution)

It's encouraged us to think more systematically about learning outcomes, appropriate to different levels. It (SCQF) has also been an issue more recently with the development of our replacement Masters programme. (Senior Lecturer, 1960s Institution)

7.6 In one particular institution in the university sector the implementation of the SCQF is highlighted as leading to a change in practice. In this instance the account is given of how the implementation of the Framework encouraged the inclusion of learning outcomes within module development.

We had to rewrite our modules into a learning outcome format because they weren't in a standard format across the university...well they were in a standard format but it wasn't very meaningful and it wasn't in a learning outcome format. So the driving force was to get this into a learning outcome format...at the time we were working with level 1, level 2, level 3 and what those levels meant and that was the driving force, so if somebody was studying at level 1 that was really a level 1 module, if somebody was studying at level 3 that was really a level 3 module...you could have a nurse coming in to do their Bsc Health Studies, the top up degree on a part time basis and they would be studying a module that was level 3 by code, but in reality it was a 1st year level module because it was in area like biochemistry...but was a 1st year biochemistry module, so it was to overcome that, and therefore when a programme was being approved by the university, the university could be confident that they had 360 credits and the correct amount of credits to get a degree award at each appropriate level. So it was to get it into learning outcome form at and be assured that it was at the appropriate level (Institutional rep, Post 1992 Institution)

7.7 Within the post 1992 institution, the SCQF is identified as assisting with admissions arrangements in flexibility, and prompting formalised activities aimed at recognising prior learning. Also within this institution, the implementation of the SCQF had interesting repercussions with respect to the Students Records System. The system in use in this particular institution was constructed in such manner as levels could only be recorded as a single numeric field. The Framework introduces levels 10 and 11, which have two numeric fields. Hence the institution had to address this. This is referred to as a “bizarre situation” which actually “had quite a significant mark institutionally”.

The Framework as a Common Language

7.8 The value of creating a common language around the concepts of levels and credits was noted by a number of respondents. This is perceived to be of value in contributing both to internal curriculum planning and re-design, and in considering the relationship between different qualifications.

There's a new language, people would have always talked about 1st and 2nd and 3rd year, ...there's a new language and it's really interesting because it's always said with a smile, 'They're at...well it's 8, I think it's 8 (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

7.9 This is referred to as a distinctly Scottish phenomenon which contrasts with other parts of the UK:

the SCQF is part of our common language, it's part of the agenda that we're all working with nationally and internally, so there's that sense of sector awareness and interestingly a complete lack of that South of the border, having done audits, developments and engagements etc South of the border, there is definitely a gap and confusion and lack of clarity at a number of levels when you go into an institution discussing it. (Director of Quality, 1960s Institution)

Credit Transfer and Articulation

7.10 The contribution of SCQF to facilitating articulation and credit transfer arrangements is an issue, which has aroused both expectations and concerns. Respondents from the Post 92 University welcomed the potential contribution of the SCQF to facilitating credit transfer and the development of articulation links. By contrast respondents from the ancient university welcomed the extent to which SCQF allowed universities to maintain their autonomy, and emphasised that it was a tool to facilitate change, and not a comprehensive solution to problems. Even within the post 92 university, where a substantial number of articulation arrangements were reported, it was also reported that these existed before the introduction of SCQF, and that the Framework had not resulted in substantial developments in this respect.

7.11 Articulation with FE is prioritised within the post 1992 institution.

We have articulation arrangements with colleges ... we've probably got about 50 % of our students who are coming with HNs from FE (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

7.12 Within the ancient institution it is recognised that articulation with FE is not a major function. This is expressed within the context that universities of this kind often act as selecting rather than recruiting institutions.

this is an institution that doesn't on the whole have tremendous recruitment problems (Vice principal, ancient institution)

In this context articulation with FE is not viewed as a “major function”.

7.13 The SCQF has certainly raised awareness of issues centred on flexibility in admissions, credit transfer and articulation and stimulated debate. In some instances this debate is linked to misconceptions regarding the scope of the Framework.

There was a great deal of the usual misapprehension in that the SCQF implies that you have to take somebody in if they come at that level. I think few people believe that nowadays (Vice principal, ancient institution)

7.14 Such misapprehension is linked by the participant to statements made in relation to the SCQF from a variety of sources, including policy makers and practitioners.

I've heard statements that imply that merely the problems between articulation between one half of the sector and another are essentially solved by the SCQF (Vice principal, ancient institution)

7.15 This respondent accepts the helpful role of the framework in tackling such issues. It is suggested that over-emphasis on the role of the SCQF can distract from the nature of difficulties associated with articulation. In this sense the impact of the framework on practice in these areas is lower than the focus which the SCQF has drawn towards them, with the Framework appearing to have had relatively little impact.

7.16 Two issues have been particularly noted by respondents with respect to the development of articulation links; specific and general credit and the 96 credit HNC.

Specific and general credit

7.17 Specific credit relates to subject specific credit, and with regards to progression with advance standing and is often referred to in the context that credit in certain specific subjects is required before a student may articulate. General credit is credit associated with the overall achievement of an award. A number of staff within the universities emphasised the need for specific credits. The issues raised were illustrated by responses from the field of social care and social work. HEIs offering programmes in social work often require credits in subject areas such as law before entry with advanced standing can be guaranteed. However the current HNC contains no module choices in this subject. These differences between social care and social work also reflect the more academic content of degrees as opposed to the more vocational elements of HNCs. As SQA is responsible for the content of HNC programmes, SQA have been highlighted as having a key role to play in the resolution of the matter.

...in the Social Work area the fact is that real issues are around, there's very significant differences between the HNC in Social Care, which is the nearest qualification is the SQA's port folio and our first year undergraduate programme which is much more influenced by underpinning studies in academic social sciences..., so the real issues for us are not the SCQF itself but the structure of qualifications which in the Social Care/Social Work area doesn't lend itself to a straight articulation. I mean you might think HNC Social Care students should automatically enter the 2nd year of the Social Work honours degree throughout

*Scotland but that's undoubtedly not the case, and it's not the case here because the SQA qualification is very much more focused on very specific vocational outcomes, and it just doesn't have the breadth of academic or underpinning that we would expect from the students entering our 2nd year.
(Dean, post92 institution)*

7.18 Respondents within the post 1992 institution also describe key activities and approaches in other subject areas designed to address and overcome issues associated with specific and general credit, including building links with FE colleges, and developing curriculum in close association. The more rigid requirements of the Social Work degree does not allow for such developments in that particular area.

Matching of the curriculum is very, very important, so we (FE and HEI) do talk about the curriculum and the matching of the curriculum and schools will talk with the FE program leaders and ensure that, you know for ease of progression that the subject areas match, that they're not coming in and doing and there's too big a jump in a subject area. (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

7.19 In some cases this collaboration has resulted in the development of courses that are designed and administered with the progression of FE students in mind. This collaboration proves beneficial in the provision of courses in which first and second are not delivered within the institution, rather the HN qualification delivered in an FEC acts as such.

*We've worked closely with the FE colleges to make sure that there would be entry into level 3 without the university actually having a first and second year
(Institutional rep, post92 institution)*

7.20 In other cases curriculum has been developed to complement that of FE to prevent repetition.

Quite a lot of our programmes have been developed in collaboration with the FE colleges, ... Sports Studies would be a good example, where it was developed in conjunction and in consultation with the colleges and the expertise in that area, to make sure that degree level was at the right level and that the students wouldn't be repeating things or be coming into something that was totally and utterly brand new and setting them up to fail. (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

7.21 In some cases the Framework is identified as positively impacting upon collaboration, in instances where it occurs.

*Its (SCQF) made collaboration an awful lot easier in that I think clarity and consistency of it enables us particularly if it's our award.
(Director of quality, 1960s institution)*

7.22 In this case the institution is "quite dictatorial" that any collaboration relating to their awards is expressed in SCQF terms. In doing so it is reported that collaborative relationships become "more easy to define". A decision has been taken to accept credit rating from any other Scottish institution. This is described as reducing "bureaucracy", in that modules delivered in different institutions can "readily" be put together in a programme. This is referred to as a simpler and more effective approach, than the approach taken prior to SCQF.

in the olden days, pre SCQF we might have had to have the programme described in text and then try and work out how to fit in our degrees, now level, volume, aims, etc. (Director of quality, 1960s institution)

7.23 In others participants highlighted particular areas in which SCQF itself had not had any impact upon collaboration, in that such arrangements were long standing, or were off a very particular nature:

We have no specific collaborations arrangements involving social work. Not ones that are influenced by SCQF, obviously there are millions of collaborations ...not with employers and agencies. (Dean, Post 1992 Institution)

7.24 In this particular instance the participant highlighted a lack of understanding of the SCQF by employers, meaning that collaborations with employers were discussed in the context of university and SQA qualifications as opposed to SCQF levels.

When we talk to employers about say their social care qualification, which we do and which we have been doing for years in various contexts. The language is the language of university qualifications and SQA qualifications which employers still understand and I'm not sure the SCQF language, at the moments is adding a lot to that discussion from the employers' point of view. (Dean, Post 1992 Institution)

In other instances, particularly collaborations with professional bodies it was “too soon” to say.

The 96 Credit HNC

7.25 The setting of HNCs at 96 credits as opposed to 120 by SQA, has been highlighted as a potential problem area for the post 1992 institution. There is an uncertainty as to whether student obtaining a 96 credit HNC will possess enough credits to enter with advanced standing into second year of a degree programme. Reference has also been made to the issue of who will be responsible for making up the credit difference, the FEC where the award is received or the HEI to which the student progresses. Participants within the post 1992 institution told of an anxiety that not allowing students with 96 credits to enter with advanced standing could affect their revenue, as students could decide to access alternative HEIs who would offer them entrance with advanced standing. They also expressed uncertainty as to who could provide advice regarding the resolution of this issue.

...is it up to the institutions to come up with their own individual answers to questions like this credit deficit on the 96 framework and in the HNC's and what they do for 2nd year entry? ...who's the person to go to find out what's happening here and what's happening elsewhere? (Institutional rep, post92 institution)

Learners and the Learning Experience

7.26 The Framework is described as impacting indirectly on learners. Changes resulting from the use of the Framework lead to improvements in the learning experience, but it is unlikely that individual learners will associate such improvements with the SCQF.

...its (the SCQF's impact on learners) probably been indirect in that there are intervening features. The university's become modularised and then semesterised, and the modular structure was designed with reference to the qualifications framework, so inevitably the SCQF was an influence. (Director of quality, 1960s institution)

7.27 This is further complicated by the fact that new batches of students are more likely to benefit from improvements in policies and practices as opposed to existing students, and also, due to the nature of provision within FE and HE, students may not have a comparative context with which to measure such improvements to learning or teaching.

...I mean I don't think students would notice the impact on their program, they would notice the impact so much because they will have been used to it, but if they compared our program now with one say 5 years ago it would be very different" (Director of quality, 1960s institution)

7.28 This is further complicated by suggestions that students are unlikely to have a good grasp of the framework.

The students in the university ... I don't think they'll think about the framework at all. I think they'll just be in and studying. (Institutional rep post92 institution)

The only students that actually know are the officers of the students association and they would certainly know about it, it's not part of the normal conversation and if you look at a course handbook you'll sometimes find it there, theoretically it ought to be in all of them. (Depute Principal, Ancient Institution)

7.29 There is a recognition that time is spent explaining qualifications and teaching processes to learners. In the main this is carried out without explicit reference being made to the Framework. The Framework is not explicitly mentioned in prospectuses or course material, or in guidance discussions with students. In spite of this, participants in the main allude to the fact that the Framework provides an architecture around which this information can be developed, or discussions structured, although they do indicate that they would be highly unlikely to include specific reference to the Framework. In particular the framework is described as useful in the context of discussion with students and potential students regarding admissions or progression.

7.30 In some cases participants expressed an as yet unmet expectation that students understanding of aspects of the framework would enhance the learning experience:

I thought... the learning outcomes, these are all specific learning objectives you know, what we do on a lecture by lecture basis, would give students some sort of structure and they'd be able to work better with it, but I think sadly the vast majority of them just do what the timetable tells them and do it because they know they have to do it to get their degree. (Lecturer, Ancient Institution)

7.31 The 1960s institution has taken clear steps to raise awareness and understanding of the Framework amongst students, and have incorporated the SCQF into information, which is provided to students or potential students.

It's (SCQF) been incorporated in our qualifications framework, it's something in our programmes specifications, and they are available to all students. It is incorporated in course handbooks and so students are told the credit rating structure, they're also told the meaning of it, the design of it and it is frequently used in terms of explaining the amount of workload and responsibilities for students in terms of quite a few subjects. (Director of quality, 1960s institution)

7.32 The SCQF is cited as useful when used with “learning contracts” in the sense that the amount of study the learner is required to undertake can be clearly indicated. The Framework is also identified in playing a key role in explaining to students the expectations of increased responsibility, independence and autonomy as they move towards fourth year.

