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1   General introduction - Educational System in the UK

The educational system in the UK is slightly complicated by the fact that there are regional differences with policy for education being devolved to the local governments in the four countries that comprises the UK, i.e. the governments of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate responsibility for education. Each of the countries of the United Kingdom have separate systems under separate governments, though in practice England and Wales tend to follow the same system. To a lesser extent Northern Ireland also tends to follow the same practice. Scotland is the one that differs most.

Across the UK as a whole there are five stages of education:

1. early years: pre-school and nursery education
2. primary school: ages 5 – 11/12 approx, compulsory
3. secondary school: ages 12 – 16 compulsory, possibly to 17/18 approx
4. Further Education (FE): not compulsory and covers 'non-advanced' education which can be taken at further, including tertiary, education colleges and HE institutions -HEIs
5. Higher Education (HE): study beyond GCE[1] 'A' levels and their equivalent, such as Scottish Higher Certificates, which, for most full-time students, takes place in universities and other HEIs and colleges.

The higher education system in Scotland is slightly different to the system in other parts of the United Kingdom. For example, in Scotland, many students move into higher education at the age of 17 (rather than 18 in other parts of the UK). The Scottish higher education system also favours a four-year undergraduate degree programme, which has been replicated in the United States and Hong Kong, amongst others. The four-year degree offers students enhanced flexibility and academic breadth, and is therefore attractive to employers.

These stages are summarised in the next diagram.

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[1] GCS: General Certificate Education, GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

Age on 31 Aug (before school year)	Year of Study	Curriculum Stage England and Wales	Schools/Qualifications		Curriculum Stage Scotland
3	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Pre-School		Nursery
4 - 5	Reception	Primary	Primary School		Nursery
5 - 6	Year 1	Key Stage 1			Primary P1
6 - 7	Year 2				P2
7 - 8	Year 3	Key Stage 2			P3
8 - 9	Year 4				P4
9 -10	Year 5				P5
10 - 11	Year 6				P6
11 - 12	Year 7	Key Stage 3	Secondary School with Sixth form		P7
12 -13	Year 8				Secondary S1
13 - 14	Year 9				S2
14 - 15	Year 10	Key Stage 4/ GCSE	GCSE		S3
15 - 16	Year 11		GCSE		S4
End of Compulsory Schooling					
16 - 17	Year 12	Sixth form/ A Level, International Baccalaureate	AS / IB Year 1	Further Education (from aged 16)	S5
17 - 18	Year 13		A2 / IB Year 2		S6
18		Bachelor Degree (3-4 years)	Bachelor of Art or Bachelor of Science	Higher Education	Bachelor Degree (4 years)
19					
20					
21					
22		Master Degree (1-2 years)	Master of Arts, Master of Science, MBA, Master of Research, Master of Philosophy		Master Degree (1-2 years)
23		Doctorate (3-5 years)	Doctor of Philosophy (Phd or Dphil)		Doctorate (3-5 years)
24					
25					
26					
27					

Figure 1: UK Educational Structure. Source: The SQA

Further and Higher Education requires more explanation since this is an area that is interpreted quite differently in many EU member states.

Further Education

Further education (FE) is used in a general sense to cover all non-advanced courses taken after the period of compulsory school education.

It is post-compulsory education (i.e. in addition to that received at secondary school), but distinct from the advanced course education offered in universities (HE). FE may be at any level from basic skills training to higher vocational education such as City and Guilds or Foundation Degree.

A distinction is usually made between FE and HE – the latter being education at a higher level than secondary school, and usually provided in distinct institutions such as universities. FE in the UK therefore:

- Includes education for people over 16, usually excluding universities;
- Is primarily taught in distinct FE colleges, work-based learning, and adult and community learning institutions;
- Includes post-16 courses similar to those taught at schools and sub-degree courses similar to those taught at higher education (HE) colleges (which also teach degree-level courses) and at some universities.

Further education is often seen as forming one part of a wider learning and skills sector, alongside workplace education, prison education, and other types of non-school, non-university education and training.

Higher Education

Higher education is defined as courses that are of a standard that is higher than GCE 'A' level, the Higher Grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education/National Qualification, GNVQ/NVQ level 3 or the Edexcel or Scottish Qualifications Authority National Certificate/Diploma. These are essentially the highest secondary school certificates in Scotland and the rest of the UK (which share A Levels).

There are three main levels of HE course:

1. Postgraduate courses leading to higher degrees, diplomas and certificates (including Doctorate, Masters (research and taught), Postgraduate diplomas and certificates as well as postgraduate certificates of education (PGCE) and professional qualifications) which usually require a first degree as entry qualification.
2. Undergraduate courses which include first degrees (honours and ordinary), first degrees with qualified teacher status, enhanced first degrees, first degrees obtained concurrently with a diploma, and intercalated first degrees (where first degree students, usually in medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, interrupt their studies to complete a one-year course of advanced studies in a related topic).
3. Other undergraduate courses which include all other higher education courses, for example SVQ or NVQ: Level 5, Diploma (HNC/D level for diploma and degree holders), HND (or equivalent), HNC (or equivalent) and SVQ or NVQ: Level 4 and Diplomas in HE.

Prior to 1992 there tended to be an obvious distinction between FE institutions (Colleges and Polytechnics) and HE institutions (HEIs), but as a result of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, former polytechnics and some other HEIs were designated as universities in 1992/93. Students would normally have attended HE courses at HEIs, but now some can attend HE courses at FE colleges.

Accredited Qualifications in the UK

Accredited qualifications, also known as regulated qualifications, are those that are reviewed, recognised and monitored by the various regulatory bodies in order to make sure that they meet specific criteria and quality standards.

The requirements for the qualifications to be accredited are set out in the Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Once proposed qualifications meet the requirements set out in the mentioned document, they are listed in the Register of Regulated Qualifications where can also be found a list of recognised awarding organisations who have the power to award qualifications within the QCF (the national credit transfer system in England, Wales and Ireland) or the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SQCF).

Accredited qualifications provide the learners and stakeholders with a guarantee of quality of both the qualification programme and the awarding body that offers accredited qualifications. Non-accredited qualifications, on the other hand, are not regulated and there is no guarantee that they meet appropriate standards.

Regulatory Bodies

Regulatory bodies are responsible for accreditation of a wide range of qualifications ranging from Entry Level Qualifications to the Higher Level Qualifications (Level 4 in the QCF or above) including vocational and work-related qualifications.

There are four main regulatory bodies in the UK who recognise awarding organisations and their qualifications.

1. The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland;
2. the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) is Wales' qualifications regulator;
3. the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) regulates qualifications with the exception of vocational in Northern Ireland;
4. the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) regulates and awards all qualifications except of HE degrees in Scotland. The SQA develops, assesses and awards qualifications taken in workplaces, colleges and schools, and provides qualifications across Scotland, the UK and internationally. As SQA Accreditation the body authorises all vocational qualifications (other than degrees) delivered in Scotland.

Ofqual (derived from the Office of Quality) is the key, non-ministerial government department in the UK that regulates qualifications, exams and tests in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. It regulates exams, qualifications and tests in England and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Northern Ireland.

To add to the confusion Wales and Scotland are regulated by their respective national governments, however, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is also accredited by Ofqual.

Ofqual is the authority which regulates and accredits the <u>British examination boards</u> (Edexcel, AQA, OCR, City & Guilds, etc. in England and Wales). The SQA have this responsibility in Scotland.

In order to be recognised and have their qualifications accredited by the regulators, the awarding organisations have to submit their proposition to Ofqual, which then carefully reviews both:

- The awarding organisation
- The proposed qualification.

 If the qualification programme meets the regulator's criteria, it is recognised and listed in the Register. If they do not meet the set criteria, they are rejected. In order to make sure that the accredited qualifications maintain appropriate standards and quality, they are kept under review by the regulators who also have the power to withdraw accreditation.

Qualifications Frameworks

Qualifications frameworks are multi-level categorisations used in education and work to allow comparison to be made between different qualifications, and to show how one qualification can lead to another. As usual, in the UK, there is more than one system.

Regulated qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are in one of the following frameworks:

- Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

1.1   Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) recognises qualifications and units by awarding credits. As each unit has a credit value that can be transferred, the system gives the learners the ability to get qualifications at their own pace. The QCF is jointly regulated by the England's regulator Ofqual, Wales' DCELLS and Northern Ireland's CCEA.

The QCF system is based on units which have credit value and levels (from Entry Level to Level 8). One credit roughly equals 10 learning hours which allows the learners to evaluate how much time they will need to gain the desired qualification. According to the QCF system, the learners can gain three types of qualifications:

- awards
- certificates
- diplomas

To gain an award, it is necessary to have 1 to 12 credit points which equals 10 to 120 hours of learning. Learners who have 13 to 26 credits (130 to 260 hours) are awarded certificates, while those who have 37 credits or more are awarded diplomas. The QCF system gives awards at any difficulty level from 1 to 8 which is due to the fact that it reveals the size of qualification and not its difficulty level. The latter is indicated by the title of qualification which, however, also reveals the size of the qualification and its subject.

In addition to developing units, developing and accrediting qualifications, and awarding credits and qualifications, the regulators of the QCF are also responsible for maintaining a unit databank and monitoring the organisations that operate within the QCF in order to ensure that all awarded qualifications meet the regulatory requirements. These are specified in the Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework that has been developed jointly by the regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Scotland is different! Similar to the QCF, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) covers schools, colleges, and vocational training. The SCQF is also based on awarding credit points which reveal the size of qualification and the system of levels which indicates qualification's difficulty, but in contrast to the QCF, the SCQF has 12 rather than 8 levels.

In a rare moment of harmony, however, with England, Wales and Northern Ireland, one credit point in Scotland also represents roughly 10 hours of learning.

The SCQF is jointly managed by:

- the Scottish Qualification Authority
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
- Universities of Scotland
- The Association of Scotland's Colleges
- The Scottish Government.

The following table shows how the various UK and EU frameworks relate:

SCQF	QCF	EQF
12	8	8
11	7	7
10/9	6	6
8/7	5/4	5
6	3	4
5	2	3
4	1	2
3	Entry Level 3	1
2	Entry Level 2	
1	Entry Level 1	

Figure 2: Scottish, UK and EU qualification frameworks. Source: SQA

Vocational Education

Strange as it may seem there is no formal definition of 'vocational education' in England.

The term is applied to programmes as different as the highly selective, competitive and demanding apprenticeships offered by large engineering companies, and the programmes which recruit highly disaffected young people with extremely low academic achievement. There is a belief that the latter damages the former.

A more general reading of the term is used reflect the many different purposes which 14-19 education serves and its large and diverse student body. In Scotland 'Vocational Training' and 'post-16 Education' are generally considered together. Secondary school education is compulsory to the age of 16; beyond this about one third of students follow a conventional academic route, leaving two thirds to follow a vocational education or to be in a job (though youth unemployment is at an unacceptably high level across Europe).

The UK uses a system of Vocational Qualifications. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work based awards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that are achieved through assessment and training. In Scotland they are known as Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ).

To achieve an NVQ, candidates must prove that they have the ability (competence) to carry out their job to the required standard. NVQs are based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) that describe the 'competencies' expected in any given job role. Typically, candidates will work towards an NVQ that reflects their role in a paid or voluntary position. For example someone working in an admin office role may take an NVQ in Business and Administration.

- National Occupational Standards (NOS) specify UK standards of performance that people are expected to achieve in their work, and the knowledge and skills they need to perform effectively.

There are five levels of NVQ ranging from Level 1, which focuses on basic work activities, to Level 5 for senior management.

A Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) is a certificate of vocational education in Scotland. SVQs are available to people of all ages. SVQs are developed by Sector Skills Councils, in partnership with industry and awarding bodies. After the SSC has developed the SVQ structure, awarding bodies can develop the full SVQ and then seek to have the SVQ accredited by the Accreditation Unit of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). SVQs can be awarded by an awarding body, once the awarding body has been approved by SQA Accreditation.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications are based on standards of competence that describe a candidate's ability to work in real conditions - having an SVQ is a confirmation that they are competent to the standards on which the SVQ is based. The standards of competence are developed by Sector Skills Councils on behalf of industry.

Similar to the NVQ, there are five levels of SVQ defined as follows:

- Level 1 basic, routine and repetitive work skills
- Level 2 broad range of skills including non-routine activities and individual responsibility
- Level 3 supervisory skills
- Level 4 management skills
- Level 5 senior management skills

Work is now underway to ensure that all SVQs are credit rated within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

Sources:

- *Review of Vocational Education (2011), UK Government – The Wolf Report*
- *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland (2011), Scottish Government*

Adult Vocational Education

The current system of Adult Education has over 19,000 regulated vocational qualifications available through 176 awarding organisations. Many of these have limited take-up and about 1,500 vocational qualifications account for over 90% of achievement.

There are also very many valued and popular vocational qualifications (such as vendor qualifications) operating outside the regulated qualifications sector, attracting investment from individuals and employers in preference to regulated qualifications. This privately funded training market is significantly larger than the publicly funded market. In 2011 employers in England spent £40.5 billion a year on training. By contrast public investment was approximately £2.7 billion.

There is recognition that there is scope for significant growth in the market for regulated vocational qualifications, but employers and individuals have to understand the regulated vocational qualifications system and how it adds value.

The current system has much to commend it however. Some (mostly large) employers engage with the system believing that vocational qualifications:

- cover the skills needed by their businesses
- allow staff to work flexibly
- do not require much time away from the job.

However, many employers (especially smaller employers) fail to engage with the vocational qualifications system.

The awarding market is dominated by a small number of large awarding organisations that operate in many sectors. Ofqual regulates 176 awarding organisations, of which the three largest (Pearson, City & Guilds and OCR) account for over half of the market. Choice between awarding organisations should encourage competition, but selection may take place on factors such as the high cost of switching awarding organisations, or the perceived ease of attaining certain vocational qualifications. This can lead to a 'race to the bottom' in quality.

Vocational qualifications can often lack clear identity or specific design principles, can be poorly quality assured, and have no obvious fit within a level of the QCF. Though all regulated qualifications in England have to comply with Ofqual's General Conditions, these do not specify particular approaches to qualification design (except for certain academic qualifications).

Rigour in vocational qualifications requires:

- reliable, robust delivery and assessment of competence (including knowledge) in an occupation
- an understanding of how the occupation fits into the wider sector.

Occupational standards have been established to allow courses to be assessed and graded for Apprenticeships, Tech Levels and adult vocational qualifications. However there is a <u>range</u> of standards in existence, including:

- those created by industry to address statutory requirements
- standards developed by professional bodies
- National Occupational Standards (NOS) designed by standard-setting bodies.

NOS are written to a standard, but the QCF unit format does not contain quality assurance processes to check these units reflect the industry requirements of the NOS-based units. However, in Scotland, where the credit system was introduced differently, there continues to be a <u>direct</u> relationship between NOS and Scottish Vocational Qualifications – keeping NOS-based units more relevant to employers.

Adult Learning

Adult learning is different from other sectors of learning in that it is not understood to be primarily for economic development, which is a departure from the justification for almost everything to do with everything else relating to public policy which seem to be measured in terms of economic value. Adult learning is valued for a much broader range of individual and social purposes, in order to create a more 'open, creative and inclusive society' and for the development of a 'socially just and responsible' country. Adult learning is depicted as central to 'personal and community empowerment' and will be informed by three core principles:

- It should be lifelong - acknowledges that barriers to participation are created by age, ability, and social and cultural backgrounds;
- life-wide - the curriculum for adult learning should be 'wide and open' and should not be 'restricted by vocational imperatives';
- learner-centred – a principle that is easy to state but hard to achieve.

Scotland Specifics

Scotland has a long history of universal public education. Its education system is distinctly different from other parts of the United Kingdom.

Traditionally, the Scottish system has emphasised <u>breadth</u> across a range of subjects, while the English, Welsh and Northern Irish systems have emphasised greater <u>depth</u> of education over a smaller range of subjects at secondary school level.

In Scotland inspections and audits of educational standards are conducted by three bodies:

1. the Care Inspectorate inspects care standards in pre-school provision;
2. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) within Education Scotland is responsible for the inspection of pre-school, primary, education, further and community education;
3. the Scottish office of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA Scotland) responsible for higher education.

All children between the ages of 5 and 16 receive compulsory education.

Primary schools	5-11 years of age
Secondary schools	12-16 years of age

Secondary education in Scotland extends over four to six years from the age of 12. All state schools are comprehensive and pupils attend them full-time for four, five or six years.

- Subject choice in years S3 and S4 makes it possible for pupils to pursue academic or vocational interests.
- All secondary schools offer a general education and more vocationally oriented courses from year 3 onwards.

There is no statutory curriculum in Scotland. Schools deliver a broad curriculum, offering a similar range of subjects at each stage. They all deliver the same core subjects, but beyond that it is a matter for the school to decide what to offer. The third and fourth years (S3 and S4) have elements of specialisation and vocational education for all.

Post-compulsory secondary education is from 16 to 18 years old (S5 and S6) is one of greater specialisation.

- Not all pupils remain for 2 years: some leave to take up employment, training or further study.
- Some pupils proceed to higher education after only one year in upper secondary education if they have gained sufficient passes in their Higher Grade examinations taken in S5.
- Others may leave to follow courses at any of the 17 Further Education colleges in Scotland or to take up a Modern Apprenticeship.

In upper secondary education a broad range of options is offered in S5 and S6 a particular aim is to equip pupils to profit from vocational education and training and from higher education.

Throughout the secondary years, pupils in all schools also have the support of guidance staff in:

1. personal guidance
2. curricular guidance
3. vocational guidance.

1.2   Vocational Education and Training in Scotland

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the sole national body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment, and certification of all national qualifications (other than degrees), working in partnership with business sectors and educational practitioners.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has two distinct functions:

1. **SQA Accreditation**
   SQA Accreditation independently accredits and quality assures qualifications and regulates

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approved awarding bodies, thereby safeguarding the interests of learners, employers, parents, funding bodies and government.

2. **SQA Awarding Body**

   As an awarding body, the SQA develops, validates and assesses qualifications, ensures quality education and training for learners taking its qualifications, and awards certificates to candidates.

Similar to the EQF and the UK's NQF, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is a framework which brings together all mainstream Scottish Qualifications, specifying the qualification SCQF Credits and level of all courses - which makes possible comparison of one qualification with another. The framework incorporates all mainstream Scottish qualifications from Access level to Doctorate level, including both academic and vocational qualifications. Figure 2, above, shows the SCQF relationship with the EQF and the UK NQF.

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications				Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SVQs/MAs
12					Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11	Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner				Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
10					Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Professional Apprenticeship
9				Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
8		Higher National Diploma			Diploma Of Higher Education	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
7	Advanced Higher Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate			Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
6	Higher					Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
5	National 5 Intermediate 2					Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2
4	National 4 Intermediate 1	National Certificate	National Progression Award			SVQ 1
3	National 3 Access 3					
2	National 2 Access 2					
1	National 1 Access 1					

Figure 3. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Source: The SQA

To guide and ensure the relevance of vocational qualifications the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) form a UK-wide network of sectoral representative organisations, and are the recognised national strategic bodies responsible for identifying the skills, education and training needs of their sector.

The SSCs also maintain National Occupational Standards (NOS) for jobs within their sector.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are based on these standards. SSCs are responsible for influencing policy and the delivery of education and training, on behalf of their sector, to ensure that

these needs are met, and are responsible for gathering labour market information and intelligence and for workforce development planning.

National guidelines have also been developed for the recognition of <u>prior informal learning</u> within the context of the SCQF as part of a wider implementation of Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL). The aim is to implement RPL provision across all post-16 education and training sectors as part of the lifelong learning agenda in Scotland. The guidelines form a section of the SCQF Handbook and cover all prior informal learning, including:

- prior learning achieved through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary)
- non-formal contexts through community-based learning
- workplace learning and training
- continuing professional development
- independent learning.

Vocational Training providers

The main providers of further education and vocational training in Scotland are the 17 Further Education Institutions, or simply colleges, who provide education and training to around 500,000 students each year. The college sector is the largest provider of lifelong learning in Scotland.

A typical college offers a wide range of courses from access level to highly specialised vocational education and training. They provide:

- continuing education beyond school
- preparation for further study and/or for entry into the labour market
- the needs of the Scottish workforce.

Courses are mainly vocational, including both theoretical and practical work, leading to awards including:

- the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC)
- Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)
- advanced vocational courses – which are classed as higher education courses, leading to the award of a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or a Higher National Diploma (HND).

Students also have opportunities to work toward industry-specific Awards accredited by other nationally recognised Awarding Bodies, e.g. City & Guilds. Many colleges have also developed close links with particular universities or other higher education institutions to which some of their students may transfer (articulate) after gaining their HND.

At non-advanced level, several different types of course meet the needs of industry and students:

- vocational and general education for post-16 students and trainees
- link courses for school pupils
- industrial pre-employment training, serving specific employer needs or the requirements of the Local Enterprise Companies
- off-the-job training for employees

- vocational and non-vocational evening classes.

College/industry partnerships: Assessment for Work-based learning

The assessment and certification of work-based learning depends on agreements between industry and local colleges. There are several models of industry-college partnership for this purpose:

- training may be jointly planned by a college and a local firm and delivered partly in college and partly at the work-place, with the college being responsible for standards
- training may be more flexible and include a number of open learning modules as well as work-based units, supported by the college
- some employers may simply contract training out to the local college, which essentially becomes an apprentice training centre
- a college can train apprentices for a particular industry, or consortium of local employers, perhaps through a Sector Skills Council.

Assessment of performance is carried out in both the workplace and college.

Colleges generally have close relationships with employers, who are represented on their Boards of Management. The colleges depend for a considerable part of their work on employees being sent for training. Employers can be involved in advising on content and course development along with sector skills councils and training bodies.

Private training providers

Large firms are able to provide in-house training and re-training courses, organised by their own training officers and certificated by the firms themselves. Increasingly, the validation and certification of these courses is carried out by the Scottish Qualifications Authority or other Awarding Bodies. Similarly there is also a strong and diverse network of private and voluntary sector providers who often operate from smaller private training centres, delivering a wide range of vocationally-oriented courses for both young people and adults. These providers are particularly important in Scotland's more rural and remote areas where there are no colleges.

There is also a range of Government funded national training programmes which are managed and delivered by Enterprise Companies and/or through colleges.

Skillseekers and other Vocational Training Programmes

Skillseekers is a vocational training programme open to young people between 16 and 25, who have left school and have a job or who are looking for work. The main elements are:

- training leading to a recognised qualification up to SVQ Level III (typically at SVQ Level II)
- an individual training plan
- employer involvement.

Get Ready for Work is open to 16 to 18 year-olds, with all trainees being paid a training allowance. It is an individualised holistic skills programme with four strands - life, core, personal and vocational skills, and aims to improve employability. Those taking part in the programme, many within colleges,

get the chance to try out "work tasters" and work placements. Students can progress to the mainstream Skillseekers programme, Modern Apprenticeships, further education or employment.

