

Education and Culture Committee

Background:

The Committee will consider the issue of Student Support and will be looking at the extent to which: the availability and balance of bursary and loan support in higher education; and the availability of bursary support in further education are helping to improve access and student retention; and to narrow the educational attainment gap.

All responses should be sent to the Committee Clerk at: ec.committee@scottish.parliament.uk

Response from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP)

SCQF as a Framework has done much to promote parity of esteem, progression, articulation and access. It is recognised internationally as a real success in gaining recognition for all types of learning – formal, non-formal and informal.

It is worth noting that the ways in which funding is arranged by definitions such as advanced or non-advanced or by definitions such as higher and non-higher are in today's market of lifelong learning, quite archaic. A greater focus on the SCQF levels rather than qualification types would do much to support a change in thinking and approach and support a parity of esteem for different types of learning.

Another example of this inequality is the provider criteria for the current part time fee grant which, whilst it identifies SCQF levels and credits as the benchmark, places restrictions on the providers that learners can access and still receive this funding. The SCQF Partnership supports individual learners and exists to sustain a vibrant lifelong learning culture in Scotland and we value the important role that part time study plays in skills development and we recognise that the Part Time Fee Grant plays a key role in supporting students on lower incomes to engage with lifelong learning.

We would like to comment, however, that restricting the list of organisations whose students are eligible for the part-time fee grant to colleges, universities and SQA approved learning providers results in a number of organisations who have achieved the status of a Credit Rating Body for the SCQF and are thus able to develop, credit rate and place learning programmes on our national qualifications framework at SCQF levels 7 -10 and which have between 30 and 119 SCQF credits but find themselves in the position that their learners cannot then access national funding as they are not a college, university or SQA approved centre. This seems to support a system where only part time learning through historically traditional routes is being recognised in terms of funding opportunities.

We have explained a little more about our Credit Rating Bodies and their roles, responsibilities and our quality assurance model for Committee's information below:

The SCQF Partnership approves a range of Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs). These are education provider organisations that are authorised to carry out credit rating – i.e. they determine the SCQF Level and SCQF Credit Points of a learning programme so it can be recognised on the SCQF. These Credit Rating Bodies all use the same SCQF Level Descriptors in this process and must adhere to the principles laid down in our Handbook for CRBs. CRBs credit rate their own learning programmes and some of them are also allowed to credit rate learning programmes developed by other, third party, organisations.

The current list of CRBs is as follows:

- Universities and other higher education institutions in Scotland
- Scotland's colleges
- The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- The Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland
- City & Guilds
- The Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)
- Police Scotland College
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)
- The Institute of Counselling (we believe that IOC has tried to access this funding for some of their learners but have been unsuccessful)

For those organisations who are not Universities, HEIs, Scotland's Colleges or SQA, the SCQF Partnership operates a robust process of approval, review and monitoring ensuring that each of these Credit Rating Bodies is a body of good standing, has rigorous and robust internal and external quality assurance systems for credit rating learning programmes onto the SCQF and has the capacity and commitment to carry out credit rating activities. In order to do this we operate a system of an approval process, annual monitoring activity and 4 yearly reviews which are carried out by a pool of reviewers who include SCQFP staff, members of our Quality Committee (experienced individuals drawn from key sectors within the education sector) and independent External Reviewers.

We are happy to discuss any of the above in more detail. Our contact details are:

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