An Enabling Tool or an Agent of Change?

7.33 As has been indicated above a number of respondents across all sectors have emphasised the value of the Framework as an enabling tool which is contributing to curriculum planning and re-design, the creation of more orderly and consistent programmes, and facilitating comparison between programmes and qualifications. However respondents have suggested that many of the developments which SCQF has facilitated have also been associated with other changes, such as modularisation, quality enhancement, and the emphasis on widening access. So far there is little clear evidence that SCQF has itself been an agent of radical or substantial change within the structures of lifelong learning in Scotland.

...it (the SCQF) hasn't really changed our processes, it's just that it's a really useful tool at the validation stage that if we internally, from a quality perspective, have some doubts about why that module is level 4 as it would have been, we've now got a tool to explain why we think that, of course academic staff will say 'well you're not an expert in maths', or whatever the subject is, 'how would you know?' but we can now say well it just looks to us that the learning outcomes are written as such that it doesn't appear to be at a level that you'd expect for level 10. (Head of quality, post92 institution)

7.34 In general the SCQF is described as cementing change rather than driving it. *Well its had a large effect on the structure and organisation of the curriculum and that is because, and that is not in itself anything to do with SCQF, when we totally reorganised our structure which we did a couple of years ago into schools and colleges things like that, and not entirely coincidentally, but not as a direct consequence. (Depute Principal, Ancient Institution)*

THE FURTHER EDUCATION SECTOR

7.35 As with the HEIs studied all the FE colleges which have been included in this study report the impact of SCQF on their work, although this impact may be less than in the university sector. This more limited level of impact is associated with the extent to which programme development occurs under the auspices of SQA, rather than being an internal college responsibility. This issue will be discussed more fully below.

Institutional developments

7.36 A theme expressed by a number of respondents was that the impact of SCQF at an institutional level had been limited to date. This was summed up by one of the college vice-principals who in responding to a question about the impact of SCQF on institutional policy and practice gave the following response:

Thus far, not in a great way at all, as we said earlier, the recognition of its existence and what it's trying to achieve is really more there in terms of just general understanding by staff and the only group that it really has impacted on thus far are those who are involved specifically in the HN developments. (Vice principal, FE college 1)

7.37 At a course level one of our respondents reported a similar level of impact.
Yeah well the SCQF doesn't impact on a daily basis. Obviously I'm aware of the SCQF at an operational level, but on a day to day basis it doesn't impact very much. We're aware of the level, the SCQF levels of our courses, but overall we don't have much to do with it on a daily basis. (Curriculum leader electrical engineering, college 2)

7.38 Another expressed the framework as having some impact within their subject area, social care with respect to new specifications regarding the HNC, but little impact across the institution as a whole.

Well within the institution I'm not really aware of it having had any impact at all, when for instance the HNC that I teach on, the social care HNC, when that was revised and obviously the new specifications came with an indication of the level within the framework and obviously the credit points at that level, but as far as having an impact within the institution I can't really say its had any impact at all. (Depute Head of Department, care and supported learning, FE college 4)

7.39 SCQF is however clearly having an impact on the HN review process which is currently underway, and a number of respondents who were involved in the process in various ways commented on this influence. These programmes are being planned around the SCQF architecture, and are leading staff to consider the issues which it raises.

Yes, as I say we're introducing the new HNC Social Care next academic session and we will take into account the SCQF framework in doing that... (AHD, health/social sciences, college 3)

7.40 The vice principal quoted above also raised a potential problem associated with levelling HNC and HND units which could result in colleges offering more limited choices to students.

I can see HN's becoming much narrower with the range of options that we can offer to be able to efficiently deliver the progression, because we can have people coming in doing infill, we can have programmes that run in the evening, which we could have someone doing 1st year of an HNC in the evening sitting along side someone doing the 2nd year because the units are all at the same level, if we started to level ones and look to progression and you've got to have certain

combinations of units then it's going to make it much more difficult in order to deliver things efficiently, and may well end up reducing the range that we can offer within programs in some ways, now the recognition of that as being a potential impact I think is just beginning to be recognised and I don't know the eventual scope of it (Vice Principal, College 1)

7.41 The main impact of the Framework to date appears to have been on internal developments. In this respect a mapping exercise of all college provision was reported from one college. SCQF has been used as the framework for this mapping, and it was reported that this helped identify progression routes and gaps in provision.

...the main impact is on, ...access and progression planning and the curriculum mapping project we did was very useful into visualising the curriculum against the levels and showing where we had gaps and overlap and no obvious progression, it (SCQF) has really helped with that. I think in terms of the design of programmes... it does I think make people more aware when they're designing programmes, they're looking at the break down of the units and the credit levels of the units within that, so that courses are pitched at an appropriate level. (Planning Officer FE College 2)

7.42 This mapping exercise was also linked to a wider one with other colleges in the area, however it was suggested that the impetus came from the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) Mapping Project, rather than the establishment of SCQF.

7.43 The theme of the value of the Framework in helping with planning and establishing progression routes was also identified by other respondents.

I think that we're thinking about what we offer and what we plan to offer, a bit about what I was saying earlier that we're kind of thinking about well what's the current curriculum? Where does that sit? Where are the gaps? How do we help people access into things and how do we help them go onto the next level? So I think it's (SCQF) actually helped organise and structure the curriculum quite well, so far. (Senior lecturer social care, FE College 2)

using the SCQF framework allows us to actually say that this particular bit of the award should go from level whatever to the next level and then so on, so we can plan a progression of awards right through the portfolio of programmes, so it's really through the whole structure of the thing, looking at each individual one and just, I mean it's about looking at the content of the units that would be in that and say right these units make a programmes that will have that particular level and if it goes ... for instance a level 7, if we design a course that sits on the top of that we should actually have to make it a level 8 with the appropriate units that are in that level 8. Again it's a reference document and a compliance document that we're going through. (Curriculum leader, motor vehicles, College 2)

7.44 A participating FEC also forms part of The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Millennium Institute. UHI is both an innovative and unique development

within Scottish Higher Education. UHI represents a network of FECs administering degree programmes validated by the Open University Validating Services (OUVS). This college noted that the SCQF is viewed as having played a key role in the development of degree programmes within UHI through enabling them to overcome restrictions when operating only within the guidelines provided by OUVS.

...and it has been a very important development at the point where UHI was really allowed by Open University to adopt the framework to thereafter really create the parameters for our curriculum development. (Depute Principal, FE College 3)

Credit Transfer and Articulation

7.45 With respect to credit transfer and articulation, while a number of respondents indicated that they hoped that the Framework would facilitate the development of these links, most respondents reported that the impact of Framework so far had been limited. While it was reported that many articulation links existed, it was also noted that these generally pre-dated the establishment of SCQF, and the Framework had done little to strengthen these links. Thus in the case of a new HNC in social care the continuing problems associated with articulation to the social work degree were noted.

I think there needs to be some meeting of minds in order to progress more students because the Framework is clearly designed with articulation...into year 2 relevant degrees sort of thing, but it's not worked up to present and I'm not sure that the new Framework will enable that in any way at all. (Associate head, health and social sciences, FE college 3)

7.46 However staff in one of the colleges did report that progress was being made in developing better links with a number of universities, and did suggest that the SCQF was being helpful in this process.

...it's in its early stages, it's gaining momentum and it's getting better all the time and I want to continue with this... the institutions are much more welcoming to our approaches. (Head of Faculty of Social Care, college 2)

7.47 The problems associated with the development of 96 credit point HNCs which had been noted by respondents from HEIs, was also noted by some FE respondents as something which would potentially exacerbate this problems associated with articulation, but it was not clear how this could be resolved.

we have a new HNC starting this year, so obviously we're going to have to look at the organisation of it and the programme development in order to ensure that students who wish to go on to Social Work training have sufficient credits in order to progress, because the actual HNC is only 12 credits, 12 units, which doesn't actually give them sufficient qualifications to get into university. They would need to do an additional, so if we can highlight those who are hoping to go onto Social Work training then we would ensure that they had sufficient units in order for them to gain access to university (lecturer, Health and Social Care, College 3)

Learners and the Learning Experience

7.48 Almost all respondents suggested that to date the Framework had had little direct impact on learners, or on the information made directly available to them, however indirectly more coherence in portfolios, better progression routes and more flexibility would have positive consequences.

I don't really think its (SCQF), as far as I'm aware, has much impact on the learning experience, except indirectly as a result of students find themselves doing a level, so many level 6's and so many level 5's and so many level 7's as part of an HN (Deputy Principal, FE College 4)

I think it (SCQF) has an indirect input, pure and simple because it allowed people who are designing materials to go to these particular units, it gives them added information on what the kind of level they should aim at, the cognitive level of the types of question and the types of assessments etc. but it's used as a guide in that respect, but it's a loose one to be honest. But I don't see the learners being aware of that, I think its more likely it'll be the people who are designing for the learners who would be aware of that. (CLMV, College 2)

7.49 Staff from another college noted that the SCQF was having an impact on the ways in which they provided information and advice to learners.

Well I think when we do course information we are much more aware of putting what credit it is, and making people aware of that, and....events and things like that about potential learners, we're kind of saying well this is what it will give you, and this is where you could go from there. And through the college, what we've managed to do it set up looking at sort of flow charts which help people see where our courses sit and what credit they would need and where do they go next. (Senior lecturer, Social Care, College 2)

An Enabling Tool or an Agent of Change?

7.50 Overall however, it can be seen from the points made above that the impact of the Framework to date within the FE colleges has been limited. While it can be seen as an enabling tool which has assisted with planning programmes and pathways, its role in respect of curriculum development has been more limited than the role which it has had in the HEIs. This is associated with the fact that curriculum development in the FE sector is in large measure a responsibility of SQA. There is also a view, shared by many college staff that while SCQF is a potential agent of change, this is a potential which is to a considerable degree unrealised in developments so far.

OTHER STAKEHOLDER AND INTEREST GROUPS

7.51 The reported impact of the framework on organisations and sectors beyond the partners and the FE and HE sectors was, as might be expected, limited. In some areas, for example social services, substantial work is now underway, and this indicates the potential of the framework to influence a wide range of provision, including CPD and post professional training. The respondent from the local authority social care department commented on the ways in which the framework was proving helpful.

The most successful aspect to me is that it (SQCF) does offer clarity of level and it gives a kind of common language if you like that if we're talking to colleagues in universities or colleges that we're now talking in a common language.....(workforce manager, local authority)

7.52 One professional body interviewed reported that the Framework had been of considerable value in accrediting their qualifications, and they hoped this would be extended to other areas, including CPD activity. It was however noted that that this was difficult in some cases because of the informal nature of the learning.

7.53 A representative from a professional body in the field of accountancy recognised that the importance of the SCQF to their organisation would grow if the opportunity arose for their qualifications to be accredited and included within the Framework. As yet this type of activity had not occurred within their organisation.

7.54 A representative from a professional body in the field of engineering noted that the framework having had little or no impact upon his organisation and its membership. This participant, however, noted the potential of the framework to have a greater impact upon the professional body as more people begin to understand it. In this sense he viewed the SCQF as having an impact upon the clarity of progression profiles, and CPD.

At the moment I don't think it has impacted at all. Now in the future once people understand what the framework is about I would expect it to have an impact when people start to set down what their career progression plans are and they could match that against the different levels within the framework and again going back to the short courses and so on that they would like as part of their personal development. (Rep of a professional body)

7.55 The very positive response within the Community Based Adult Learning (CBAL) area has also been noted, and funding for a SCQF project worker has been welcomed. While there has been a delay in getting a suitable person in post this has now been resolved, and progress is expected in this area.

7.56 However the frustration regarding progress within the vocational training area has also been noted. This was expressed forcefully by one respondent:

Get a shift on in terms of all the vocational inputs. Bring the vocational side in quickly. It just seems to have been in development for so long and it always seems to be the case that I am told "well, we'll bring the vocational work in as

soon as we finish this lot". But it needs to be done now, it needs to be done at the same time. (rep, national org/dept)

7.57 The local authority workforce manager also noted that ‘the fact that the VQs are not credit rated’ was the most disappointing aspect of the Framework development for her. Other respondents both from Scotland and from other parts of the UK brought out the complexity of the process of attempting to integrate vocational qualifications which are UK wide into the Framework, and the extent to which the attempt to secure a UK wide solution was contributing to the delays in this respect. Questions were also raised about the extent to which this resolving these complex and difficult questions had been a sufficiently high priority in a Framework which was dominated by mainstream FE and HE qualifications.