Work is currently underway with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to re-design Skillseekers to introduce pre-apprenticeships to link with vocational learning in schools, address core skills and provide better progression routes to Modern Apprenticeships or further education.

Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships are training programmes offering those aged 16 and over the chance of paid employment linked with the opportunity to train for jobs across a wide range of industries.

- There are about 80 different types of Modern Apprenticeship presently available in Scotland, and all follow a minimum SVQ level III supplemented by further training in core skills.

All the Modern Apprenticeship frameworks are developed by the industry or sector in which they will be implemented and therefore encompass all the skills required to become a craftsman, technician or manager in that area. Many Modern Apprentices also attend colleges or training centres to study the theory relating to their chosen occupation. Adult Modern Apprenticeships are also available.

1.3   Teaching in Scotland

Teaching in Schools within Scotland is an <u>all graduate</u> profession, with nine universities offering programmes of initial teacher education.

Responsibility for reviewing and maintaining the standards of education provided by each university lies with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) who:

- Ensure the professional appropriateness of programmes
- Ensure compliance with statutory requirements
- Provide objective information about the quality of programmes
- Determine and advise on approval of programmes
- Inform policy
- Stimulate enhancement of the quality of provision.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) was one of the first teaching councils in the world when it was set up in 1965. In 2012, legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament made it the world's first independent, self-regulating body for teaching. Amongst their many responsibilities, the GTCS:

- Maintain the register of teachers in Scotland
- Set the Professional Standards expected of all teachers
- Accredit programmes leading to the award of GTCS Standards, including Initial Teacher Education at Scottish universities
- Advise the Scottish Government on matters relating to Scotland's teachers.

<u>Primary</u> teachers teach a range of curricular areas including; literacy, numeracy, religious and moral education. To gain registration as a primary teacher one of the following qualifications are required:

- A four year undergraduate programme such as the Bachelor of Education

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- A one year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) completed after an initial degree
- A part-time course, usually done in partnership with a local authority.

There are three ways to qualify as a <u>secondary</u> (ages 12 - 18) school teacher in Scotland:

- Completion of a one-year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) following a degree in the subject to be taught
- Completion of a Part-time or distance learning PGDE courses, usually in partnership with a local authority
- Completion of a four-year Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree courses in subjects such as music, physical education and technology at a Scottish university.

In order to be considered for registration in <u>Further Education</u>, it is necessary to hold a Teaching Qualification (Further Education) from one of the Scottish teacher education institutions or equivalent teaching qualification. Registration in Further Education does not equate to being allowed to teach in local authority primary and secondary schools in Scotland. Registration in Primary Education or Secondary Education will not be awarded on the basis of a Teaching Qualification (Further Education).

There is no requirement for a qualification to teach in <u>Higher Education</u>.

1.4 VET Framework

Vocational education and training (VET) is offered at most levels of the qualifications frameworks in the UK, though a separate qualifications and credit framework exists in England and Northern Ireland from the ones in Scotland and Wales.

In the UK there are around 200 awarding organisations – all requiring registration with the Government's non-ministerial Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) - offering several thousand accredited qualifications.

- Awarding organisations design and award qualifications
- Education and training providers (e.g. secondary schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, further education colleges and higher education institutions) deliver learning.

Further education colleges represent the largest group of VET providers offering education to learners 16 years or older, and including a large number of adult learners. VET qualifications are offered through:

- Work-related Business and Technology Education Council qualifications
- National vocational qualifications/Scottish vocational qualifications
- Other recognised vocational qualifications.

Apprenticeships are offered in the form of apprenticeship frameworks, which include a work contract, an accredited technical and occupational qualification and core, transferable skills such as numeracy, literacy and ICT. Apprenticeships are available at three principal levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and at four levels in Scotland.

Adult and continuing education forms part of the formal education system in the UK, but is also offered as informal and non-formal training by employers and training providers. Trade unions, employer organisations, Sector Skill Councils and other social partnerships are involved in adult education provision, the development of learning resources and anticipating labour market needs.

There is also a well-established system for VET learners in the UK to progress to higher education (articulation), though there is no automatic right to progression from one qualifications framework level to the next as education providers and awarding organisations retain the right to set entry requirements for individual qualifications.

The unit-based structure of qualifications, and their alignment to qualifications and credit frameworks, opens up the possibility of credit transfer between qualifications in line with recognition of prior earning guidelines. It is hoped that credit transfer will occur more frequently in the future. The UK also has the main building blocks to support the European credit system for vocational education and training in place, and is working towards its implementation for international student mobility.
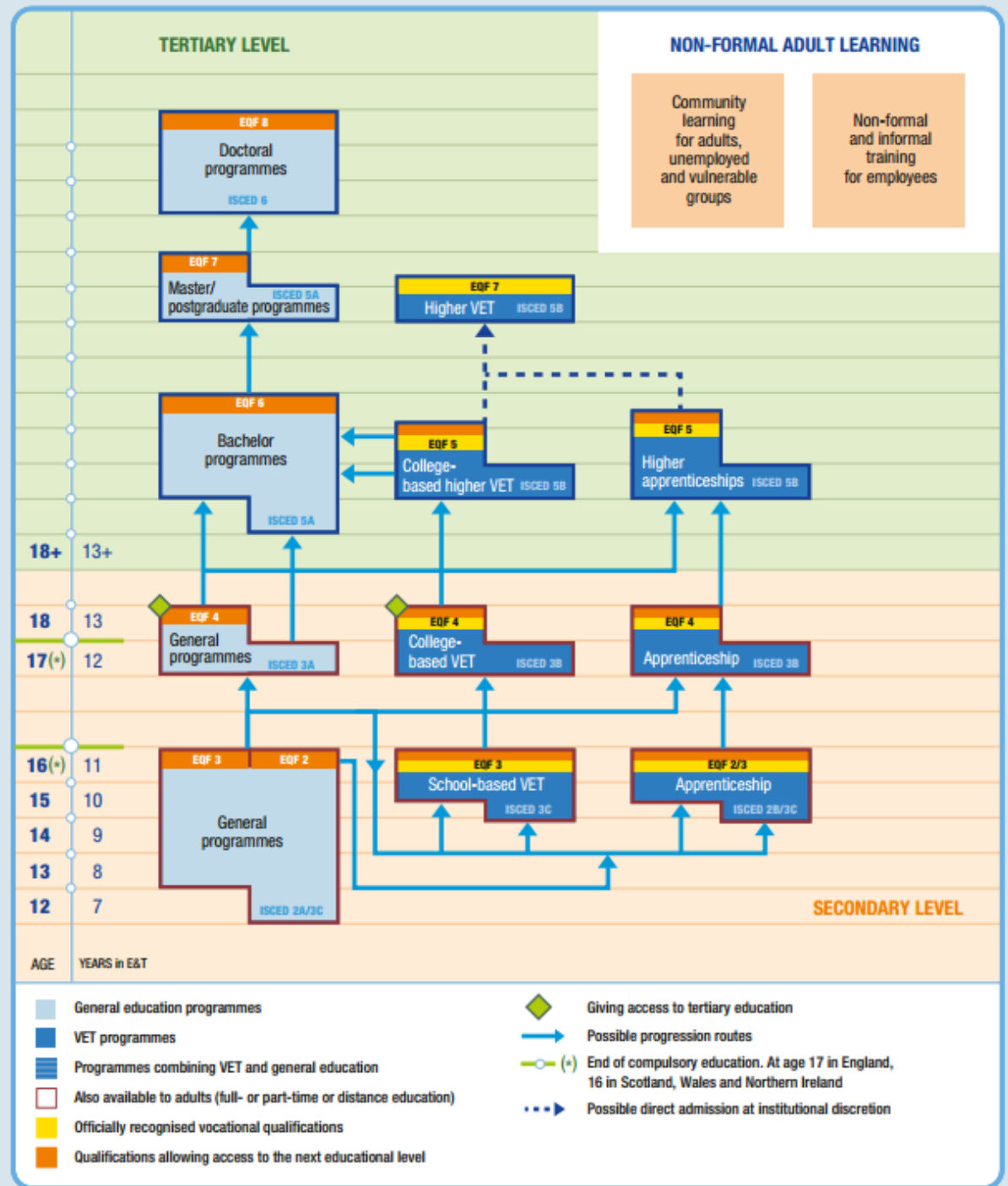
VET in the education and training system in the UK

Figure 4. The Structure of VET in the UK. Source: Cedefop & ReferNet UK

In common with much of Europe, the UK has experienced increased youth unemployment in recent years and VET systems are subsequently under review to improve quality and relevance of VET to labour market needs. There is an aim to increase the numbers of VET graduates and employees with intermediate skill levels as well as to decrease young people leaving school with low basic literacy

and numeracy skills. Initiatives such as raising the age of compulsory participation in education or training to 18 years are being implemented in England and a place in education or training up to this age is already guaranteed in England and Scotland.

1.4.1 A Scottish Perspective & Definition

Vocational Education can mean different things in different states. In Scotland the definition reflects the concepts underpinning the policy for Scotland's developing curriculum. The definition of vocational learning is:

"The delivery of a range of skills which young people would need in their life and work, including the development of pre-vocational, enterprise and employability skills, personal skills, high level cognitive skills and the opportunity to put learning into a practical context."

Types of Vocational Education in Scotland

There are four basic types of vocational qualification in Scotland.

1. Higher National Qualifications are offered as a one-year Higher National Certificates (HNC) and a two-year Higher National Diplomas (HND).

   Most HNs are work-related and specially designed to:
   a. meet the needs of employers
   b. be equivalent to the first two years of a university degree programme.

   On successful completion of a HNC/HND students may progress to university at 1st, 2nd or 3rd year, or straight into employment. HNs can also count towards membership of professional and technical bodies and other employer organisations.

   Full-time HNCs can take one year to complete and two years part time (or in other situations such as flexible learning). Full-time HNDs take two years full time to complete and can also be taken part time over a longer period.

2. National Qualifications (NQs) cover a broad range of subjects to suit a student's skills and interests, and can include Standard Grades, National Units, National Courses and Group Awards. NQ prepare students for possible entry to HNC/HND programmes and can cover training related to employment.

3. Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are awards that recognise an ability to do a specific job.

   They are designed in consultation with employers and based on national standards set directly by representatives from industry, commerce and education. SVQs are awarded following evidence that work-based activities meet these standards and hence enhance the job prospects of an individual.

   SVQs are available to people of all ages and at all stages of their careers. They are available across five levels, reflecting differing aspects from basic work activities to senior managerial

skills.

4. <u>Professional Development Awards</u> (PDAs) are designed for individuals already in a career or vocation who wish to broaden their knowledge and skills.

PDA qualifications can be at different levels from NQ to HN and may include work-based units. They assess against national occupational standards (NOS) or other professional body standards.

Scotland has a long established, and a very formal system of education. It has its own Credit and Qualifications Framework (the SCQF) which – annoying - has 12 levels, compared to the eight levels in the UK NQF or in the EU EQF. To put it in a wider 'standard' perspective the SCQF relates to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as follows:

ISCED Level	Description	SCQF Level
0	Early childhood Education	
0	Early childhood Education	
1	Primary education	
2	Lower secondary education	1-2
3	Upper secondary education	3 – 6
4	Post-secondary non-tertiary education	7 – 8
5	Short-cycle tertiary education	9
6	Bachelor or equivalent	10
7	Master or equivalent	11
8	Doctoral or equivalent	12

Figure 5: ISCED Summary (for a full mapping see: www.uis.unesco.org ISCEDMappings)

Earlier Figure 2 showed the relationship between the SCQF, the UK NQF and the EU EQF.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the single national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland for school and vocational education.

