Facilitating credit-based links in higher education: Guidelines to support colleges and higher education institutions

Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access
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Introduction

In 2002, the Scottish Advisory Committee for Credit and Access (SACCA), a joint committee of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and Universities Scotland, and the Association of Scottish Colleges (ASC) established a joint Working Group on supporting credit links at the college-higher education institution (HEI) interface. The Working Group included members from colleges and HEIs, along with student representation and representation from SACCA, ASC, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Scottish and Qualifications Authority (see appendix 1).

These Guidelines, developed by the Working Group, have been designed to support colleges and HEIs in facilitating relevant credit-based links and enabling learners to make informed choices about opportunities to transfer credit. They have been developed by working with colleagues from both sectors and are offered as a current consensus on issues to be addressed in facilitating credit-based links. They are not intended to be prescriptive and practice will no doubt evolve with experience of operating credit-based links.

These Guidelines focus on links between Higher National Qualifications (HNQs) and degrees, and are relevant to the range of credit transfer and progression routes currently available to learners as they move between colleges and HEIs, in either direction. The routes covered range from those that have been individually negotiated by the learner through to routes arranged through specific articulation agreements between named institutions. These Guidelines may also be helpful when considering transition routes within colleges or HEIs although they have not been specifically developed for that purpose.

Some institutions have programmes that are designed to accept credit from a wide variety of sources. In these programmes a credit transfer decision will not necessarily be based on a specific articulation agreement between institutions. The receiving programme may however ask for specific credit point and level requirements.

If programmes are articulated through a specific articulation agreement this means that credit transfer arrangements have been agreed between named institutions and learners’ credit will be transferred according to these arrangements. It can also mean that the programmes have been designed to provide continuity of learning through joint working on programme design, learning, teaching and assessment arrangements, student support and through the provision of information to learners.

HNQs and degrees are qualifications in their own right, but it is important that providers of these qualifications take account of the different needs and learning experiences of the range of learners who undertake them. Many learners who complete an HNQ want to enter the workforce immediately. Some, however, choose to continue their studies in higher education, either immediately or after a gap of time, either full-time or part-time.
Colleges and HEIs have worked together for a number of years to facilitate such credit-based links and enable learners to make informed choices. These Guidelines are intended to help institutions to build on their commitment to widening access and participation and providing greater flexibility of learning opportunities. They will support institutions as they develop the consistency of their approach across programmes and enhance their current good practice.

How have the Guidelines been developed?

The Guidelines have been produced through an extensive process of discussion and consultation with colleges and HEIs in Scotland. The Working Group worked in partnership with the sectors and the four regional access forums in Scotland to develop the Guidelines. The regional forums cover the four geographical areas of Scotland: the South East; the West; the North; and Fife and Tayside, and were established through the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) in August 1999 to help widen participation in higher education. By 2001 the regional forums had developed to include colleges working as partners alongside the HEIs to help widen participation in their regional area.

The Working Group has also maintained links with the SHEFC and Scottish Further Education Funding Council-funded SACCA suite of projects on 'Mapping, Tracking and Bridging' (the MTB Project) in respect of progression and credit transfer between HNQs and degrees. The MTB Project has produced a national map of HNQ to degree links along with 'bridging toolkits' and examples of practice to support institutions and learners in building and using links between HNQs and degree programmes. Full details of these toolkits, and the national map of HNQ-degree routes are available at www.scqf.org.uk/college2uni

A basic principle underlying the development of the Guidelines is that they should be informed by the needs of learners. Learners considering transfer in either direction between colleges and HEIs need information about:

- the range of learning and potential employment opportunities available;
- the structure and content of programmes;
- entry and progress requirements and progression routes;
- the transition support they can expect.

Discussions about the information needs of learners along with debates about the flexibility of programme structure, learning and teaching opportunities and issues related to guidance and support all contributed to the development of the Guidelines. The Working Group took account of current good practice in colleges and HEIs and tried to develop a consensus on what can be done to encourage a more consistent approach and enhance current good practice when working with learners at the college-HEI interface.
Who are the Guidelines for?