7.58 With respect to the impact of the Framework in schools it may be helpful to consider SCQF as a federal framework which brings together smaller sub-frameworks, initially the SCOTCATS framework of higher education qualifications and the National Qualifications awarded by the SQA. Nearly all school qualifications belong to one of these sub-frameworks. We might therefore expect the SCQF to have had little impact on schools over and above the effect the introduction of National Qualifications by Higher Still, starting in 1999. Nevertheless schools may have an important role in promoting young people’s awareness of the SCQF. Moreover, respondents to our initial ‘scoping’ interviews pointed out that the SCQF was potentially important for future developments in school curricula and qualifications, especially the 3-18 Curriculum Review whose report was subsequently published as *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive 2004). The limited evidence we have gathered from the schools sector has indicated little impact in this area. The head teacher we interviewed expressed the view that so far the SCQF had had no impact on learners, on the curriculum, on learning programmes or on collaboration. Its main impact had been on reports to parents, which used the SCQF levels to explain how different qualifications related to each other. This was a requirement by the Executive, and our interviewee considered that this was the main factor which had encouraged use and awareness of the framework. The use of SCQF levels to describe all qualifications on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate, from 2005, may further promote awareness.

7.59 This respondent also cited the curriculum review and the proposed Skills for Work courses as more direct influences on the school curriculum. The SEED policy-maker suggested that the SCQF could potentially influence these developments. The process initiated by *A Curriculum for Excellence* was still at any early stage; it aimed to define the outcomes required at each level, and to bring together the 5-14 curriculum, Standard Grade and National Qualifications. There were several issues to be resolved, including:

- The relationship between curriculum and qualifications - between what is learnt and what is formally certificated
- Questions concerning the ability and mechanisms to fit levels A to F of the 5-14 curriculum into the SCQF
- The relevancy of SCQF levels to younger learners and to the models of development and progression appropriate to this age group

- Questions concerning the improvement of progression between levels, and whether there was a role for the SCQF in supporting this.

7.60 The policy-maker considered that the SCQF provided a 'big opportunity' but it needed to clarify its intentions regarding the school sector.

SUMMARY

7.61 There is evidence that SCQF has already had considerable impact, particularly within the HE sector. However this has largely been as an enabling tool facilitating curriculum development and quality enhancement within the HEIs. In this respect it has built on the earlier developments associated with SCOTCATS, modularisation etc. In FE, while it has also facilitated changes associated with mapping of provision, and planning of provision and progression, its impact has been more limited because curriculum development takes place largely under the auspices of SQA. However the Framework was having a major role in shaping developments within the HN Review process, and through this more FE staff were becoming involved with the use of the Framework. However there was little evidence that the Framework was having a significant impact as an agent of change, for example in the development of articulation and credit transfer links between FE colleges and HEIs. This was leading to a level of 'scepticism about the impact of the Framework in the FE sector. It is also important to consider the specific contribution of SCQF and the impact of the sub-frameworks, such as National Qualifications and SCOTCATS, when considering the impact of SCQF on the FE and HE sectors, and the wider changes in the educational system.

7.62 With regard to vocational and work based qualifications there was little evidence of progress. This was partly associated with the attempts to undertake these developments in a UK context, but the failure to secure progress was leading to a degree of frustration among employers and those involved with vocational training. There is some evidence of the potential of the SCQF to have a potential impact in the area of professional qualifications. The opportunities for developments in the field of community based learning have been welcomed, although limited progress has so far been made, and the scale and complexity of the tasks involved have been noted.

CHAPTER EIGHT CURRICULUM CASE STUDIES

8.1 Analysis of data from Phase One of the project indicated that knowledge and understanding of the SCQF was differential with greater knowledge in some subject areas rather than others. Curriculum change processes were highlighted as a key factor in engaging with the SCQF and therefore to focus on institutional responses alone would not give as full a picture as it might. As a result, we decided to do two brief case studies of curriculum areas in three further education colleges and three universities. The curriculum areas identified were Social Services and Engineering.

8.2 Social Services was chosen as a case because of the new regulatory framework governing work in this arena, which requires more of the workforce to become suitably qualified. Furthermore, there is the aim to provide a qualifications framework that enables career progression across what have been the highly differentiated areas of social care and social work. This work is being undertaken by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the SCQF is central to the planning of the qualifications structure. It was therefore anticipated that in this subject area the SCQF may have had a substantial impact and that as a result of this there could be a significant knowledge and use of the Framework within this particular field. In this respect the use of the Framework extends beyond institution policy though the requirements of the SSSC.

8.3 By contrast, Engineering was chosen as a subject because it was viewed as having an existing relatively settled pattern of curriculum and progression. It was anticipated therefore that less impact might be identified and knowledge of the SCQF would be less due to more limited engagement. Here the use of the SCQF would be consistent with institutional policies towards it, but limited beyond that.

8.4 The rationales for choosing these curriculum areas proved substantially correct following the field work.

CASE STUDY – SOCIAL SERVICES

'... there's a tendency for us all, and I include myself in this, to see in the framework what we want to see and to interpret in ways we wish to see it interpreted.' (Senior Lecturer, 1960s University)

Background

8.5 Social services has a new legislative environment which requires the upskilling and increased qualifications of those working in this combined area of social care and social work. In particular, there is the requirement for the extension of training and qualification of those working in social care and opportunities for career development and progression within and between social care and social work. This is taking place alongside the development of SCQF and the aim of the case study is to explore the nature and extent to which SCQF assists or hinders the development of qualifications, articulation and progression. This is particularly significant where, in parts of the occupational area, most of the workforce does not hold occupational qualifications, many

work part-time, there are a lot of older workers and there are an increasing number of migrant workers seeking to have their qualifications recognised from overseas. The significance of the SCQF to developments in the social services can be seen by the fact of there being a special SCQF development project in this area.

8.6 An informant from the Scottish Social Services Council identified the SCQF as having a lot of ‘potential’ in enabling them to qualify and register workers, in particular through the recognition of prior informal learning. ‘Potential’ is a concept used extensively in this interview. Indeed they identified the ways in which the Council specify some qualifications as having to ‘fit’ with the SCQF, in particular at levels 7 and 8. Further potential was identified by the informant in moderating the vocational (SVQ) and academic (HNC) routes to care qualifications. This is interesting as the HN’s are often perceived to be vocational routes to degrees, suggesting that HNs are having to serve the diverse and not always mutually supportive purposes of employment and progression – also found in the Literacies for Learning in Further Education Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) project.

8.7 For this informant, the SCQF is ‘primarily’ a policy driven initiative and provides a language that not everybody understands but one with the potential to work towards consensus: ‘if we didn’t have the SCQF we would have to invent it’. The role of organisations such as SSSC is to implement the policy. This indicates the perceived importance of SCQF in supporting the developments desired within the social services sector. However, they also expressed concern that there may be drawback in focussing so much on assessments and qualifications at the expense of ‘education in its broadest sense’.

8.8 However, at present they identified only a ‘fairly small group’ as having a ‘lively interest in the SCQF’, while many within the SSSC assume SCQF to be ‘more than it is’, exaggerating its importance for good intentions. In the sector as a whole there would be ‘more ignorance’, while those in the inner circle overestimate the extent to which people have an interest in what is being promoted, in particular employers. There are unintended consequences of this and the perception that those outside the inner circle rely on what they are told and assume, rather than checking ‘things out to make sure that SCQF can do the things that they really wanted to do’ and ‘even the people who are in the know probably don’t know all they need to know’. For this person, there may be over-inflated expectations of what the SCQF can do and how it might be used for practices for which it was not designed, such as for funding decisions.

8.9 Internal debate within the SSSC regarding the relationship between SCQF and professional standards was identified as an issue. One example of this is over whether the level descriptors are sufficient to embrace professional standards in the social work arena. A second example relates to UK-wide post-qualifying frameworks and the need to ensure alignment of Scottish qualifications with those elsewhere in the UK. Underlying these debates are concerns about ‘the extent to which SCQF has been sufficiently well developed to do all the things that we as a Council are required to do’. However, for this informant, while it is possible to exaggerate the impact of SCQF on the sector, it will be embraced. For this to happen, however, they suggested that precise timescales would be helpful as ‘I would have liked to have seen more progress up until now’. Strong policy

direction and leadership were identified as key to successful implementation. The SSSC as a driver in the implementation process was identified as significant. They identified the 'challenge' to FE and HE providers of SCQF as a hindering factor, although, as we will see, the differential responses from FE and HE informants indicate a more complex picture. For this person, SCQF promotes a collaborative ethos, when educational institutions have developed a more competitive ethos over the years.

8.10 The perception is therefore that the SCQF is necessary, but there are many debates in terms of levels of knowledge and understanding across the sector, what it can and cannot be used for, the extent to which it is sufficient, and how it is to be implemented. The role of the SSSC in promoting qualifications that link specifically to the SCQF appear significant as a driver for change, but does not of itself address curriculum issues with the occupational area, nor issues of comparability within the SCQF and across the UK and EU.

The Further Education College Providers

8.11 Four FE colleges participated in this study to date, three of whom participated in the case study approach. Interviews took place with a range of staff at different levels, focussing on levels of knowledge of SCQF, impact of SCQF and drivers and hindrances in the implementation of SCQF. This case study focuses on interviews with those staff directly involved in provision for the social services.

8.12 A Senior Lecturer in college 2 in the eastern central belt identified the staff team there as being 'very aware' of the registration requirements in social care and discussing how new and existing courses sit within the SCQF. This is supported by 'information that we get from various places (which) is quite helpful and being clear about what the framework is'. However, who gets this information is 'hit or miss' and who reads it is a further issue. Interestingly, in a number of interviews it was only the fact of being interviewed which has resulted in staff trying to find about the SCQF in order to make some response to the interview schedule.

8.13 Within the Social Care section as whole she identified knowledge of the SCQF as 'quite good', but better among those involved in the 'rewriting of the HNC'. This points to the ways in which knowledge of SCQF is influenced by curriculum review processes, which is also found in other data collected for this project. She also highlighted that the SCQF is 'really important' and has 'big potential' but relies on people needing 'to get their head round and understand'. Even when there is information therefore, there are processes necessary to promote understanding of the implications.

8.14 While the SSSC informant identified, SCQF as having 'potential', this senior lecturer indicated the SCQF was viewed 'very positively' as a 'real opportunity to clarify training', in particular by identifying gaps and filling them. This informant points to the SCQF as helping to 'organise and structure the curriculum quite well'. However, there was some uncertainty about implementation processes of SCQF.

8.15 She identified the SCQF as helping in relation to admissions and flexibility by providing ways of interpreting what people already have and what they need. Course

information and flow charts of progression in college 2 now make reference to credit and credit levels. She infers that students are therefore 'clearer about different pathways they need to take in order to get there'. The SCQF raises awareness of having flexible arrangements. However, this awareness is not always translated into practical application, as little impact is identified in relation to credit transfer, progression and articulation, particularly into HE. To address these concerns, she identifies the need for more events including FE, HE and employers to 'work at articulation, the danger is that people are doing it individually and there's no sort of coherence to it'. This points to the range of factors involved in making use of the SCQF.

8.16 This senior lecturer identifies students as not having a 'good grasp' of the SCQF, but indicates staff as talking to them about it. In addition she sees the college as having an educational role with employers and the voluntary sector in relation to the SCQF.

8.17 Much of this was echoed by a curriculum leader in college 2, who largely talked in terms of SCQF as a potentially useful tool, once recognised and understood. She identified staff as being 'very aware' of SCQF in developing courses and in discussions with students and employers. There was also more potential to use it when marketing and providing information and guidance to prospective students. It also helps with articulation to HE, although 'more traditional' universities were identified as being problematic in continuing to use their own approaches which do not match the SCQF.

8.18 However, unlike the senior lecturer, and in tension with her view on staff awareness of SCQF, the curriculum leader identified knowledge of the SCQF as limited. Indeed she noted 'it's only fairly recently that I've begun to get my head round it all... I don't think it goes much beyond me in my area... it's the curriculum leaders who are getting more familiar with it'. This suggests some disparity of perception not only of the SCQF but also of staff's knowledge and involvement in SCQF-related developments. This suggests that there may be some general awareness, but the nature and extent of knowledge and understanding of SCQF is more variable. For this curriculum leader, this could be addressed by more workshops and conferences for staff development purposes, as while information on SCQF is available, 'I don't think its been widely dispersed'. In terms of her own development, she identified networking as crucial to developing understanding, rather than the college briefing – 'it's very useful, helpful, but I don't know how many people look at it'. For her, increased familiarity with SCQF is the key to people feeling 'at ease' with it.