The SQA develops, accredits, assesses and certifies all Scottish qualifications except university degrees. SQA courses allow students to build up a range of units leading to a particular qualification, and are designed to prepare students for further study at college or university (e.g. to complete an undergraduate degree), or to progress directly to employment.

All SQA course units and qualifications relate to a level in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

1.4.2   Statistics of vocational and adult education
School Pupil Numbers and Projections: December 2014

In Scotland, in 2014 there were 676,955 pupils in publicly funded schools, an increase from the 2013 figure of 673,530. Projections for 2018 are:

- Primary pupil numbers will increase to 398,000
- Secondary pupil numbers will decrease to 275,000 in 2016 and 2017 before increasing to 278,000.

On 1st April 2014 there were:

- 2,055 local authority primary schools
- 363 local authority secondary schools
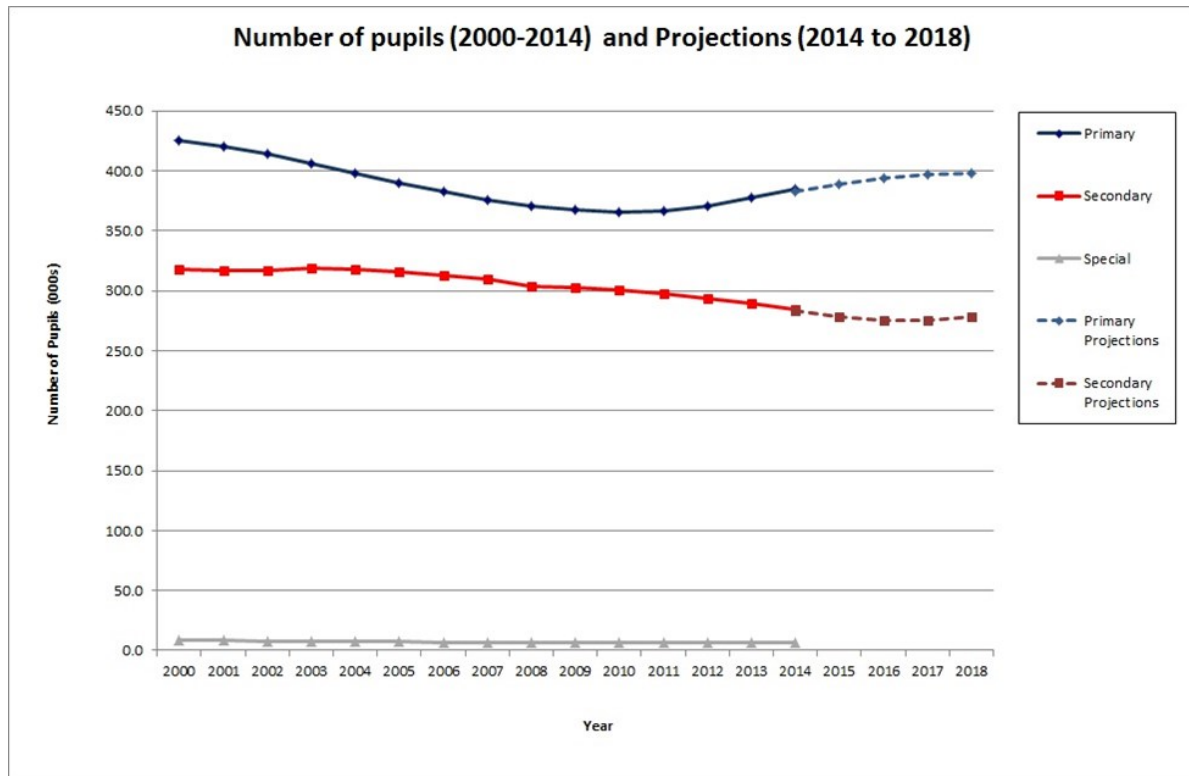- 142 local authority special schools.

Figure 6. School pupils in Scotland. Source: The Scottish Government

Destinations of School Leavers: June 2014

In March 2014, approximately 9 months after leaving from the school year 2012/13, 90.0 per cent of young leavers were in 'positive destinations' (learning, training or work).

This is higher than last year and all preceding years, and is information used to monitor the Scottish Government's National Indicator on increasing the proportion of young people in learning, training or work.

Information on school leavers' initial destinations (in September approximately 3 months after leaving school) is also collected. In September 2013, 91.4 per cent of school leavers, from the 2012/13 school year were in positive destinations.

Between 2011/12 and 2012/13 the proportion of leavers in sustained positive destinations – higher education, further education, employment, training, voluntary work or activity agreements – increased to 90.0 per cent.

- The proportion in higher education increased by 0.7 percentage points
- The proportion in further (vocational) education decreased by 0.5
- The proportion entering employment increased by 0.7 percentage points
- The proportion of school leavers unemployed and seeking employment or training approximately 9 months after leaving school has decreased to 7.9 per cent (a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from the proportion in 2011/12).
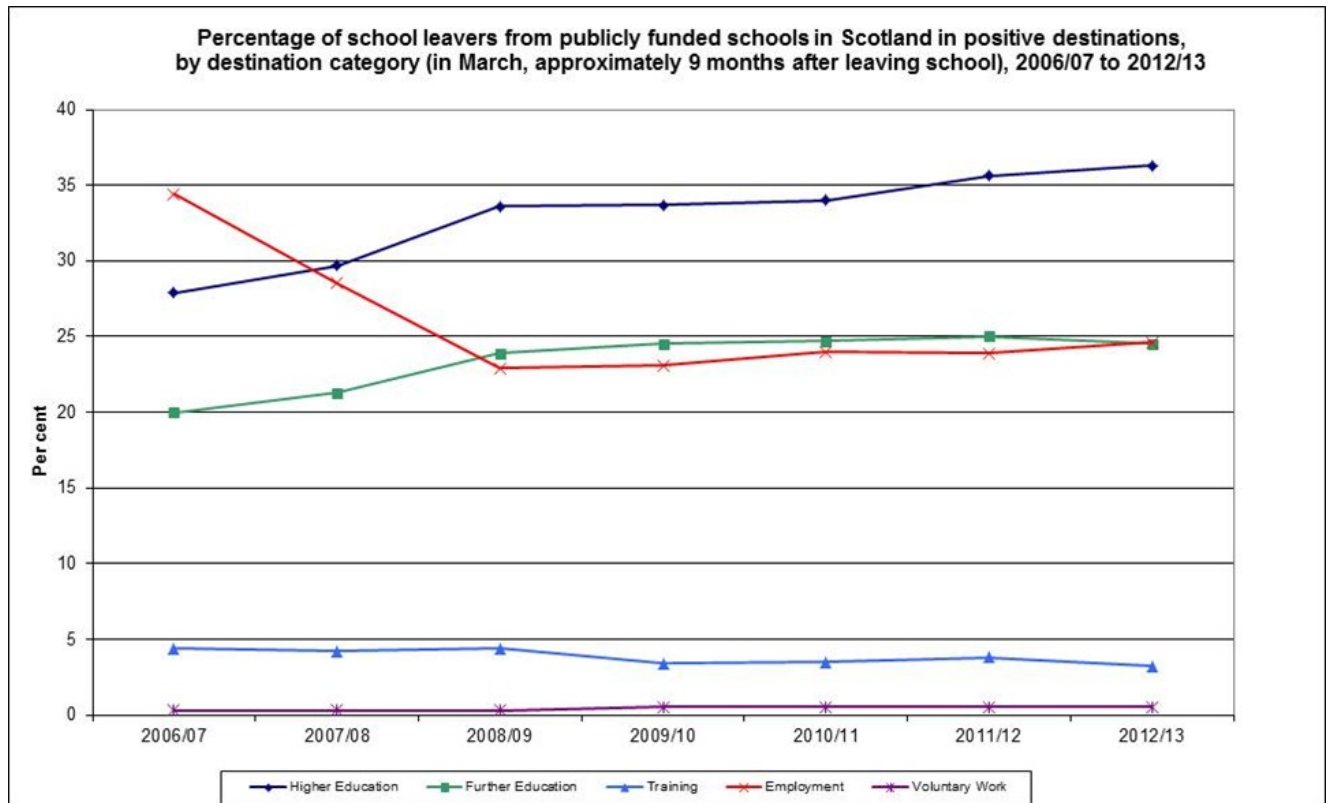

Figure 6. Destinations of School Leavers. Source: Scottish Government

Teacher Numbers: February 2015

	2005	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**
School-based teachers	50,757	51,886	52,446	51,765	50,599	49,784	49,026	48,691	48,620	48,442
ELC teachers	1,702	1,704	1,689	1,650	1,630	1,524	1,461	1,386	1,288	1,212
Visiting teachers	1,450	1,157	964	933	772	714	881	1,176	1,170	1,160

ELC = early learning and childcare

Table 1. Teacher numbers, 2015. Source: Scottish Government

Vocational/College Numbers

The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students at Scotland's colleges decreased by 1% between 2011-12 and 2012-13 (from 133,199 to 131,421).
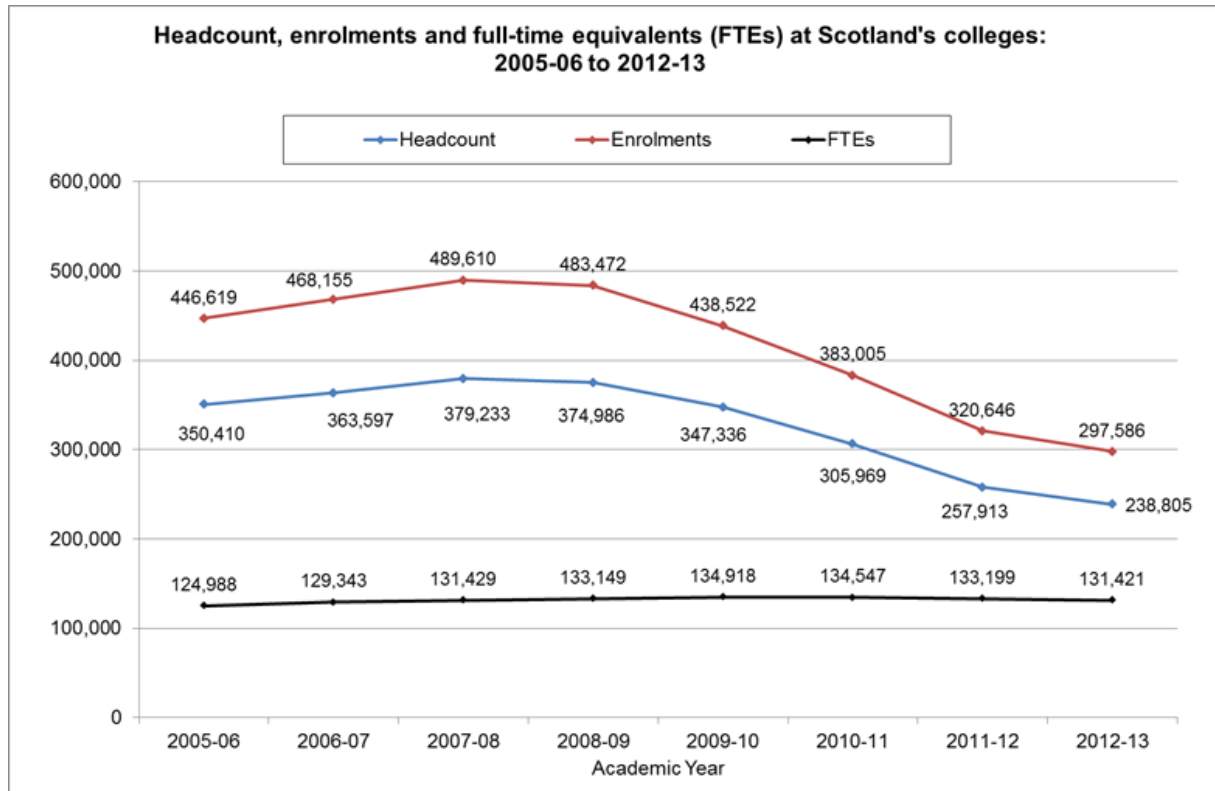

Figure 7. VET Student Numbers. Source: Scottish Government

A shift in study patterns is taking place within the college sector as colleges concentrate on full-time courses aimed at helping people gain employment and no longer fund short courses lasting less than 10 hours. Although the overall activity of colleges remains relatively stable, this change has led to a decline in part-time study and an increase in full-time study, which is reflected in college figures on an enrolment and headcount basis.