8.19 A somewhat different perspective was provided from college 3 in the Highlands. Here an Associate Head indicated that he could not 'say it's something I have engaged with'. Although he did identify an impact of the SCQF in relation to transition from HNC to HE provision elsewhere. In general and unlike in college 2, he suggested that knowledge of SCQF in the social care arena was 'very limited' and it to have 'limited use' – 'people find it useful in terms of clarification and so on. But I don't think its high on anybody's agenda'. This is in part due to a lack of any staff development on SCQF. Nor does he believe there to be any impact on the learning experience for students.

8.20 While useful for informing prospective students and those wanting to transfer courses, the Associate Head suggests that the SCQF has made articulation more difficult

for college 3's students because of the reduction of HNC from 120 to 96 credit points. This was highlighted in a number of interviews for this study. The Associate Head's view is also that the HE provider they work with is not interested in addressing the issue and the SCQF does not help in this respect.

8.21 Given the importance given to SCQF by our informant in the SSSC, it is interesting that the Associate Head suggests that he is not sure if the framework is not high on the agenda of SSSC, SFEU or SQA in terms of the limited collaboration he has had with them. He suggests that within his college 'there is a lack of knowledge about the framework and particularly how it relates to social care'. This indicates that there is uneven information and understanding of the SCQF within FE provision in the social services. He is also unsure of the role employers have had in relation to the SCQF. However, his perspective may be underpinned by his over-arching view that 'I'm not quite sure it should have an overwhelming impact, in a way I think it's good to have some clarity and coherence behind the scenes, it's a framework but I'm not sure it should be everyone's number one priority'. This counters significantly the view of the significance of SCQF provided by our informant from the SSSC.

8.22 The Associate Head's views were echoed by a lecturer at college 3. She identified the knowledge of SCQF in the social care arena as general and limited. She did, however, indicate the framework to be useful, particularly as a guidance tool. However, she has not received any staff development on the SCQF. Unlike the Associate Head who identified credit information as now available in the prospectus of Y college, the lecturer did not identify any information as being made available to students.

8.23 While the senior lecturer in college 2 identified the SCQF as assisting with flexibility of admission, the Associate Head identifies it as contributing to a tightening up of admission and accreditation of prior learning. However, he was 'not sure that we've fitted that to the framework particularly well as yet'. This view is echoed by the lecturer who indicates the framework to be 'a guide but its not set in stone'.

8.24 The lecturer seems to represent the lack of knowledge of SCQF identified by the Associate Head. The lecturer herself admits this – 'to be honest until you contacted the Associate Head, I had little information about the framework, I'm sure I could have gone online and read about it myself, but other than that until your telephone conversation came up I had limited knowledge'. More knowledge of the framework is identified as desirable, but to date the lecturer indicates it has had little impact upon her teaching role. This points to the issue of the nature, timing and amount of information made available and what formats that is offered in to promote knowledge and understanding. There seems to be wide variation in terms of knowledge and understanding and no clear strategy to address this. There also seems to be lack of clarity over who should be driving this process from outwith and within FE. The indirect influence of the SSSC and possibly employers could be significant to the development and depth of impact of SCQF.

8.25 Respondents from FE college 4 in the West of Scotland were much more critical of the SCQF than participants from the other FECs. The Head of Department and Deputy Head of Department of Care and Supported Learning expressed views which focused upon the "irrelevancy" of SCQF to the work of their institution. These views were

expressed in the context of tensions regarding SVQs and their position in the Framework, and the comparability or incomparability of different qualifications. It was for these reasons that the Deputy of Head of department viewed the SCQF as not having any impact at all upon the institution.

8.26 Within this particular institution it was expressed that staff “know about it” and “understand what it is trying to do”. In spite of this the Deputy Head of Department reinforced that within his department and perhaps within the institution “we don’t value it”.

8.27 This participant viewed SCQF as trying to achieve “the impossible”. He expressed the view that SCQF shows equivalences between qualifications, and that as such it was “meaningless to say, for instance that any SVQ 4 is equivalent to any HNC”. This interpretation of the SCQF is interesting in the respect that the Framework aims to encourage comparability as opposed to equivalence. Their perception of the SCQF as promoting equivalence as opposed to comparability is a key factoring in the negative perception of SCQF within this institution. This perception was linked to early promotional activities and statements regarding the SCQF, which influenced their view that the SCQF “was built on a house of sand”. It is also worth noting that the SCQF is officially presented as promoting comparability of qualification as opposed to equivalence.

8.28 Representatives from this institution had clear opinions regarding the additionality of SCQF, and felt that it was considerably difficult to separate out the impact of SCQF, from the impact of earlier initiatives. In this sense the Framework was viewed as building a clear ladder that is useful for encouraging “laypeople” to understand qualifications, but holds less relevance to those who “are already familiar with the sort of portfolio of SQA qualifications and other higher education qualifications”.

The University Providers

8.29 Three universities participated in this study and interviews took place with a range of staff at different levels, focussing on levels of knowledge of SCQF, impact of SCQF and drivers and hindrances in the implementation of SCQF. This case study focuses on interviews with those staff directly involved in provision for the social services. In all institutions the qualifying programme for Social Work had recently been overhauled to conform to registration purposes and this had involved articulating these qualifications within the SCQF for approval purposes.

8.30 A Professor at 1960s University therefore comments that ‘the SCQF was integral to the development of the new BA honours in Social Work’, as the standards for social work education were written with the SCQF in mind. There has therefore been a ‘significant impact’ upon the structuring of the curriculum, although the SCQF is also positioned as only ‘pretty important’. As a result, this Professor indicates that knowledge and understanding of the SCQF is ‘pretty good’, which points to the ways in which participation in curriculum development plays an important role extending understanding of the framework, although also involving a significant amount of staff time. This is extended to students through the information provided in handbooks and the like and the

descriptions of the courses at interviews, but ‘how overt that would be to them, is a bit unclear to gauge’. The professor is therefore cautious of the extent to which SCQF is meaningful to students, despite its use in their materials. This is reinforced by a Senior Lecturer at Modern University – ‘if you were to get a group of our students together and ask them about the SCQF you’d just get blank looks’. For the senior lecturer, ‘the information is there in the prospectus, but I don’t think it’s necessarily meaningful for students’. This is his surmise and he does posit that it would be interesting to know what students’ knowledge of the framework is however. This also points to the generic issue that information does not in itself build shared understanding.

8.31 While the Professor identifies the SCQF as perceived to be ‘fairly useful’ in making things ‘pretty transparent’, she also notes that initially it can be seen as ‘complicated’ and ‘cumbersome’. She also questions whether it is sufficient in itself. This raises the question of the extent to which SCQF actually resolves issues in and of itself or provides a language through which to discuss issues. This is a point raised strongly by senior lecturer, to which we will return. It is the generic nature of SCQF language which the Professor poses as problematic and whether this is sufficient for all forms of learning. In her particular case, she raises the question of whether the framework sufficiently tackles issues in professional education, in particular, in relation to post-qualifying professional development – ‘people feel there needs to be a bit more to it or else you need something in parallel’. This suggests that the contextual issues relating to specific subjects and qualifications are not resolved by SCQF alone – ‘the information we’ve had has been very generic and we have then done the work in applying it to social work’.

8.32 The Professor also points to the ‘expectation’ that ‘it would enable us to have smoother pathways for people into Social Work training mainly from FE’. This is an area also identified by a senior lecturer, alongside the impact of SCQF on curriculum design and the specification of learning outcomes. This senior lecturer has been involved in SCQF projects outwith the 1960s University. He identifies knowledge and understanding among staff as more mixed than the Professor – despite the SCQF being taken ‘very seriously’ at institutional level - with ‘quite a lot of misunderstanding about what is involved’ and still some fairly basic lack of understanding among some his colleagues. This he sees is because different individuals and groups invest their own interpretations in the framework. For the senior lecturer, this is most noticeable in relation to articulation. He is clear that the SCQF is ‘a mechanism for helping us to think about articulation, it’s not in itself an articulation mechanism’. SCQF is sometimes seen as the latter because ‘some people I think wanted the difficulties and issues in dealing with articulation to be resolved for them’. For this senior lecturer, this is not a ‘realistic expectation and nor do I think it’s an appropriate expectation personally’. He notes these different expectations as resulting in HEI’s being positioned as not ‘on board’, ‘obstructive’, ‘elitist’, or ‘protecting their own interests’, rather than recognising legitimate concerns, as ‘the qualification framework gives us a framework for thinking about those things, but it doesn’t resolve those issues’. For the senior lecturer, the SCQF is ‘incredibly useful’ in providing a ‘common language’, but this does not overcome curriculum and articulation issues in and of itself. This points towards the way in which differing expectations of the SCQF can result in the continuation of disputes relating to credit articulation, as opposed to providing a framework through which those issues can

be discussed. In other words, issues of articulation are reaffirmed because of a lack of shared understanding of how the framework can or should be used.

8.33 For this senior lecturer also, there is the need for monitoring of the implementation of the SCQF to establish whether it can fulfil its aims and that students benefit. His particular concern is that the increased flexibility might enable the widening of access, but this will not be matched by retention and achievement. Once again, this points to the ways in which the framework does not itself resolve issues of curriculum, articulation and student support.

8.34 The significance of the impact of the SCQF upon Social Work provision is echoed by a Dean at the post 92 university. 'Compliance' with SCQF is part of the institution's policy, and this has happened for the degree in social work, where 'assessment policies are cross referenced to the SCQF'. For staff, there is 'partial' but 'growing' understanding of the SCQF and effort is going into raising awareness, in particular of level descriptors. This view is echoed by a Lecturer at the post 92 university, who notes the principal impact of SCQF as providing clear statements against which to benchmark the new degree programme. He identifies staff as having an 'awareness' of SCQF, but still formulating their views on it. For him, the framework is a 'potentially helpful guide', but expectations are 'extremely minimal'. The lecturer also identifies the framework as 'prescriptive' and therefore a possible hindrance to curriculum development, which reinforces the issue raised by a senior lecturer in 1960s university regarding the different ways in which people see and interpret the framework.

8.35 As elsewhere, the Dean notes the importance of SCQF to curriculum review and development procedures within the post 92 university. As with those in 1960s university, the Dean does not envision students as having an understanding of SCQF, as it is not part of the 'popular perception of education' as yet. This is supported by the Lecturer – 'I'm not sure that it's user friendly to learners or potential learners'. Unlike staff in college 2 who identified increased discussions drawing upon SCQF with employers, the Dean's view is that employers do not 'think in terms of the SCQF as such, they think in terms of the qualifications they are used to'. Overall, the Dean's view is that the framework is 'not terribly important' at present, a view shared by the Lecturer – 'I don't think it has had any real impact'. This is despite the obvious impacts they identify above. However, given the discourses of compliance and prescription put forward by both the Dean and Lecturer, their orientation to the framework may have resulted in downplaying its significance. It would appear that there is more active engagement from those in the 1960s university than the post 92 university in this respect.

8.36 Interestingly the Dean identifies articulation as having become more complex, but he sees this as a result of the changes in professional qualifications agreed by the SSSC and not the SCQF. He works with the distinction of general and specific credit and points to the 'specific vocational outcomes' of SQA awards by contrast with the breadth of academic underpinning expected in degree programmes. This is because of the different nature of the curriculum purpose, which acts as a 'real hindrance to credit transfer, progression and articulation agreements'. The different curriculum purposes of HNCs and degrees makes articulation and credit transfer problematic because of the specific nature of the credit, despite in principle the possibility of credit transfer at the generic

credit level. However, he does see the SCQF as putting 'greater pressure on both universities and further education to develop articulation routes.

8.37 The ancient university provides a contrasting situation to the other two universities. Like them, there is an institutional commitment to formulating programmes in relation to SCQF. However, a senior lecturer at this university comments that 'it's very early days really... (the ancient university) has gone slow to the idea of having to be lined up with other qualification networks... so it's relatively recently impinged'. Unlike the senior lecturer at 1960s university, the senior lecturer here does not 'have dealings with the SCQF world outside of the university'. Knowledge within his own subject area is 'very limited' and 'not very sophisticated'. Staff have had access to information, but the take up of SCQF has been 'coincidental' rather than systematic at institutional level. However, for this senior lecturer, the SCQF is 'useful'.

8.38 Despite the fact that the ancient institution has had to revise its programmes in line with SCQF, like other university providers, a senior lecturer indicates that the framework 'doesn't directly impinge on the main group of staff in the subject area'. Indeed, unlike at the 1960 university, although with similarities to the post 92 university, 'as a general rule I would say that the framework is not perceived as an active factor in life'. For the senior lecturer, it is simply something that the ancient institution decided to adopt and this has been gone along with in Social Work. Given this position, it may not be surprising that expectation of the SCQF are low and not particularly sophisticated – there might be some development of credit accumulation and transfer and possibly some articulation between different levels...'. In relation to admissions and credit transfer, there is limited impact, although the SCQF has helped in the reorganising of progression from undergraduate to postgraduate study within the curriculum.

8.39 For the senior lecturer, the work of the SSSC and the Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education are promoting the adoption of the SCQF, but the traditions of the ancient university mitigate against this. However, this appears to be changing – 'the likes of this university have been a wee bit isolated... but I think it's having to, it's coming to grips with it more seriously than they might have done in the past'.

Summary

8.40 Social services is an area where legislation and the work of the SSSC has been critical in promoting the uptake of the SCQF in formulating qualifications across a range of levels and subjects. From the above, it would appear there are different levels of enthusiasm about this – from compliance to opportunity – but also different levels of awareness, knowledge and understanding both within institutions and across institutions. Some providers appear to be more isolated from developments outside their own institution than others and yet, it is precisely those types of opportunities, which are suggested by a number of interviewees. There appears to be limited understanding of the issues faced by different types of institution in relation to credit transfer and articulation, although articulation is seen as both an opportunity and as problematic in relation to SCQF. This may rest in part in the differential investments of meaning in the SCQF, as identified by a senior lecturer at 1960s University – whether SCQF provides a means of thinking about issues or resolves them in and of themselves.

8.41 It is clear that, despite the significance of SCQF to developments in qualifications in the social services, and the fact that qualifications are now articulated in relation to SCQF, issues of curriculum, assessment, student support and the like remain.

CASE STUDY – ENGINEERING

‘(Knowledge and understanding is) not very much... due to lack of use, you know if we were using it day in and day out we’d pick it up’. (Curriculum Leader 1, College 2)

8.42 Engineering embraces a wide range of subjects, but there is a history of structured progression at higher levels because of the mathematical component of many courses. This is reflected in the relationships staff in both FE and HE identified with pre-existing credit arrangements through SQA and SCOTCATS. For most of the interviewees, their relationship is with the arrangement pre-existing the development of the SCQF and through the partnership organisations, in the case of FE, the SQA. Re-numbering credit levels and a certain tidying of the curriculum would appear to be the main impact, but interviewees tended to view the SCQF as not in and of itself resulting in much which would not have happened anyway.

The Further Education College Providers

8.43 Due to the lack of use, the Curriculum Leader 1 in college 2 identified the impact of the SCQF overall as ‘very little’. However, they did anticipate that there would be increased impact, in particular in relation to APL and credit transfer, which was perceived to raise resource issues given the time involved in making individual assessments. The potential importance of SCQF to credit transfer was also raised by Curriculum Leader 2. However, for Curriculum Leader 3 at College 2, courses were seen as for employment rather than progression, which had actually impacted upon the provision of higher level courses in that college. Both Curriculum Leader 1 and Curriculum Leader 2 referred to transfer mostly into their own courses. Curriculum Leader 2 also identified the SCQF as having an impact on the development of new courses, which is consistent with the Social Services case study.

8.44 However, for the moment, they indicated that what ‘we’re trying to do is just to get on with what we’ve got just now’ and that there was no present or future perceived impact of the SCQF on the organisation and structure of the curriculum. However, Curriculum Leader 1 also raised possibilities for collaboration raised by SCQF ‘if we’re all reading off the same hymn sheet’, but as they also pointed out ‘certain colleges might have higher standards than others’. This latter point relates to the issue of specific credit, as progression and transfer are seen to be dependent upon the acquisition of quite specific subject knowledge. Like others, Curriculum Leader 2 identified the framework as a ‘tool’, but like those in Social Services in post 92 University, they added ‘it’s a compliance tool’. This suggests some of the differential forms of engagement which are possible in the uptake of the SCQF – not all see it entirely positively. However, in tension with this is Curriculum Leader 2’s view that in reforming the curriculum ‘the new framework has helped to be able to make sure that different options within engineering

has got their rightful place'. Overall their assessment is that the SCQF will be important but is not important at present.

8.45 According to Curriculum Leader 1, staff had not received any development on SCQF and students no information. Two booklets are shared among ten staff in this college. More literature was deemed as necessary, although Curriculum Leader 1 identified usage as critical to the development of knowledge and understanding. For Curriculum Leader 2, the current situation is one where the SCQF is used as a reference point and is not something people use expertly in a day-to-day way - 'if they have to use it they will but its not something that they talk about in everyday language'. For them, unlike Curriculum Leader 1, the issue is not one of lack of information, but of knowing where to look for it. A sense of general awareness but limited knowledge due to lack of use was also identified by Curriculum Leader 3. Curriculum Leader 3 also pointed to the ways in which the curriculum complied with SCQF, but that that may not be apparent to all staff.

8.46 For Curriculum Leader 1, Curriculum Leader 2 and Curriculum Leader 3, the SQA was identified as their significant reference point, with limited involvement with the SCQF as such - 'we do talk about the course and how it fits overall within the structure of things within, well under the SQA umbrella rather than the SCQF'.

8.47 A similar picture was presented by a Lecturer at College 3. They identified expectations of the framework as 'pretty neutralist' and limited, based upon a general awareness of its existence rather than specific knowledge. The impact has therefore been 'pretty marginal'. This they put down in part as due to 'poor dissemination' of the necessary information. Like others in this case, they identify SCQF as being used in confirming existing practices rather than resulting in new ones.

The University Providers

8.48 An Academic Director at the post 92 University identified the SCQF as 'reasonably accepted' within their subject area, but this was because it was consistent with initiatives from other directions, such as the professional bodies. This raises the issue of how the SCQF is contextualised in particular institutional settings alongside other initiatives which may hinder or support its uptake. Thus, for the Academic Director, the SCQF does not have to be addressed separately from benchmark statements and professional bodies. However, the uptake does not result in enhanced expectations as 'We've been in something similar already. Like staff within the colleges therefore, the Academic Director perceives the SCQF as adding little to existing arrangements - 'it's a continuation of what we've done'... 'I don't think SCQF is far enough removed from what we were doing to make in itself a difference'. Thus on its own, the Academic Director identifies the impact of the SCQF as marginal, but, as part of many things, useful.

8.49 Like others, the Academic Director identified use as key to the development of the SCQF, although it is noticeable that they see this in terms of appreciation of what it is about only partly, as also significant are 'what its limitations are and how to work the system'.

8.50 The lack of impact of SCQF on a day-to-day basis in Engineering is confirmed by a Senior Lecturer at the ancient University. For them and their colleagues, there is a general awareness. Although their institution has adopted language of SCQF, it is only within that context that there is engagement. Indeed the institutional uptake of the framework is seen as problematic and that the SCQF itself would be more beneficial. For the senior lecturer, the expectation of the SCQF is that it will be used as a ‘common currency’. However, he was unsure ‘how seriously any one believes that it is a very good common currency’, indicating a cautious evaluation as the framework is not yet proven. At the ancient University, they have been seeing how existing programmes match the framework, but this senior lecturer identifies a significant concern regarding articulation and the specificity of the credit required for successful transfer. Like staff in the colleges he also identifies a lack of staff development to support understanding of the SCQF. However, their overall assessment is that the SCQF is ‘not hugely important in that if it wasn’t there we could still manage without it’.

8.51 Much of this is shared by a Director of Teaching at the ancient University. DT identifies the reorganisation of the curriculum as significant, but this does not seem to have generated knowledge through use per se, as staff knowledge and understanding is still ‘very little’. Thus, a more coherent structure has been created and a number of anomalies sorted out. However, the extent to which this is due to the SCQF or would have been undertaken as part of any curriculum review process is unclear.

8.52 A major concern for the Director of Teaching is that of expectations, which takes us back to the point raised by a senior lecturer at the 1960s University in the Social Services case study. The Director of Teaching does not view Engineering as having a great expectation of the SCQF, ‘but other people might have... we are genuinely concerned that the feeling goes out that it’s going to make it a lot easier to transfer between institutions and we just don’t see it will and I think there is a danger in thinking it will’. Given the importance of subject content, in particular Maths, to progression within the subject, this is a major concern for Engineering, although there is recognition that it might not be so significant in other subject. This points to the challenge of a framework that embraces all curriculum areas and levels, when there are specific curriculum-related issues to meeting possible expectations. However, this may not be as big a problem given the Director of Teaching’s view that there will not be a significant demand from students to change institutions, which may be self-fulfilling insofar as the message from Ancient is that tight specification of credit for transfer is necessary.

SUMMARY

8.53 Engineering as a curriculum area has relatively settled patterns of provision, which has accommodated the development of the SCQF, but would appear to have been only affected by the framework to a very limited extent. There is a general awareness of the SCQF but little detailed knowledge. There are concerns regarding curriculum progression and the expectations of others regarding how the SCQF can be utilised. Even where the SCQF has been used, this does not seem to have impacted greatly upon those using it, although the end effects entails certain curriculum changes.

CHAPTER NINE THE SCQF AND OTHER UK DEVELOPMENTS

QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS ACROSS THE UK

9.1 England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNI) share a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which covers most types of qualifications except those awarded in higher education. There is a separate higher education qualifications framework for EWNI, which is the nearest counterpart to the higher education levels of the SCQF. Neither the NQF nor the higher education framework for EWNI is a credit framework. Both are primarily concerned with clarifying the relationships among qualifications, rationalising and eliminating duplication among qualifications and establishing criteria for quality and relevance. In addition the NQF has a regulatory function, and it lists qualifications which may receive public funding in England.

9.2 The most directly comparable framework in the rest of the UK is the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), launched in 2003 (CQFW 2003a, 2003b). The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (NICATS) was launched in 1999, with a focus on higher education, but recent progress has been slow, partly because of the need to coordinate with other UK developments. In England there has been substantial interest in credit approaches, especially in Further Education, adult learning and their interface with higher education (Tait 2003a, 2003b). There were several local or regional initiatives, including Open College Networks (OCNs) and programmes for access to higher education. However the government in England took a more cautious approach until the 2003 *Skills Strategy*, which announced its intention for the first time to develop a credit framework for adults (DfES *et al.* 2003). In 2004 the development of this framework became combined with the ongoing reform of vocational qualifications, and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) launched a consultation on proposals for a Framework for Achievement (FfA), a unitised framework of vocational qualifications based on a central database of units designed to a standard template (QCA 2004). The FfA would include qualifications not currently in the NQF but it would exclude informal learning and most school and higher education qualifications. It would cover England, but with the intention that it should be capable of recognising achievements across EWNI, and that it should link as closely as possible with the CQFW and the SCQF. A parallel consultation was held in Northern Ireland.

9.3 The Copenhagen agreement committed member states of the European Union to develop a credit system for vocational qualifications. An official of the SQA has represented the UK on the Technical Working Group which is developing the principles for a European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS

9.4 We interviewed one person associated with the main credit developments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively, and an expert on credit who is familiar with developments in all four countries.

9.5 Interviewees agreed that credit developments across the UK used a similar concept of credit, namely an outcomes-based concept measured in terms of notional

learning time with a unit of 10 hours. The SCQF was closest to the CQFW in design and purpose. Both were descriptive rather than regulatory frameworks; both aimed to include all types of learning. The main differences were that higher education had played a more prominent role in the SCQF, and that Scotland had control over its own qualifications and was not covered by the NQF. The SCQF was constructed around a single main awarding body for schools and colleges; the CQFW was more concerned with providing a common framework for different awarding bodies.

9.6 The FfA would be narrower in focus than either the SCQF or the CQFW; it would cover vocational qualifications and exclude most qualifications used in 14-19 and higher education. It would have a regulatory purpose. It would emphasise mutual recognition by awarding bodies, and involve a database of units, many of which would be centrally specified. It therefore involved a more radical re-structuring of existing qualifications than the SCQF, with the aim of rationalising provision and making it more flexible.

9.7 Our interviewees agreed on three comparative strengths of the SCQF: its partnership model, and in particular the strong commitment of the Scottish Executive and of higher education; Scotland's control over its qualifications and the dominant role of a single awarding body; and the comprehensive coverage of the framework. One interviewee also considered that the SCQF's pragmatic approach was a strength: it did not, for example, require all qualifications to be re-specified.