The number of students (headcount) studying at Scotland's colleges was 238,805, a decrease of 7% (19,108) from 257,913 in 2011-12. Overall, there were 297,586 enrolments in Scotland's colleges in 2012-13, where individuals can enrol on more than one course. This represents a decrease of 7% (23,060) from 320,646 in 2011-12.

1.4.3   Higher Education Students in Scotland

The figure shows that in 2012-13, there were 230,970 students in higher education in Scotland, a fall 1.0% compared to 2011-12. There were a further 47,975 studying for advanced qualifications at vocational colleges.

While the number of first degree students rose by 1,590 (1.1%) and the number of research postgraduates rose by 320 (2.7%), the number of taught postgraduates fell by 1,750 (4.0%) and the number of students at sub-degree level fell by 3,025 (3.9%).
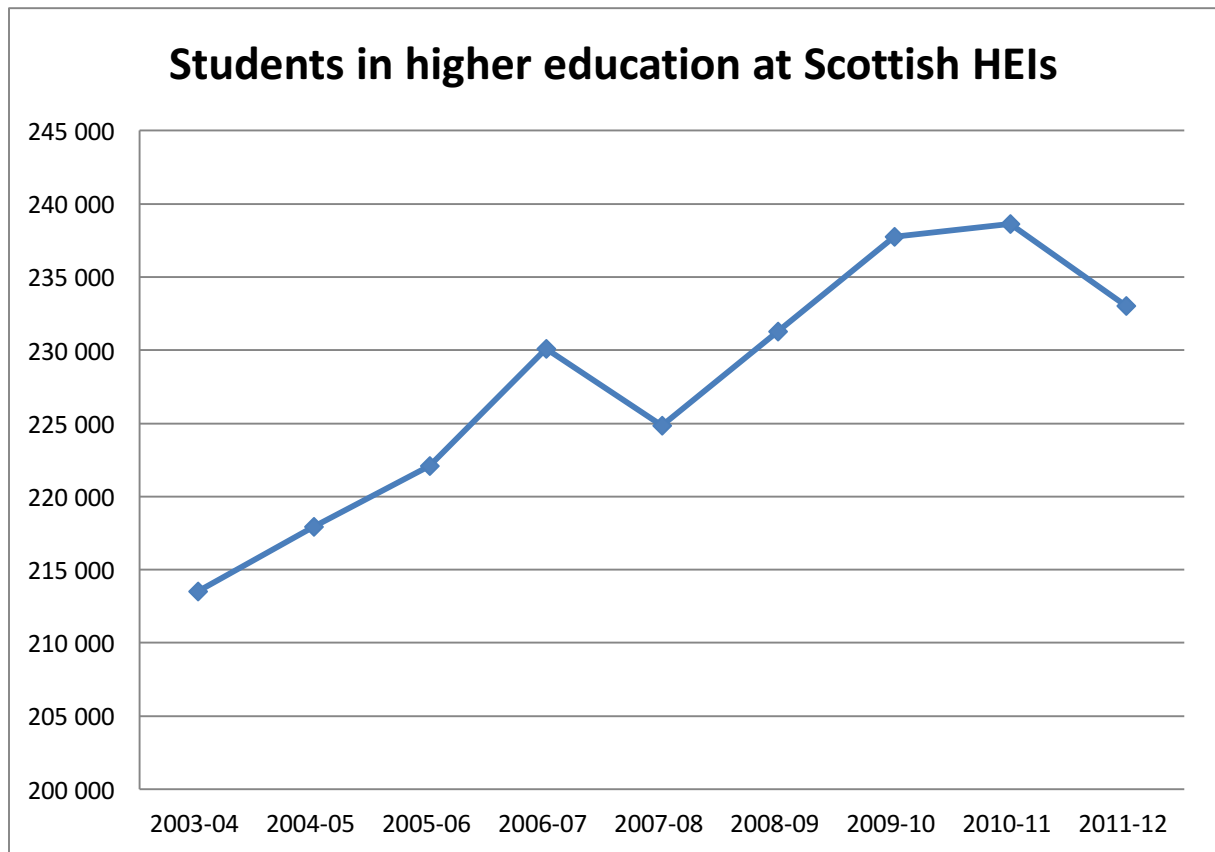
Students in higher education at Scottish HEIs

Figure 8. HE Student Numbers. Source: [Scottish Government](#)

The Scottish HEIPR is a measure of participation of all entrants aged between 16 and 30 (inclusive). It measures wider population access to higher education and is suitable for comparison with measures in other countries.

The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR)

The Scottish HEIPR:

- Decreased from 56.1 per cent to 54.7 per cent in 2012-13. This was largely due to a reduction in the number of Scottish-domiciled entrants, aged 16 to 30, at Scottish Further Education Colleges and rest of UK universities.
- Has increased from 53.1 per cent to 54.7 per cent since it was first calculated in 2006/07.
- Is consistently higher than the English counterpart, although the trends over time are similar.
- Scottish Higher Education Institutions contribute to the greatest part of the HEIPR, although there has been an increase in HE provision by HE colleges.
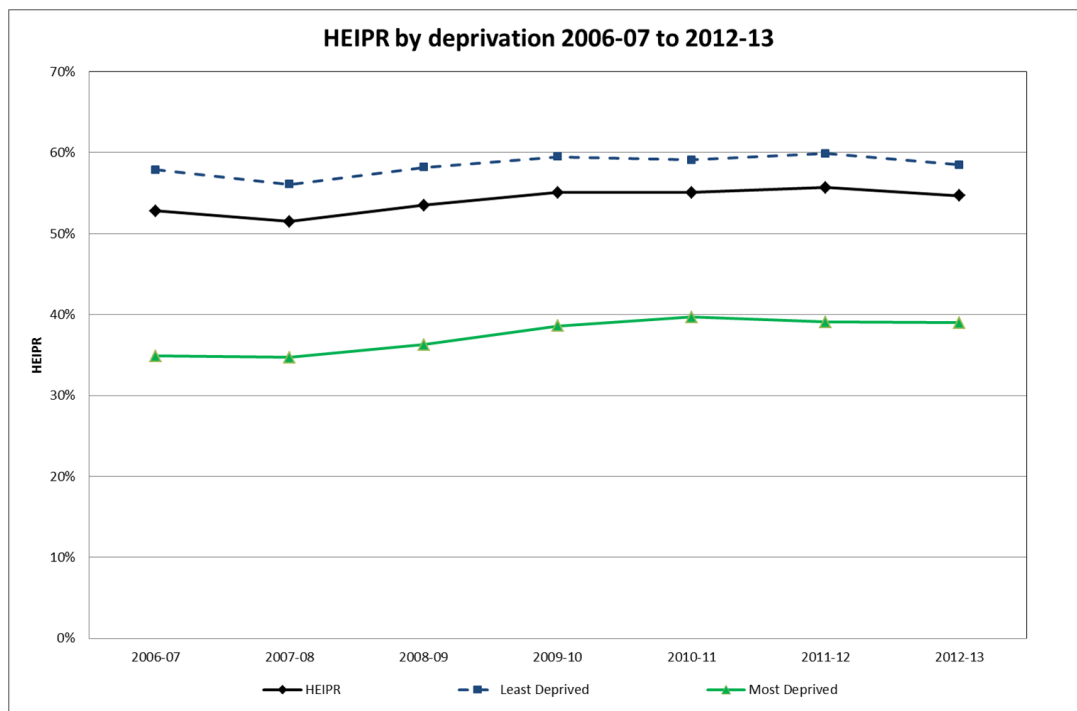- HEIPRs are lower in the most deprived areas of Scotland

Figure 9. HE Initial Participation Rate. Source: Scottish Government

The figure shows that participation of those from deprived areas is consistently lower than participation rates for those from non-deprived areas.

The HEIPR for the most deprived areas increased in each year to 2010-11. In the last two years the HEIPR has decreased from 39.7% in 2010-11 to 39.1% in 2011-12 and to 39.0% in 2012-13, compared with 54.7% for Scotland as a whole.

Erasmus+

2 Legal obligations/recommendations regarding institutions and courses in vocational and adult education

2.1 The Scottish Qualifications Authority

As there are differing systems within the UK, the focus here will be on the Scottish system, which is governed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. This is perhaps the best system to use, as it is the single authority in Scotland. There are a number in England, with differing QA systems which in itself causes concern as there is always the potential that colleges and approved centres may chose the 'easiest' system to conform to, not the best.

The Board of Management (or equivalent) of a college has primary responsibility for quality provision, as the governing body of a college. The Board must take a strategic overview of quality assurance and enhancement to be assured that:

- appropriate mechanisms are in place
- that these mechanisms are being applied rigorously and effectively by consistently considering quality matters at Board level.

The key requirement in the management of a centre (e.g. college) is that:

- The centre must operate a revision-controlled, documented quality management system.

There must also be a documented schedule for reviewing the quality management system, and the outcome of reviews must be recorded and actioned. The SQA must be notified of any changes that may affect the centre's ability to meet the quality assurance criteria.

The centre's policies and procedures must be supported by senior management and understood by all relevant staff, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the administration, management, assessment and quality assurance of SQA qualifications across all sites must be clearly documented and disseminated. All documentation and processes must be supported by evidence.

The criteria for quality assurance falls into the follow six categories:

- **The management of a centre**
  The SQA requires a centre to have a fully documented quality management system in place to support all SQA qualifications offered by the centre. The documented policies and procedures must show compliance with the criteria as detailed in the Quality Assurance Criteria.
- **Resources**
  Resources relating to the quality assurance criteria include staff, accommodation, equipment, and reference, learning and assessment materials. A centre must ensure that they have sufficient resources to enable candidates to achieve the competences defined in a qualification. The SQA approves and monitors resources to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- **Candidate/student support**
  Candidates must be supported throughout their time with a centre, from initial guidance on course choice, to induction and ongoing support, to certification and pre-exit advice.

Documented information on centre and SQA policies and procedures must be given to candidates for reference.

- **Internal assessment and verification**
  Internal verification underpins internally assessed qualifications, and is one of the key processes by which a centre and the SQA ensure equality of access to assessment for all candidates. Effective assessment and internal verification must be guaranteed to ensure that assessment decisions are fair and transparent.
  All candidates entered for the any qualification must be assessed to a specified standard, confirmed by internal verification procedures written to ensure that all assessment decisions are consistent with national standards.

- **External assessment**
  Where an external assessment is set and marked in a qualification by the SQA, they take on all responsibility for ensuring that national standards are met and maintained, but the centre is still very much responsible administering assessment all assessment activities, according to defined guidelines.

- **Records and data management**
  The SQA requires a centre to maintain a fully documented and effectively managed system to ensure that accurate and current data is retained within the centre (for a minimum of three years) and exchanged with SQA. All data must be stored in accordance with current data protection legislation.

The SQA's Quality Assurance Criteria are divided into four distinct processes:

1. Systems Approval
2. Qualification Approval
3. Systems Verification
4. Qualification Verification.

These are measured against a set of clearly defined criteria, with a pre-determined rating of either: low, medium or high impact. The four processes support SQA centres to ensure the value and integrity of its main awards - the Higher National (e.g. HNC/D) and Vocational Qualifications (SVQ).

2.2   SQA's Quality Assurance Approval

In Scotland all centres, including colleges, must seek and obtain approval before offering SQA qualifications.

There are two types of approval:

- **Systems Approval.**
  Systems approval confirms that a centre has the management structure and quality assurance systems to support the delivery; assessment and internal verification of SQA qualifications irrespective of what qualification(s) are offered.

- **Qualification Approval.**
  Qualification approval confirms that a centre has the staff, reference materials, learning materials, assessment materials, equipment and accommodation needed to deliver and assess the qualifications listed on its application for offer.

Any centre wishing to offer a first qualification must apply for both systems approval and qualification approval at <u>the same time</u>. For both types of approval, a centre must demonstrate that it has the necessary systems and qualification requirements in place to meet SQA's approval criteria. Subsequent applications to offer additional qualifications have to be made, but can be done at any time.

Centres are continually assessed to ensure that they meet SQA's quality assurance criteria for delivery and assessment of qualifications – this is <u>verification</u>. The SQA routinely monitor all approved centres to ensure that they continue to have the necessary management structure and quality assurance systems and that they meet the assessment and internal verification requirements for the qualifications being offered.

2.2.1   Systems Approval

All centres must operate a <u>documented quality management system</u>. Their systems must be documented so they can be audited and evaluated against SQA requirements. Documents may be held electronically or in hard copy but should include:

- policies
- procedures
- supporting information for the assessment of SQA qualifications.

Centre documentation should be made available to all staff and candidates involved in the SQA programme.

Evidence might consist of a <u>quality manual</u> containing policies, procedures, and descriptions of roles and responsibilities. Examples will include:

- recruitment/selection policy and equal opportunities policy;
- health and safety policy;
- assessment arrangements policy statement for candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs' malpractice policy;
- complaints grievance procedure and appeals procedure;
- internal verification policies and procedures;
- documented processes for records data management.

Every centre must have a documented schedule for reviewing the quality management system. The outcome of reviews must be recorded and auctioned.

This regular review is to ensure that the quality documentation (e.g. policies, procedures, recording documentation) of a centre actually reflects current practice, up to date, and fit for purpose.

Assessors and Internal Verification

One of the key features within the Systems Review is the importance attached to assessment and verification. The centre's assessment and verification procedures must be documented and implemented to meet qualification and SQA requirements.

- Internal verification is a crucial element of SQA's quality assurance as it ensures that all candidates entered for the same qualification are assessed fairly and consistently to the specified standard.

Every SQA centre is responsible for operating an effective and documented internal quality assurance system - a requirement of being an SQA-approved centre – covering, as a minimum, the three stages of internal verification:

- pre-assessment
- during assessment
- post-assessment.

Pre-assessment must cover:

- how a centre checks the assessment instruments for validity (currency and fitness for purpose) including SQA-devised assessments
- how a centre can evidence that all assessors and internal verifiers have a common understanding of the standards required, even when assessments have been drawn from the national bank

During assessment must cover:

- how assessment and internal verification records will be maintained
- how standardisation will be achieved

Post-assessment must cover:

- How will assessment and internal verification processes be reviewed and updated?

2.2.2 Qualifications Approval

Qualification Approval is dependent on a number of factors:

- Staff must be appropriately qualified staff
- Sites must be approved
- Partnerships responsibilities for delivery, assessment and internal verification process must be clear
- Assessment Environments must be fit for purpose and reviewed on an on-going basis
- Any Equipment must similarly be fit for purpose and reviewed on an on-going basis
- Reference and Learning Materials must be clearly specified, be fit for purpose and reviewed on an on-going basis.

2.3 Vocational Qualifications

It is essential that any Vocational Qualification (SVQ) assessor or verifier must have the technical experience and skills and/or qualifications as stated in their sector's Assessment Strategy.

Each strategy is written by a Sector Skills Council (SSC) that has responsibility for a designated occupational area(s), so any centre seeking approval should always refer to the relevant Assessment Strategy for information relating to experience, skills and qualifications.

SVQ assessors and verifiers must hold, or be working towards, a appropriate assessor/verifier award within 18 months of commencing their role. The main ones are:

- L&D9D: Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct Methods (L&D9D)
  - See also L&D9DI: Assess Workplace Competence Using Direct and Indirect Methods
- L&D11: Internally Monitor and Maintain the Quality of Workplace Assessment
- QCF Workplace Assessor/Verifier Qualifications.

It is recommended that QCF assessors and verifiers either hold, or are working towards a nationally-recognised assessor/verifier qualification. Competence in assessment or internal verification can be demonstrated by:

- holding other qualifications that include relevant and sufficient assessment or verification components, or
- providing evidence of having successfully practised as an assessor and/or verifier of awarding organisation qualifications

2.4 Higher National Qualifications (HNC/HND)

Again, assessors and internal verifiers need to be competent in the subject/occupational area to a level appropriate to the qualification.

In practice, this could mean providing evidence of experience and current practice in line with the qualification approval being sought though a relevant qualification in the subject area would be ideal practice but not essential unless it was a specific requirement of the Unit specification or Assessment Strategy.

HN assessors and internal verifiers also need to be competent in assessment (or internal verification) for the type involved in the qualification. There are a number of qualifications in assessment and verification that are acceptable, including:

- TQFE/TQSE
- Conduct the Assessment Process
- Carry Out the Assessment Process
- Conduct the Internal Verification Process
- Internally Verify the Assessment Process

2.5 Internal Assessment and Verification

Any centre's assessment and verification procedures must be documented and implemented to meet qualification and SQA requirements.

- A assessment centre must provide documented evidence to ensure that assessments are valid, reliable, equitable and fair
- Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements
- A centre must take steps to ensure that assessment evidence is the candidate's own work
- Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements

Centres must detail their <u>standardisation arrangements</u> that describe arrangements for achieving standardisation, to help ensure consistent, reliable and fair assessment decisions are made. Similarly there must be a process of <u>internal verification</u> of materials:

- outlining who developed the assessment materials used
- confirm that these have been subject to internal verification using the centre's arrangements for achieving standardisation.

3 Quality Management in the institutions in the UK

In 2014, the four administrations (i.e. on behalf of the four countries) of the UK recently reported the progress they have made to the EQAVET network.

As usual, there are four slightly different approaches being taken to the implementation of the EQAVET recommendations:

- in England this is led by the UK Government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- in Northern Ireland it is overseen by an EQAVET steering group
- in Scotland the Scottish Vocational Qualifications Board acts as the National Reference Point
- in Wales the Quality Effectiveness Framework (QEF), introduced in 2009, continues to play a critical guidance role in Wales for FE institutions and Work Based Learning providers.

Looking at each of the countries:

- In <u>England</u>, the FE Quality Assurance System (introduced in April 2010) was designed to reduce burdens and bureaucracies that existed in previous performance management arrangements for post-16 learning. It was designed with knowledge of the ten European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) indicators.

  Currently there is work underway to develop a communications plan, and to work with stakeholder bodies, to promote the EQAVET recommendation and its benefits to post-16 education and training providers.

- <u>Northern Ireland</u> has a quality improvement strategy in place and has therefore met the primary aim of the EQAVET Recommendation. The initial phase of the implementation work has focussed on an examination of the NI VET quality assurance system in comparison to the EQVAET indicators. The further education sector, and stakeholders on the steering group have completed surveys allowing analysis at system and provider level, and a review document has been completed.

  The next steps of implementation are likely to include further communication with providers on the EQAVET Recommendation, in conjunction with wider communication on other, linked initiatives (e.g. EQF, ECVET). The EQAVET steering group's remit is being widened to support a coherent approach. Work done on the analysis of indicators will also serve as useful groundwork for any future review of the Department for Employment and Learning's quality improvement strategy.

- <u>Scotland</u> has carried out an initial analysis and benchmarking of the EQAVET indicators. This has been presented to the Scottish Vocational Qualifications Board and this body has advised that the quality assurance mechanisms in place with regards to VET met most of the indicators, although there were some gaps.

  The Scottish Government has announced a major review of post-16 Education, *Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education*. The proposals are wide-reaching and some of the outcomes may have an impact on the quality assurance arrangements for the VET sector. The Scottish Vocational Qualifications Board will re-consider the initial analysis to determine what actions, if any, need to be taken with regards to the gaps previously identified but also to take account of any changes in the VET landscape as a result of the wider post-16 review.

- In <u>Wales</u> the Quality Effectiveness Framework (QEF) that was introduced in 2009 continues to play a critical role in Wales for FE institutions and Work Based Learning providers. Work was commissioned earlier this year to look at how existing quality systems in Further Education align with the EQAVET indicators, though all the data required by the EQAVET quality indicators appear to be useful as measures of progress.

Homing in on Scotland, it is the SQA that participates in such European Initiatives, monitoring developments in VET across Europe. The SQA have representation on the working group for the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), which is tasked with producing guidance on <u>aligning</u> their quality assurance approach with ISO9001 and EFQM (through mapping tables).

The SQA's Accreditation team is also an active member of the UK Co-ordination Group for VET. This group co-ordinates work on European initiatives including EQF, EQAVET, ECVET, and ESCO and acting as the central point for dealing with European Commission matters of protocol. However these have to be passed to each administration (i.e. country) to deal with as the decision making processes related to the engagement with VET related EC policy instruments rests with the appropriate structures in each country.

The UK European Co-ordination Group for VET therefore acts as a dissemination, information sharing and co-ordinating group supporting the work related to decision making in each country.

Through this group, the SQA monitors developments across a range of European initiatives, including EQAVET on behalf of the Scottish VQ Board. As mentioned above, the EQAVET group uses two common quality assurance models:

- ISO9001, and
- the European Foundation Quality Model (EFQM)

as the means to produce the guidance. The SQA Accreditation team will map its recently revised Regulatory Principles (2014) against the EQAVET indicators and will openly publish their mapping.

Current distribution of QM/QA tools in vocational schools

In Scotland the SQA provide very detailed guidelines for Systems and Qualifications Approval (see Systems and Qualification Approval Guide) which relate to specific forms and information that have to be gathered. These guidelines apply to all centres (e.g. colleges and private providers) that deliver SQA qualifications.

Each of the main areas of quality assurance has their own separate, very detailed guidelines including many checklists and flowcharts:

- Qualification Verification Guidelines
- System Verification Guidelines

These represent the extent of the approval or verification 'toolkit's that are in the hands of the centres.

For all quality assurance there are published criteria, falling into six categories that detail:

- A statement of the Criteria
- An example of the evidence that is to be gathered
- The applicability (to systems/qualification approval/verification)
- The level of impact of the criteria.