9.8 The SCQF's weaknesses, as perceived by interviewees, often mirrored these strengths. They included:

- the partnership model could also slow down progress. The SCQF had been slow to include qualifications not owned by higher education or the SQA;
- compared with the FfA, the SCQF offered less potential to accumulate or transfer credit, because it had no system of mutual recognition and it was based on whole qualifications rather than breaking them down into standard units. This 'weakness' is the converse of the pragmatic approach which one interviewee perceived as a strength, and it reflects the different objectives of the SCQF compared with the FfA. However, it was suggested that this limitation might become more important when the SCQF included more qualifications awarded by bodies other than the SQA;
- the SCQF's top-down model appeared to result in less ownership and familiarity among practitioners than (for example) among those in England and Wales who had been involved in more bottom-up credit developments such as OCNs;
- Scotland's control over its qualifications could also be perceived as a weakness as it led to differences across the UK. We return to this point below.

PROGRESS

9.9 In comparing these frameworks we must remember that not only are they at different stages of development - our interviewees agreed that Scotland was the most developed - but that they build on very different histories of qualifications development. For example, in some respects the FfA resembles the Scottish Action Plan which developed a single national catalogue of vocational units in the 1980s. Conversely, as

our interviewees pointed out, Scotland has still to come to terms with the full implications of including a range of awarding bodies, whereas this was a starting point for the other credit frameworks in the UK.

9.10 Scotland was perceived to be ahead of the rest of the UK. However interviewees expressed the concern that progress had sometimes been slow, and that there was a need to look beyond the process of ‘putting numbers behind learning programmes’ and to ensure that other conditions of success were in place. A credit framework challenged institutions to make their provision more flexible. It also had implications for funding and governance. These were challenges for all credit frameworks, not only the SCQF.

CO-ORDINATION

9.11 The SCQF was seen to have influenced developments across the UK - not least, by demonstrating that it was possible to have a national credit framework without adverse consequences. Specific aspects of the SCQF which had been influential ranged from its Committee structure (the JAC and IG) to its experience in the recognition of prior learning and its approach to N/SVQs. Our interviewees expressed contrasting views on the willingness of the QCA to learn from the other countries of the UK.

9.12 Co-ordination across the UK was perceived as a challenge. In the consultations over the FfA awarding bodies, employers, the Sector Skills Council and other stakeholders had expressed a strong desire that the different frameworks should be aligned. One interviewee referred to a ‘constant dripping-tap sort of comment about when are the four countries going to get together and why they keep on having different frameworks’. There were technical issues in bringing the frameworks into closer alignment, notably with respect to the different level descriptors and the different scope of the frameworks. Nevertheless our interviewees felt that these issues were soluble and that progress was being made.

9.13 However, one interviewee commented that technical reasons could become political. Two interviewees suggested that there was a lack of will to achieve alignment, although they did not agree on whether the problem lay within Scotland or the QCA (whose role as a regulator, it was suggested, gave it a different perspective to that of other framework developers). One interviewee felt that Scotland had, in the past, shown insufficient interest in the rest of the UK, and regretted that Scotland had not participated in the HE Credit Group for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The same interviewee felt that the UK’s ability to influence developments in Europe had been weakened by its failure to agree a common approach among its own frameworks. Ireland, rather than UK, had increasingly played a prominent role internationally. However, those interviewees who were involved in current credit developments within the UK agreed that there had been effective co-operation and good working relationships among the four home countries, both on the Inter Country Credit Group and more informally, especially in the past year.

SUMMARY

- The SCQF shares a similar architecture and concept of credit with other UK credit frameworks, with some differences such as the greater number of levels in the SCQF. In purpose, scope and design it is closest to the CQFW. However, the other Frameworks place much more emphasis on the mutual recognition of credits awarded by different awarding bodies.
- Those involved in developing other UK credit frameworks perceive that the SCQF is the most developed. Its perceived strengths include its partnership model, the commitment of higher education, the status of SQA as the single national awarding body, and its comprehensive coverage.
- However, these features of the SCQF were also perceived to result in less ownership and use of the Framework by providers, and in weaker potential to support credit accumulation and transfer. They contributed to the relatively slow progress in implementing the Framework, although this was recognised as a problem facing other frameworks as well.
- There are strong pressures for a more coordinated approach across the UK. Cooperation and working relationships among the frameworks are seen to be good, but some respondents perceive that political as well as technical problems inhibit closer coordination.

CHAPTER TEN THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCQF

CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

10.1 The SCQF is led by what one interviewee described as ‘a loose arrangement, not formally constituted’ of the four Development Partners (DPs), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Scottish Executive, SQA and Universities Scotland. In addition there is a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) (which often presents the public face of the SCQF), on which other stakeholders are represented, and an Implementation Group whose membership overlaps with the JAC. The executive functions reside in a ‘joint secretariat’, housed with the DPs. This has no formal status; it cannot, for example, hold budgets or employ staff in its own right.

10.2 These arrangements reflect the origins of the SCQF as a voluntary confederation of sub-frameworks belonging to the SQA and the Scottish universities. They reflect the ‘ownership’ of the SCQF by the DPs, the voluntary and ‘enabling’ role of the Framework and the absence of a regulatory role and of the bureaucracy which this would entail. Partly for these reasons, most of the interviewees who commented on the arrangements for managing and administering the SCQF, including interviewees from elsewhere in the UK, recognised the current arrangements as a strength of the Framework. The SCQF was compared favourably with other frameworks which had (for example) failed to secure the same strong commitment from higher education or which had large and seemingly unresponsive bureaucracies. The SCQF’s pragmatic, partnership-based approach was seen as the key to its aspiration to encompass all qualifications in Scotland.

PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

10.3 However, the arrangements also had perceived weaknesses. Several respondents felt that the current structures contributed to what was perceived as the relatively slow progress of the Framework. This was linked to the management and administrative arrangements for the Framework. They referred to what one described as a ‘degree of impatience over the implementation’ of the SCQF.

10.4 In this respect a number of points were identified by respondents. Firstly it was noted that the slow progress with bringing forms of learning and qualifications which were ‘not mainstream’ into the Framework was ‘most disappointing’. This included workplace qualifications and other learning from informal and community-based contexts. It was also noted that public awareness of the Framework was still very limited. This was in part related to the failure to agree and implement an effective communications strategy. Several interviewees commented on the time it had taken to launch the consultation on *Extending the Facility to Credit Rate within the SCQF* (SCQF, October 2004).

10.5 Respondents recognised that complaints of slow progress were a characteristic feature of credit frameworks and qualification frameworks across the world. They also acknowledged specific factors which had slowed the development of the SCQF. The

'exams crisis' of 2000 had distracted the attention of the SQA. More recently the need to work with the other emerging UK frameworks and to contribute to European developments had inhibited more rapid progress. In particular the complexities associated with including UK-wide vocational qualifications within a Scottish framework was noted as something which was causing real difficulties. Some respondents noted that the impatience of some participants was as much an issue for the management of expectations as an issue for the implementation process itself. In other words, expectations of speed and spread of implementation did not sufficiently take account of the complexity of what was envisaged, given the strategy adopted and resources available.

10.6 Nevertheless, several respondents felt that current structures had specifically impeded progress. They identified three aspects of this.

10.7 In the first place, in the words of one interviewee, 'things drag along because we have to work by consensus'. Progress required the agreement of the DPs, but they did not always share a common vision and understanding of the Framework and of what it was meant to achieve. As another interviewee noted in summer 2004, when the credit-rating consultation paper had still not been published, 'I rather suspect [that] had there not been four cooks in the kitchen from the development partners, you know, we would've seen something out of the kitchen by now'. All of this led one respondent to comment in the context of the new appointments which were being made in early summer 2005: '...if they are back to the situation of having to clear every single tiny thing with a panel of 4 people, down to what colour should this brochure be, then progress will continue to be slow. So partners have to look hard, I think, at when do they cut the ties a bit and agree to hand it over to someone...'

10.8 Second, some interviewees perceived that the model of development and implementation had focused on the topics and issues of most direct concern to the DPs. Too little attention had been paid to setting targets for cross-sectoral development or to extending the Framework beyond the mainstream FE and HE qualifications, that is, to qualifications not owned by the DPs. One interviewee felt that many recent developments, for example the guidelines on credit transfer, reflected a higher education perspective and were essentially a continuation of SCOTCATS, rather than a wider and all-embracing framework. Because the Framework was owned by the bodies which awarded qualifications rather than those which used them, insufficient attention was paid to ensuring its effective use. Many of the same individuals who had inspired the Framework were still in the driving seat. This was a great strength of the Framework but it could also make it difficult to extend the vision so that it was more widely shared.

10.9 Third, several interviewees noted a lack of capacity and authority to get things done. There were very few officers involved in carrying forward the work of the Framework, and there was an absence of senior staff with a full-time responsibility for the implementation of the Framework. This was summed up by one respondent's comment that:

I think there might need to be a more proactive centre to the framework, so that the secretariat is running with the ball a bit more..... I also think that the people who are doing it, are all doing it in a kind of part time way and there's a lot to be

done and the model I think is we come together and talk about implementing and then people go off back to their own sections and implement, that seems a wee bit fragmented to me, so I think there might be an argument to say it would be better if there were some more clear agency that was charged with making this happen. (representative of national organisation/department)

10.10 Furthermore staff lacked the autonomy to take day-to-day decisions without obtaining approval from the partnership members. There was a need for more proactive administrative leadership and for more prioritisation of objectives.

10.11 These respondents suggested that the current structures had been appropriate for the development of the Framework, but now that the main policy decisions had been taken and the focus was switching from development to implementation the structures had to adapt to changing needs. There were new functions to be performed.

10.12 Several respondents commented that the inclusion of a wider range of qualifications might necessitate some change in the current arrangements, including a register of qualifications which had been credit rated. If the credit-rating activity was to be extended, there would need to be arrangements to quality-assure this activity, and to prevent awarding bodies from ‘shopping around’ to get the credit-rating decisions they wanted. There were sensitivities about the role of the SQA, as a part-owner of the Framework which might have a commercial interest in decisions about the inclusion of other qualifications. The management arrangements would need to be able to handle potential conflicts of interests. They would need to enable the SCQF to co-ordinate with the Framework for Achievement, which would have a regulatory function in England. They would need to facilitate the more proactive measures which some respondents considered necessary to raise public awareness and to promote the use of the Framework.

OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

10.13 All of these factors have led to recognition among many respondents, who are involved with SCQF at a national level, that there is a need for change in its management and administrative structures. The majority of our respondents who considered the possibility of change identified that the case for change should recognise existing strengths and any modifications to the current structures would have to balance the need for faster progress against the positive features of the existing system. This could be summed up by the following quotation:

...that partnership and that way the partnership was structured was absolutely necessary in order to agree principles, in order to share philosophies, in order to set up technical aspects of the Framework, in order to ensure the quality assurance processes.It's not the right mechanism for implementing the framework. (Representative of national organisation/department)

10.14 The need for care in introducing change was also echoed by a representative of one of the higher education institutions:

I certainly would want anything in the future to be done in the same relatively co-operative manner and operated by people with whom, in this part of the sector, we have trust and experience. (Vice Principal, Ancient institution)

10.15 However, the need to consider options for the future was clearly stated by the representative of another national body:

I think the question for us is what would be the management arrangement for the future? Can a JAC (Joint Advisory Committee) which is a loose body really without executive power ...with periodic development partner meetings, hold this together? And do we need to set up a more formally constituted body?I think this may be a necessary step forward in the future. (representative of national organisation/department)

10.16 However, this raises an issue of fundamental importance which has emerged in a number of interviews, and that is the question of the function of the SCQF. Two views can be observed.

- A more limited function as an ‘enabling’ or ‘communications’ framework, an instrument of change rather than an agent of change. In this view the emphasis is on maintaining and extending the Framework, developing links with other frameworks in UK and Europe, and similar activities of this type.
- A more extensive remit in which the Framework is itself an agent of change, proactively encouraging openness and flexibility.

10.17 These two models could have quite different implications for future management structures.

10.18 In the first model the central questions are around the ownership and management of the Framework. It has been suggested that this may involve establishing a national qualifications committee, which would in effect be an enlarged ‘partnership’. This committee would be serviced by a relatively small core staff to ‘maintain’ the Framework. A number of key questions emerge here.

- If the partnership is to be enlarged, which stakeholder groups would be invited to be members of this national committee, and what would be the criteria on which new partners would be invited to join? Would this be confined to Scottish awarding and quality assurance bodies, as some respondents have suggested, or would it have a wider membership?
- What would be the relationship between the new committee and the staff it employed? This is firstly a practical question. On what legal basis would staff be employed and by whom? Some respondents have suggested establishing a new body, some kind of jointly owned company, which would be established for this purpose. Others have suggested that an existing body might take over at least some functions of the secretariat. Secondly there is the question of the autonomy which staff would have to act on behalf of the committee/body. As has been noted above, it has been suggested by a number of respondents that under the current arrangements SCQF staff have had little autonomy, and have found it necessary to obtain approval from

all four partners for many of these activities. It has been suggested that this has slowed the process of implementation.