These details are very well communicated to all centres (public colleges, private providers, sector skills trainers, etc.), and they are followed.

There is little evidence that toolkits for QA, or in other area, are integrated and ICT supported. There is a very comprehensive SQA 'toolkit' for Qualification Development with very detailed step-by-step documentation, but with no fewer than 51 downloadable forms, documents or spreadsheets. In this, and other areas, all PDF forms are active and with reasonably consistently named fields which makes it relatively straightforward to integrate and automate the filling and/or capture of data from/into institutional database systems.

The SQA are currently phasing in their NAQA – New Approach to Quality Assessment – and carefully evaluating its deliberately phased introduction and evaluation.

NAQA should bring a number of QA benefits to both centres and the SQA. For example:

- NAQA should add value for Centres to their quality assurance practices
- NAQA should also add quality for the SQA.

Cost is a factor. One obvious benefit has to be that NAQA should reduce costs for SQA but not at the expense of quality gains. As quality increases then the cost of interventions with centres, particularly in cases of non compliance, should reduce.

One obvious means of reducing costs is to make greater use of ICT-based systems. Doing so can also help to minimise the potential for incorrect interpretations of the QA criteria, as happens, e.g. with the interpretation of the validity of assessment instruments. Further work will identify trends in the use of ICT with the intention of sharing good practice and to identify typical non-compliance issues that commonly arise.

4 Relationships between the Ntl. QM system and EQAVET

The EU has initiated the introduction of EQAVET system in member countries. Specify what the indicators of the European system include and examine if these measurements have been carried out in your country. If not, how can they be introduced? It is important to carry out standard measurements that can be compared with the help of an IT system.

Since 2013–14 the SQA's Head of Accreditation has represented the UK on one of the two EQAVET working groups tasked with producing guidance on aligning a quality assurance approach with EQAVET. The EQAVET group uses two common quality assurance models:

- ISO9001
- the European Foundation Quality Model (EFQM)

as the means to producing this guidance. The guidance and the ISO9001 and EFQM mapping tables can be found at on the EQAVET web site.

SQA Accreditation will map its recently revised Regulatory Principles (2014) against the EQAVET indicators and will publish the mapping on its website though, as of March 2015, these have not appeared.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has two distinct functions:

- SQA Accreditation
- SQA Awarding Body.

It is SQA Accreditation that has the responsibility for independently accrediting and quality assuring qualifications, and it regulates approved awarding bodies. They are the body that safeguards the interests of learners, employers, parents, funding bodies and government. The work of SQA Accreditation is overseen by the Accreditation Committee (AC) which was established by the Education (Scotland) Act 1996.

The Accreditation Committee is accountable to Scottish Ministers and ensures that there are appropriate governance mechanisms in place with regards to SQA's functions.

The committee's work is divided into two main areas:

- Accreditation, with responsibility for:
    - Advising standard setting organisations in the development of National Occupational Standards and qualifications
    - Supporting and assisting awarding bodies through the accreditation process
    - Reviewing accreditation submissions
    - Working with awarding bodies and standard setting bodies to determine Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)credit rating

- Regulation, with responsibility for:
    - Conducting awarding body audits and ensuring they remain compliant with the Regulatory Principles
    - Reviewing the Quality Enhancement Rating of awarding bodies

- Supporting new awarding bodies through the approval process
- Investigating complaints and compliance issues and cases of malpractice or maladministration

The SQA quality assure by ensuring that approved awarding bodies remain compliant by continual monitoring of performance against the Regulatory Principles.

This is done by using robust quality assurance processes such as:

- awarding body audits
- self-assessment
- risk profiling
- provider monitoring
- reviewing
- evaluating accreditation submissions.

These approaches help to ensure compliance, maintain standards over time and protect learner interests.   Approved awarding bodies must also ensure that their business practices, their qualifications and the practices of their providers comply with the same Regulatory Principles, but also Regulatory Principles Directives and the clauses within any legal arrangements with SQA Accreditation.

SQA Accreditation has designed the Regulatory Principles to encompass the five key principles of better regulation to ensure that regulatory duties are carried out in a:

- transparent
- accountable
- proportionate
- consistent, and
- targeted fashion.

There are 15 Regulatory Principles in total, each one defining a standard which awarding bodies must meet in order to be compliant. It is these Principles that are to be mapped to EQAVET.

This mapping is eagerly awaited, but no schedule has been given for its production.

5   ICT tools and/or structured toolkits in managing QAs

In the UK quality assurance in vocational (further) education is something that will be high up the agenda of every provider, particularly colleges. This is a typical statement of a quality strategy – for Manchester College. Note the line that says:

"The college has a documented quality system".

However there is no real mention of systems and of how the strategy might be implemented via toolkits. There is many a mention of "quality assurance procedures" and the "development and continual evaluation of a wide range of quality improvement strategies", but not the actual implementation.

This is an example from England, and mentions the various bodies that QA has to be aligned with. The story is similar in all other UK countries, though the various bodies may be different. The quality framework is repeated here, below.
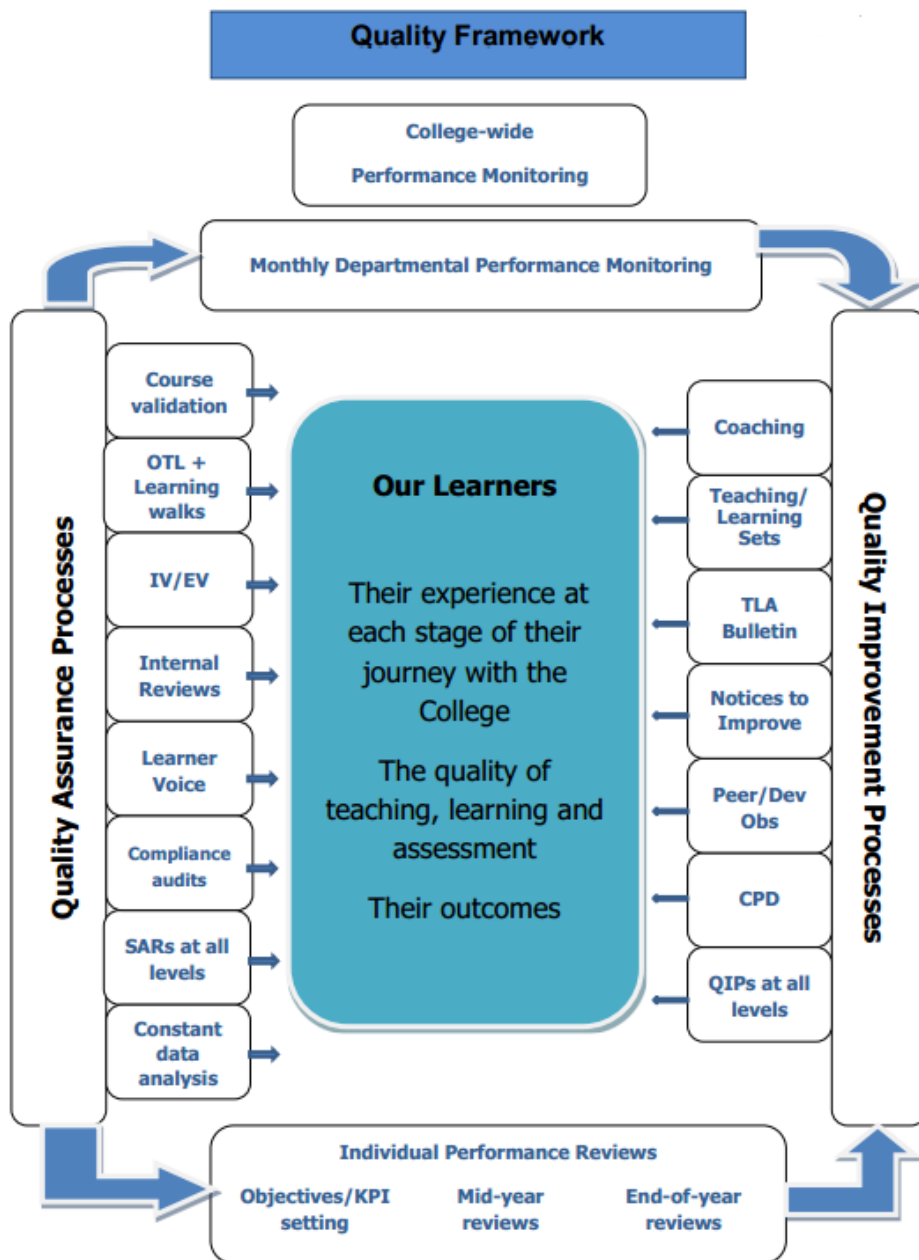

Figure 10. Source: Manchester College Quality Strategy

Toolkits exist in certain areas to help to structure the processes of quality management, but it is hard – if not impossible – to find ICT-base examples.

The Scottish SQA has a well-structured 'toolkit' for Qualification Development - not strictly a QA issue, but an area where it important to see quality built in during the development process. Details

can be found on the SQA Website. The toolkit is a very detailed, extensive and well laid out methodology backed up with no fewer than 51 downloadable DOC/PDF/XLS files. The spreadsheets offer a rudimentary ICT-based approach to the definition and capture of initial information, but few – if any –of the other documents are active or ICT-supportive in any way. This is an obvious area for the development of ICT support.

The SQA have other 'toolkits' for Internal Verification and for Recognition of Prior Learning. Again these are not areas of QA, and these are more of structured guidelines rather than toolkit, but they do serve as examples of how far 'toolkits' in general have been advanced within the VET sector in Scotland. It is reflective of the rest of the UK too.

Quality Manuals within colleges tend to be highly structured, contain many guidelines, and have all the necessary data-gathering forms required for all of the processes within. They also align with the requirements of the same set, or a major subset, of governing bodies so they are obvious candidates for ICT-driven guidance and collection of information.

6   Executive Summary

The system in the UK is complicated by the fact that the UK is made up of four countries, each with their own administrations in charge of education. While there is significant overlap between three of the countries, Scotland is significantly different in many ways. However Scotland is also simpler in one respect, namely that for schools and further (VET) education there is a single governing authority – the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). This report has touched on the UK as a whole, but has concentrated on Scotland which, for all intents and purposes, can be viewed as a member state in its own right.

The SQA has a holistic view to quality assurance, which is one reason why Scotland is a good example even in isolation. There are four key process foci to the SQA approach to quality assurance:

- Systems Approval
- Qualifications Approval
- Systems Verification
- Qualification Verification

Each process area is very well defined and well-supported with guides though, as is commonly found, there is little if any evidence of ICT support to the various 'toolkits' that can be found. Toolkits tend to be in the form of forms plus guidance.

OpenQAsS has therefore started at a good time for the UK as a whole, but for Scotland in particular. The single authority in Scotland (the SQA) is currently mapping its Regulatory Principles against EQAVET – the results of which should appear early 2015 – as part of its continued efforts to improve the quality assurance process for all stakeholders. It has also recently completed its phase in of its NAQA (New Approach to Quality Assurance), so these activities provide a solid definition and infrastructure for OpenQAsS to home in on core QA activities that might be common to the rest of the UK and applicable across EU member states too.

To be effective NAQA must offer tangible short term value and the potential to deliver even more value over time. It must also come at a cost (financial, people time, etc) that is acceptable and an improvement over the previous procedures. In introducing NAQA the relationship between SQA and centres should become one that is more of a welcomed critical friend with whom quality assurance enhancements can be jointly explored and developed, rather than as a system and requirement imposed upon an institution.   Quality improvement is good for both parties, and should be developed in an environment of mutual collaboration and trust.

The implementation this NAQA – in the QA Management System - <u>will </u>be more effective than previous approaches, because it provides greater clarity of expectations than existed previously, and it supports wider continuous improvement processes in a measurable way. The criteria that it incorporates are now able to be interpreted as <u>enablers</u> that support professional conversations during verification activities.

Within NAQA there will be a much greater focus on centre intelligence gathering and local review/action leading to sharing this information with SQA. This is an area that would benefit greatly from having a range of ICT-supported toolkits.

NAQA should also help to reduce costs incurred by centres, and where additional costs are seen to be incurred, they should be as a result of improvements to quality assurance in general and not NAQA specifically. Many of the long term costs will be due to centres devoting more time to staff development and training.

Qualification Verifiers – one of the key set of stakeholders in the overall quality process - consistently report that the new NAQA process is more effective and more robust than previous procedures and that centres themselves find the process more rigorous than before. The SQA's QA Management System – the implementation of NAQA - offers great potential for implementations to remove most of the unproductive time that verifiers and centres spend completing varying report forms. This is exactly where OpenQAsS can help. One example is with the potential use of E-portfolios which are likely to be used to an even greater extent within the 'regionalised' environment of the Scottish college system. Verifiers need to be presented with tools and systems that are readily usable and which help directly with the tasks that they undertake.

FE/VET colleges and other providers are regularly quality assured and there is a requirement for them to have, and to follow, a quality manual that lays out all procedure and processes to be followed by a deliverer of SQA approved awards, and to cover all aspects of the student journey. This quality manual will also contain all the required structures, forms and management procedures for all data gathered as part of the quality process. Quality manuals may differ between institutions (e.g. CAPDM's sister company Opus Learning is a wholly online SQA approved centre), though they will be broadly similar in most areas. Opus Learning's quality manual is available to OpenQAsS as an example of this requirement. Opus, itself, can see the obvious benefits of having this manual implemented as a ICT toolkit to streamline all the associated QA tasks.

7   Case studies

7.1   Case study I.: Vocational Educational school (IVET) – Opus Learning

How is your Q/A evaluated internally? What documents are used?

Opus has a fully developed Quality Manual that complies with the needs of the SQA in respect of reporting, student and centre management, and qualifications development. This is a paper-based manual with all required forms for internal and external reporting.

Opus uses this manual, in conjunction with the relevant SQA guidelines to guide their QA. Evaluation is a duty of the executive of the company (Opus is a private company) with delegation to particular boards and committees, e.g. the Academic Board.

Do you have an official Quality Assurance Manual? If so, what reference documentation is it based on or aligned to?

Opus has a fully developed QA Manual, based on and aligned with the requirements of the national qualifications authority.   It covers all aspects of the management of a centre, and the full requirements of the management of a student through the full academic cycle.

Opus had all the necessary experience internally to develop its quality procedures, in conjunction with interpretation of the requirements of the governing authority.

Internally the responsibility for the completeness, update and applicability of the manual lies with the CEO with back-up from the chair of the Academic Board.

Is the planning of lessons and the evaluation of results monitored?

Opus is a wholly online college with no lessons as such. However Opus develops and delivers all required content online to students studying for its SQA qualifications. This content is very deliberately designed and developed to be fit for purpose. Its use is constantly monitored through student feedback.

All student assessments must be pre-verified by the governing body, the SQA, before being offered to student candidates. All submissions are marked by an approved assessor and subsequently checked by an approved internal verifier. The audit trail left may be monitored by an SQA external verifier at any point.

Are there standards documents in place to benchmark teachers' effectiveness?

Opus only has tutors – students self-learn online. However all documentation is available to students to offer feedback, evaluation and to make complaints if necessary. This is backed up by all necessary remedial processes.

What other activities are evaluated at specific times during the school year?

The key activities for Opus centre on assessments, how these are processed, and how results are communicated to both the student and the governing authority. These are reviewed at each Academic Board meeting.

Are there key processes and end-point indicators in place to ensure goals are being met?

No key processes or indicators, but there is a detailed list of criteria and the evidence required to show compliance with the governing authority, who may carry out inspections.

What methods to evaluate the results of the different activities were used in the survey.

Opus uses two main instruments: student questionnaires and self-monitoring forms/catalogues.

Do you have an online tool to measure quality assurance?

No, but that is one of Opus's goals

What kind of quality assurance tools and methods were used?

Predominantly a matrix of criteria

Was a systematic SWOT analysis made?

No

Has your school got a website?

Yes, http://www.opuslearning.com

Do you have an online Forum for teachers at your school

No

Do you have a Forum for students, parents, employers

Yes, in the form of social (forum based) courses

Do you keep in contact with former pupils and follow their career progress

No

Do you liaise with other schools on Q/A experience

Not at the moment, as we tend to be seen as competition. However it is a goal.

Feedback, development

The governing authority, the SQA, openly publishes QA results. Their reviews identify performance against each of the criteria employed.

7.2   Case study II. : VET provider (CVET) – a Scottish FE College

How is your Q/A evaluated internally? What documents are used?

Quality enhancement is developed through self-evaluation and a number of benchmarking and staff development activities, underpinned by significant staff training on all campuses.

The Board of Management of the College recognises that primary responsibility for quality provision rests with colleges themselves. As the College governing body, the Board take a strategic overview of quality assurance and enhancement to be assured that appropriate mechanisms are in place and are being applied rigorously and effectively by consistently considering quality matters at Board level.

 Do you have an offical Quality Assurance Manual? If so, what reference documentation is it based on or aligned to?

The college has a quality manual aligned with the guidelines produced by the SQA.

Is the planning of lessons and the evaluation of results monitored?

Yes, though not within the institution-led review of quality – which is more about the management of the college. However the college has developed well established and robust arrangements for learners to evaluate and enhance their experience. *'Listening to learners'* focus groups have resulted in learners making a greater contribution to the evaluation of their learning experience. There are also regular training sessions for all class representatives, which has raised the profile of the role and resulted in positive engagement across all teaching areas. Outcomes of learner engagement at curriculum level have included improvements to scheduling of classes and assessments, introduction of placement opportunities, project based work and a variety of learner led social enterprise, fund raising and volunteering events.

Learner Engagement staff work closely with the elected student association and the student president to promote learner engagement across the colleges, and the college has a mechanism for

regular meetings with senior staff to ensure communication flow and to find solutions for any issues raised by students.

Are there standards documents in place to benchmark teachers' effectiveness?

The college carries out robust self-evaluation of all teaching areas using existing documented processes, but revised self-evaluation procedures are included as part of the Quality and Planning procedures. All staff also undergo the recommended CPD in *Curriculum for Excellence* and learning and teaching activities for lecturing staff, as well as a management development programme for academic and support managers. CPD comprises self-reflection and College/Faculty/Unit/Section-directed activity.

What other activities are evaluated at specific times during the school year?

Quality enhancement was developed through self-evaluation and a number of benchmarking and staff development activities, underpinned by significant staff training on all campuses. The role of the Teaching Fellows played a significant part in mentoring and supporting staff undertaking teaching qualifications, as well as participating in leading professional discussion, both in preparation for external review and as part of self-evaluation. A Forum for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (FELT) group, involving learners and teaching staff from Faculties plus representatives from those Support Sections, was formed to report on service delivery, excellence in learning and teaching, and promoting learner involvement in the enhancement of learning and teaching. This group reported to the Board of Management.

Additionally all course teams systematically evaluated performance indicators and a range of additional measures to support learner success. This included early phase course reviews, learner focus groups, improved induction activities, an enhanced learner services team and learner teambuilding events.

Are there key process and end-point indicators in place to ensure goals are being met?

The Board of Management of the college and the Learning and Teaching Committee regularly monitor *Performance Indicator* data for early retention, overall retention and outcome, both over time and in relation to national results. These are compared against the published comparative figures for Scotland and colleges in other regions. Key messages from these figures are discussed, extracted and incorporated into the college Quality Enhancement and Learning and Teaching action plans.

In addition, the revised Scottish Funding Council procedure for publication performance indicator data has colleges publish these figures on their own websites in a uniform format supplied by SFC.

The college carries out robust self- evaluation of all teaching areas using existing processes. Discussions on the revision of self-evaluation procedures for the college takes place through Quality and Planning workshops. Interim measures are agreed to help develop self evaluation for the college as a whole, and a set of college and draft strategic aims and principles have been produced.

What methods to evaluate the results of the different activities were used in the survey.

Quality assurance across the college campuses is primarily driven by a comprehensive programme of internal verification, external audit, external verification and significant user feedback. Lists of Internal Verifiers for each subject area are regularly monitored and

updated, and sampling is used effectively to ensure standards are agreed and maintained. Internal verification (IV) activity is also subject to annual internal audit by qualified staff.

Do you have an online tool to measure quality assurance?

No

What kind of quality assurance tools and methods were used?

General user feedback on services and facilities is gathered through annual surveys supplemented by additional questionnaires and focus groups where more detailed qualitative feedback is helpful. Survey results are considered by all unit teams and areas for improvement identified.

Quality enhancement is also pursued through the systematic collection, recording and analysis of complaints to ascertain areas for improvement and lessons learned, and collected according to existing procedures and processes. Data was reviewed and reorganised into a set of categories to enable comparison across the three college campuses.

The college also adopts the model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

Was a systematic SWOT analysis made?

No.

Has your school got a website?

Yes

Do you have an online Forum for teachers at your school?

Yes, and its use is encouraged.

Do you have a Forum for students, parents, employers?

Yes, and again encouraged

Do you keep in contact with former pupils and follow their career progress

Alumni are not actively tracked

Do you liaise with other schools on Q/A experience

Yes, experiences are shared.

Feedback, development

The governing authority, the SQA, openly publishes QA results. Their reviews identify performance against each of the criteria employed. Internal reviews are published as college reports.

8   Bibliography

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9   OpenQAsS Project Basics

Programme: Erasmus+, Strategic Partnership, Vocational Education and Training

Participating countries: Hungary, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, Ireland

Project duration: September 2014 – August 2017

Project ID: 2014-1-HU01-KA242-002356

Project website: http://openqass.itstudy.hu/en

Coordinator: iTStudy Hungary Ltd.

Contact: Mária Hartyányi. Email: maria.hartyanyi@itstudy.hu

The OpenQAsS project vision is to utilise the potential of today's networking technology in all areas of the implementation of the EQAVET Reference Framework principles, and so make the resulting tools part of the daily practice of institutional Quality Assurance in our VET schools.

Target groups

- Teachers and headmasters of VET schools; managers and trainers of VET provider companies;
- VET schools and VET providers;
- Researchers working in the field of the vocational education;
- Software developers joining the OpenQAsS.org community.

Objectives

- To improve the culture of quality assurance by involvement of VET teachers and trainers into online consultation in the partner countries;
- To develop Open Source Software toolkit (Open QAsS) to promote and facilitate QA management in VET schools and adult educational VET providers;
- To develop a certificate – Institutional Quality Manager (IQAM) – for VET teachers and trainers who take responsibility for quality management tasks in institutions.

Partners

iTStudy Hungary Educational and Research Centre for ICT - Hungary

Universidad de Alcala - Spain

AICA, Associazione Italiana per l'Informatica e il Calcolo Automatico - Italy

CAPDM Ltd. - United-Kingdom

SZÁMALK Szalézi Vocational High School - Hungary

National Research Council Institute - Italy

TREBAG Ltd. - Hungary

ICS-SKILLS Certification Body Of The Irish Computer Society - Ireland