- There are also questions about what outstanding issues there will be at the end of the current implementation stage, and what will need to be done to undertake further 'implementation' work, e.g. in community-based learning or with regard to vocational qualifications. Would the new committee and body have responsibility for a further implementation stage to effectively extend the framework to cover a wider range of learning and qualifications, and if so how should this be done, and what would be the resource implications?

10.19 In this model the wider issues of change which the SCQF might facilitate would not be the responsibility of this national committee, or the body established to maintain the SCQF. These responsibilities would be seen to rest with the lifelong learning community and the various sectors within it. There are questions regarding how this would be co-ordinated and driven forward. Some respondents have suggested that this should be seen as part of the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy and the responsibility would fall to them to co-ordinate it. However, this raises key questions about how this could be co-ordinated to ensure effective action to provide an implementation plan for change and deal with related resource issues. There would also be important issues regarding the co-ordination of the wider programme of work with the continuing development work within SCQF. Appropriate mechanisms would need to be established for this purpose.

10.20 Model 2 has been less clearly articulated by respondents, but is at least implicit in some responses from the FE, vocational training and employers sectors. This presupposes a more proactive role for SCQF as an agent of change and this is clearly included in the original aims and other policy statements. The implications of this for the management structures are also not very clearly articulated. However, it would probably effectively involve bringing together the two sets of issues identified under Model 1 within one national body. This would probably involve establishing an appropriate committee/sub-committee structure, and a significant complement of staff to undertake a further agreed implementation programme. The issues raised under Model 1 would also be significant for this model.

10.21 The remit of this evaluation has not extended to extensive examination of the most effective options for the future management and administrative arrangements. However, a number of respondents are suggesting that important changes are needed, and those responsible for the development of SCQF need to decide on the type of change they wish to introduce, and how this can effectively be implemented.

CHAPTER ELEVEN CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The conclusions which can be drawn from this study are presented under the headings of the original agreed aims for this research.

11.2 To explore the knowledge and understanding of the Framework among institutions and organisations providing learning opportunities, employers, professional bodies, information and advice agencies and relevant national organisations.

- Knowledge and understanding regarding SCQF varied considerably within the institutions and organisations included in this study. In general it was good among those who were involved with the framework and its implementation. Within the colleges and universities this included institutional leaders, those involved in quality assurance, and programme staff who have a responsibility for implementing aspects of SCQF. However, it would appear that many members of teaching staff have little involvement with SCQF and little knowledge of it. Within the other organisations studied those with a particular remit for implementing SCQF, or who were representatives on SCQF committees had good levels of knowledge and understanding, while many other staff had only limited knowledge.
- While the research has only undertaken limited investigations of levels of knowledge among learners, employers, the general public, and within the school sector, all respondents who commented on these issues suggested that knowledge and understanding of SCQF among these groups is relatively limited.
- Most respondents reported that there was a good level of information available about SCQF, but many staff did not access this unless there were good reasons to do so. Some staff reported that they would value more information and support when implementing SCQF. It was suggested by some respondents that much of the current information was geared more to the needs of the educational community than to employers or the general public.
- In general respondents' perceptions of the Framework were positive, and a number expressed high expectations in terms of securing recognition of equivalences in qualifications, and opening up new pathways. However, some also expressed concern that expectations regarding credit transfer would not be met, and there was a perception among many respondents that progress was slow. Some felt that the Framework fuelled expectations about credit transfer, which did not always take sufficient account of issues surrounding general and specific credit.
- A related issue was a concern expressed by a number of respondents that publicity, and particularly some of the earlier statements, about the Framework had encouraged unrealistic expectations regarding the potential for the Framework to introduce change. This raises questions about the scope and function of the Framework which may require clarification.

11.3 To investigate the initial impact of the SCQF on policies, practices and behaviour of the above organisations. This will include, for example, impact on the structure and organisation of the curriculum, institutional planning, the design of programmes and pathways, admissions arrangements, the presentation of information, and institutional collaboration.

- Within HE institutions the main impact of the Framework was reported as being connected with internal activities, such as curriculum review, design of programmes and pathways. In this way it has made a valuable contribution to curriculum planning and development. It should also be noted that while the positive impact of the Framework in these ways was recognised across the HE sector, the Framework was being used in different ways within different institutions. For example, one institution reported that almost all of its undergraduate provision was organised around two levels, while others reported that they were using four levels.
- Within the FE sector the impact of SCQF is more likely to have been discussed in the context of mapping provision and helping to create more coherent pathways for progression. This is associated with the fact that most curriculum development takes place under the auspices of SQA. The impact of SCQF at both a programme and institutional level was, as a result, limited in the colleges studied. However, it was reported that SCQF has had an important role in shaping the HN Review which is currently underway. It was also reported that it was through involvement in developments such as HN reviews that FE staff gain greater knowledge and understanding of SCQF.
- With respect to wider change within the Scottish educational system it is important to distinguish between the specific contribution of the SCQF and the impact of the sub-frameworks, such as National Qualifications and SCOTCATS, which were incorporated within it. There is only limited evidence of change which can be attributed to the specific contribution of SCQF. In particular with respect to the development of articulation and credit transfer arrangements between FE colleges and HEIs there was little evidence that SCQF had contributed much beyond providing a language and tools to underpin arrangements that would have usually been introduced in the absence of the SCQF. Some respondents, particularly from the HEIs, were happy that SCQF was not forcing the pace of change. Others, particularly from the FECs expressed some ‘cynicism’ or ‘scepticism’ about the extent to which SCQF would help introduce change of the type they had hoped for.
- Within the community learning and development sector high expectations for SCQF were reported in this study, and fuller evidence on this issue was collected in a recent study regarding the establishment of a learning and assessment framework for CBAL, completed by CRL staff. A number of respondents in both studies expressed the hope that the implementation of the SCQF project in this area will lead to greater accreditation and recognition of learning. However, concerns were also expressed by a number of respondents in the CBAL study that attempting to use assessment and accreditation systems which were not suited to the particular characteristics of CBAL could distort its nature. It appeared from this current study, and the earlier CBAL

study that only limited progress has been made to date in extending the Framework to cover a wider range of community learning and development.

- While it was reported that there were high expectations for the Framework in recognising vocational qualification, disappointment was expressed by a number of respondents that there had been very little evidence of progress on this issue. This was also associated with a low level of knowledge about the Framework and its potential among employers, employees and trade unions.
- There was some evidence of professional bodies making use of the Framework (see social services case study), and it was reported to be very useful in these cases. However, it appeared that there were only limited developments of this kind. Again this was associated with limited knowledge and understanding of the Framework.
- Only limited evidence was gathered from the schools sector because it was known that the impact of SCQF in this sector (as distinct from the National Qualifications ‘sub-framework’) was limited. It was confirmed that the Framework was having only limited impact in schools at present. It was suggested that SCQF could have potential in curriculum development, but that the objectives needed to be clarified. The inclusion of information about SCQF levels on SQA certificates this year was noted as a potentially important development, the impact of which will require to be monitored.

11.4 Investigate factors, which influence, facilitate or hinder institutions’ responses to the SCQF and the implementation strategies, and the practical issues that are raised. These include internal factors (institutional mission and organisation, staff attitudes, etc) and external factors (funding arrangements, student demand, stakeholder interests, etc).

- In many cases, and particularly in the HE sector, there was recognition that the SCQF has had an important role in introducing a common language of credits and levels and that it had acted as a catalyst encouraging institutions to carry out quality enhancement activities.
- With regard to these forms of internal change and development many respondents described SCQF as an enabling tool which has facilitated change, and built on other changes such as SCOTCATS, modularisation, quality enhancement, and growing emphasis on widening access and lifelong learning
- A number of HE respondents also welcomed the partnership arrangements for the development and implementation of the Framework which had safeguarded institutional autonomy and had not resulted in coercion into new forms of collaborative relationships.
- Within the FE colleges the creation of a clear framework of levels and credit was also seen as a valuable enabling tool in planning provision.

- Within FE colleges some level of frustration was expressed about the reluctance of some HEIs to engage with the enhanced opportunities for collaboration and credit transfer which they felt that the framework provided.
- It was reported by some respondents from both FE colleges and HEIs that the allocation of 96 credit points to HNCs was likely to make articulation with credit more difficult, and they were unclear as to whose responsibility it was to resolve this issue.
- Related to the above point about responsibility for resolving issues was a concern, expressed by a number of respondents that there was a lack of clear leadership with respect to the development and implementation of the framework.
- Respondents from within the field of community learning and development (particularly in the CRL CBAL study) noted that systems of assessment and accreditation would have to be developed for many aspects of community learning and development. This would require a significant investment of resources, and could potentially have major resource implications for voluntary organisations in establishing systems for assessment and quality assurance.
- It was also noted that while SCQF could be useful in enabling employers to understand the qualifications system, few have so far seen it as being important for them or engaged with it. As a result their knowledge and understanding of the Framework is limited.
- With regard to vocational and work based qualifications, including SVQs, it was suggested by respondents that the need to develop a UK wide approach was an important factor contributing to difficulties and delays in resolving the issues associated with the location of these qualifications on the Framework. Because many of these qualifications were UK qualifications, or (as with SVQs) had an English equivalent, a purely Scottish solution would be limited and unsatisfactory. However, progress towards achieving UK solutions had been slow.
- It has also been suggested by some respondents that the need to find a resolution to the issues associated with vocational qualifications has not been a high priority in the development and implementation of the Framework, and that this has been associated with the origins of SCQF in earlier developments, particularly SCOTCATS and the National Qualifications.
- The issue of the potential costs for credit rating bodies, employers, voluntary organisations and professional bodies in having qualifications credit rated has been noted as an important issue, which will require to be addressed if the Framework is to be extended to a wider range of learning and qualifications.
- Interviewees involved in developing frameworks elsewhere in the UK perceived that Scotland was ahead of the rest of the UK. There were good relationships among the teams developing the different frameworks. There were strong pressures, especially from employers and labour-market interests, for a co-ordinated approach, and some interviewees felt that this was being inhibited for reasons that were more political than technical.
- A number of respondents expressed the view that the current partnership arrangements for the control and management of the Framework had been very successful in the development stage. This had helped establish the consensus

required to agree the basic principles on which the Framework should be build, and ensure acceptance of and participation in the Framework across all sectors.

- However, concern was expressed by some respondents that this had limited the range and speed of developments, and that the momentum for change was being lost. The question was raised as to whether modifications are required for the implementation phase, to increase the administrative capacity of the SCQF, to give greater autonomy over day-to-day decisions and ensure more effective progress. Our respondents were anxious to preserve the benefits of the current looser arrangements, but many clearly felt that the time had now arrived when change should be considered.

11.5 Outline what further research will be required to investigate more fully the impact on learners.

11.6 The following issues have been identified as potentially important issues for further research. Some focus directly on learners, in others the impact will be less direct. In all cases learners have to be considered in relation to the other groups and organisations involved with SCQF. The topics have been divided into ones which focus more on implementation issues, and ones in which there is a greater emphasis on impact. However, in a number of cases the research would focus on issues of both implementation and impact.

Implementation

- Employers and work-related learning: to examine more fully the issues associated with including work-based and work-related learning within SCQF and ensuring greater employee and employer involvement with the Framework.
- Social services: to consider social services in further detail as a case-study of the implementation of SCQF. This would involve an examination of the issues raised for: employees/learners; employers; educational institutions; professional bodies; other relevant organisations.
- Management structures: to consider the issues associated with establishing control and management structures for SCQF which will enable it to develop most effectively within the wider context of the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy, and involve an appropriate range of stakeholder groups.
- Cross national issues: to examine more fully the issues to be addressed in developing the SCQF in the context of UK and European developments.
- Comparative issues: to examine mutual lessons for the development and implementation of qualifications frameworks from comparisons with developments in the UK, Europe and elsewhere.

Impact

- Guidance and counselling: to consider the extent to which SCQF is being used in the provision of guidance and counselling for students and prospective students, what opportunities does it create, and what issues are raised.

- Information and awareness among learners and parents: to monitor changes in the awareness of SCQF among learners and parents, and to identify the factors which influence this awareness including the inclusion of SCQF credits on SQA certificates.
- Institutional arrangements for credit transfer: to examine the existing arrangements for credit transfer within educational institutions and other relevant organisations, the extent of usage and impact on learners, the impact of SCQF on the development of these arrangements, and issues associated with creating greater flexibility and opportunities for credit transfer.
- Participation and progression: in the longer term, to assess the impact of the SCQF on participation, credit accumulation, credit transfer and progression between programmes and institutions. This could make use of existing data sources such as the SQA record, the Scottish School Leavers Survey and the survey of leavers from FE and HE.

11.7 To identify changes to policy and practice which relate to the Framework, its implementation and future development

- The importance of widening the Framework to include qualifications beyond the mainstream of those provided in FE and HE was noted by many respondents. In particular, the need for an effective programme of action which will lead to the inclusion of community-based learning and vocational and work-based qualifications was recognised as a priority.
- This could have considerable implications for costs associated with credit rating, and establishing systems for assessment and quality assurance which need to be addressed and resolved to provide greater confidence in the robustness of the Framework.
- There is a need to establish more clearly the role and function of the Framework. It would appear that at present that there are differing views and expectations of the Framework. Two possible models have been identified.
- A more limited function as an ‘enabling’ or ‘communications’ framework, an instrument of change rather than an agent of change. In this view the emphasis is on maintaining and extending the Framework, developing links with other frameworks in UK and Europe, and similar activities of this type.
- A more extensive remit in which the Framework is itself an agent of change, proactively encouraging openness and flexibility. In this view the emphasis is not just on maintaining the Framework, but on considering how it can contribute to a wider agenda of change.
- Clarification of this type seems important in developing appropriate structures for the control, management, development and administration of the Framework. It should also help clarify the expectations which people can realistically have regarding the Framework and its impact. This should also help inform a future programme of work regarding the development and implementation of the programme.
- It has been noted above that, while it has been generally agreed that the partnership model has been very successful in the development of the Framework, there is now a need to establish new structures for the control, management and administration of the Framework, which will be better suited to enabling it to move forward to its next

phase of development. The structures established will depend on the agreed model for the role and functions for the Framework, and should build on the established strengths and success of the partnership approach.

- Whatever model is agreed, and whatever structures are established, there is a need to consider how the Framework can contribute most effectively to the agenda of change associated with the Scottish Executive's lifelong learning strategy. At present there is a lack of clarity surrounding these issues and significantly different expectations. There is a view among a number of respondents that the Framework has so far made only limited contribution to developing cross-sectoral agreements and enhanced opportunities for credit transfer. If this is to continue to be an objective associated with the establishment of the Framework, there is a need to consider how it can be achieved more effectively. In this respect it may be useful to establish a longer term action plan with identified objectives, and timeframes. Related resource implications would also need to be considered.
- In implementing such an action plan the opportunities to use more fully other public sector initiatives, such as those currently under way in the social services sector, should be considered as possible levers for change.
- There is a need to consider how all sections of the Scottish community can be helped to see the relevance of the Framework to their interests, insofar as it is relevant. This could also contribute to more effective use and implementation of the Framework.
- The pressures for a more co-ordinated approach across the UK have been noted, particularly with regard to vocational qualifications. Respondents also commented on the need to ensure that developments within Scotland were in line with wider European developments.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APEL	Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning
CBAL	Community Based Adult Learning
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
CRLI	Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning
DP	Development Partner
ECVET	European Credit transfer system for Vocational Education and Training
EWNI	England, Wales and Northern Ireland
FE	Further Education
FEC	Further Education College
FEC	Further Education College
FEDA	Further Education Development Agency
FEU	Further Education Unit
FfA	Framework for Achievement
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HN	Higher National
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
IG	Implementation Group
JAC	Joint Advisory Committee
NICATS	Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme
NQ	National Qualification
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OCN	Open College Network
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OUVS	Open University Validating Services
PDP	Personal Development Plan
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACCA	Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access
SCOTCATS	Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SFEFC	Scottish Further Education Funding Council
SFEU	Scottish Further Education Unit
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council

SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification
TLRP	Teaching and Learning Research Programme
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands

Appendix A : Information Sheets for SCQF interviews

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Evaluation

The Scottish Executive is interested in evaluating the initial impact of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF is currently at a developmental stage, and it is felt that such an evaluation will assist in providing shape and coherence to the future development and use of the framework. The Scottish Executive has commissioned the Centre for Research and Lifelong Learning (Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Stirling), and Edinburgh University to carry out this evaluation.

The SCQF has been established as a national unified framework through which learning of all types can be recognised and the relationships between qualifications clarified. The aims of the framework are outlined in the SCQF National Implementation Plan (2002), and include:

- Assisting people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential
- Enabling employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce

In order to implement these aims, the SCQF identified the following goals:

- To establish a national framework and vocabulary for describing and recognising all learning
- To make the overall system of qualifications easier to understand and use by clarifying the relationships between qualifications, and making clear the entry and exit points and routes for progression and credit transfer
- To build more credit links between different types of qualifications to enhance flexibility and enable the accumulation and transfer of credit from different routes.
- To provide a common means for describing and recording all individual achievements, including the potential for a harmonised format for all records of achievements and transcripts
- Assist in making clear the relationship between qualifications in Scotland and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby clarifying routes of progression.

We are contacting you at an early stage in our work. Reflecting on your experience of the SCQF, we would like to ask you about your thoughts on the initial impact of the framework, and what you consider to be factors that influence, facilitate or hinder organisations and institutions responses to the framework. We would also like to explore which organisations, institutions and individuals you would consider to be important for us to contact in the evaluation of the framework. We plan to use information gathered at

this stage to develop areas to be explored in the later stage of our work. We would like you to participate an interview, which will take approximately 45 minutes of your time.

Reflecting on your experience the discussion will focus on:

1. The **knowledge, understanding and expectations** of the SCQF in your organisation, institution, or sector.
2. The **impact of the framework** on policies and practices, for example changes to organisational structure, the structure of curriculum, institutional planning etc. We will ask you to reflect on the reasons why these changes may have occurred.
3. The **operation of the framework**. We will ask you to identify which aspects of the framework you consider to be successful or unsuccessful.
- 4 **Influencing factors**. We will ask you to identify factors that assist or hinder the response of organisations and institutions when implementing the framework.
- 5 We would ask you to **identify individuals, institutions and organisations** that are considered to be **important to contact as part of the evaluation of the framework**
- 6 **Anything else** that you would like to raise in relation to the SCQF, or that you feel is important for us to know

Outcomes from the project

The information gathered at this stage will be instrumental in the formulation of the second stage of our work when we will consider the operation of the framework at a practical level. There will be final report at the end of the project, which will become the property of the Scottish Executive. We will also ensure that we agree with them the appropriate mechanism for feedback to those that agreed to be involved in the research.

Confidentiality

Anything you tell us would be confidential in that we will not discuss it with others outside the research team. For ease of working we will ask that we can tape record discussion, which, if you agree, will then be transcribed and locked in a room at the CRLI offices. You may request a copy of this transcript if you wish. We will ask your permission to record before we do so, and if you do not want this to happen please tell us.

It may be that in reports we write, we might want to quote things that you have said which are particularly pertinent and relevant. If we do this, you would not be named, and we would seek agreement in advance.

The research team

The research team includes Professor Jim Gallacher, Nuala Toman (Glasgow Caledonian University), Professor Richard Edwards (University of Stirling), and Professor David Raffe (University of Edinburgh).

Appendix B: Interview schedules

SCQF Evaluation

Phase One Interview Schedule

Introduction

1. Briefly tell me about the work of your organisation or institution in relation to the SCQF

Knowledge and understanding of the Framework

2. In your view, what is the extent of knowledge and understanding of the framework in your organisation, institution or sector?
3. How is the framework perceived in your organisation, institution or sector?
4. What expectations do staff within your organisation, institution, or sector have of the framework?

Impact of the Framework

5. How has the implementation of the framework impacted on the policies and practices of your organisation, institution or sector
6. Are you aware of any changes in your organisation, institution or sector that have resulted from the implementation of the framework?
7. Which parts of your organisation/institution/sector have been most affected, so far?

Operation of the Framework

8. From your experience what do you consider to be the most successful aspects of the framework? (Why)
9. From your experience what do you consider to be the least successful aspects of the framework? (Why)

Influencing Factors

10. From your experience, what factors do you consider assist institutions or organisations in their response to the framework? (Why)
11. From your experience, what factors do you consider hinder institutions or organisations in their response to the framework? (Why)

Contacts

12. From your experience which organisations, institutions or individuals would you consider to be important for us to contact as part of the evaluation of the SCQF?
13. Are there any other issues, which the evaluation should explore?

SCQF Interview Schedule Institutional Leaders

Introduction

1. Briefly tell me about how the SCQF impacts on the work of your institution?
2. What organisations/individuals do you/your institution liaise with in respect to the development and implementation of the SCQF?

Knowledge and Understanding

1. In your view what is the extent of the knowledge and understanding of the framework in your institution?
2. How is the framework perceived in your institution?
3. How are the implementation processes associated with the SCQF perceived in your institution?
4. What expectations do you/your institution have in relation to the framework?

Impact of the Framework?

In your view, to what extent has the framework impacted on:

- Structure and organisation of the curriculum
- Institutional planning
- Design of programmes and pathways
- Admissions arrangements and flexibility
- Credit transfer, progression and articulation
- Information available to learners/potential learners
- Learners/ learning experience
- Collaboration
- Resources
- Staff development

Influencing Factors

1. What factors assist your institution in its response to the framework?
2. What factors hinder your institution in its response to the framework?

Operation of the Framework

1. In your view has your institution received or had access to appropriate information regarding the framework?
2. How useful is the operation of the framework to your institution?
3. In your view will existing structures associated with the SCQF ensure its effective implementation?

The Framework in respect of engineering/social care/social work

1. Are you aware of any particular developments in the subject areas of engineering/social care/social work with respect to the SCQF?
2. Which members of staff do you feel it would be appropriate for us to contact as part of this study?

Conclusion/summary

Overall how important would you say the framework is to the operation of your institution?

Are there any other issues you would like to raise?

SCQF Interview Schedule – Social Services/ Engineering

1. Briefly tell me about how the SCQF impacts on the subject area of social work/engineering within your institution?
2. What organisations/individuals do you work with in respect to the development and implementation of the SCQF?

Knowledge and Understanding

3. In your view what is the extent of the knowledge and understanding of the framework within your institution with respect to the subject area of social work?
4. How is the framework perceived in your institution with respect to the subject area of social work?
5. How are the implementation processes associated with the SCQF perceived in your institution with respect to the subject area of social work?
6. What expectations do you/your institution have in relation to the framework with respect to the subject area of social work?

Impact of the Framework?

7. In your view, to what extent has the framework impacted on the following with respect to the subject area of social work:
 - Structure and organisation of the curriculum
 - Institutional planning
 - Design of programmes and pathways
 - Admissions arrangements and flexibility
 - Credit transfer, progression and articulation
 - Information available to learners/potential learners
 - Learners/ learning experience
 - Collaboration
 - Resources
 - Staff development

Influencing Factors

8. What factors assist your institution in its response to the framework with respect to the subject area of social work?
9. What factors hinder your institution in its response to the framework with respect to the subject area of social work?

Operation of the Framework

10. In your view has your institution received or had access to appropriate information regarding the framework in respect of the subject area of social work?
11. How useful is the operation of the framework to your institution with respect to the subject area of social work?
12. In your view will existing structures associated with the SCQF ensure its effective implementation?
13. Are you aware of any particular developments within the subject of social work with respect to the SCQF?

Conclusion/summary

14. Overall how important would you say the framework is to the operation of your institution with respect to the subject area of social work?
15. Are there any other issues you would like to raise?

Interview schedule for 'home international' interviews

1. What contacts have you had with the SCQF and with the individuals and organisations associated with it? How familiar are you with it?
2. How does the SCQF differ from other frameworks in the UK with respect to:
 - (i) its purposes?
 - (ii) the design of the framework?
 - (iii) the way in which it has been developed and implemented?
3. What do you perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the SCQF, with respect to:
 - (i) the purposes and design of the framework?
 - (iii) the way in which it has been developed and implemented?
4. How do you perceive current progress in the implementation of the SCQF?
5. Has the SCQF influenced developments in other parts of the UK, or elsewhere?
6. What are the main issues in coordinating the SCQF with other frameworks in the UK?
7. How successfully are these issues being addressed?
8. What are the main future challenges for the SCQF, and for its relationship with other frameworks?
9. Any other comments?

SCQF Evaluation : Schedule for final key informant interviews

1. How do you judge current progress towards the implementation of the SCQF?
 - 1b. Specifically, how do you rate progress against the objectives in the December 2002 Implementation Plan?
2. What are the main challenges facing the SCQF?
3. Are current structures for the management and direction of the SCQF sufficient to address these challenges and to ensure progress?
 - 3b. If yes/no, in what ways are they/ are they not sufficient?
4. If no to question 3: what alternative structures should be considered?

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