The Guidelines have been developed to assist institutions as they work on college-HEI interface developments and enhance mechanisms to enable learners to make informed choices about the opportunities available. They are designed for staff working at both institutional and programme level and will also be of value to student associations.

How can the Guidelines be used?

Together, the outcomes of the MTB Project and these Guidelines are intended to provide a useful resource to support institutions and learners in building and using HNW to degree routes.

The Guidelines make use of the national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities that has been developed through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Along with other documentation such as the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education produced by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, it is hoped that the Guidelines will inform institutional policy and practice and can be used to:

- support the provision of information on programmes which is helpful for learners, staff and employers;
- develop college and HEI policy on interface issues;
- inform other relevant institutional policies such as programme design, teaching, learning and assessment, and student support and guidance;
- support programme design teams as they work on issues of access, progression and learning demand;
- assist work on learner guidance and support at the college-HEI interface; and,
- provide opportunities for staff development, both within and between sectors.

The context

The development of the Guidelines is set in a context of a number of sector-wide developments that emphasise the importance of widening access and participation and providing greater flexibility of learning opportunities.

The Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee Report (2002) and the Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland (2003) both emphasised wider participation and flexibility in the provision of learning opportunities. The Higher Education Review (2003) identified speeding the rate at which flexible and innovative provision is developed as one of the key challenges. It acknowledged that this would require, among other things, greater cooperation and collaboration across and between institutions and sectors, more and greater transparency in routes and entry and exit points for learners, and better information to support learner choice.
By 2004-05, most of the main Scottish qualifications will be within the SCQF. They will have been credited and levelled, laying the foundation for Scotland to have a single, unified and integrated framework and encompassing a wide range of education and training provision. The SCQF has helped to develop a better understanding of the full range of qualifications in Scotland, their purposes and how they relate to one another. It also provides a number of principles and guidelines on credit and credit transfer and these are currently being developed into a set of SCQF guidelines to support the transfer of credit between programmes across the full range of education and training.

In addition the SCQF provides a framework for:

- integrating learning across all of the education and training sectors by building clearer links and bridges between programmes of learning;
- maximising opportunities for credit transfer by developing clear routes for progression with no 'dead ends';
- providing flexibility by creating programmes with multiple entry and exit points;
- assisting learners to plan their learning and progress by harmonising approaches to personal development planning and records of achievement.

In 2002, the development partners for the SCQF published a National Plan for Implementation of the Framework and one part of the plan related to developing clear routes for progression and credit transfer. Within this area, a clear framework of principles, guidelines and arrangements is being developed to support the transfer of credit across the interface of the college and HEI sectors. These Guidelines form part of that framework.
The Guidelines

1 Institutional policy

The Guidelines are relevant to the range of credit transfer and progression routes currently available to learners as they move between colleges and HEIs, in either direction. The routes covered in the Guidelines range from those that have been individually negotiated by the learner through to routes that are arranged through specific articulation agreements between named institutions. They are based on the needs of learners who are making a transfer in both qualification and sector.

This section of the Guidelines is designed to help institutions enhance existing practice and develop the consistency of their approach through the development of their current institutional policy. The policy will reflect the institution's commitment to widening participation and be embedded in more general strategic policy and planning arrangements in this area.

Guideline 1.1

Colleges and HEIs have, and are developing, arrangements for facilitating credit-based links and enabling learners to make informed choices about opportunities to transfer credit between HNQs and degrees. As these arrangements develop they should be set within a policy that is informed by the overall strategy of the institution on widening participation.

Colleges and HEIs have and are developing institutional policies and arrangements that enable and support credit-based links. The policy should include details of how information and support are made available to learners in order that they can make informed choices about credit transfer.

Guideline 1.2

The institutional policy should address approaches to facilitating credit-based links between the sectors including details of the approach to:

- information about programmes leading to qualifications;
- credit transfer between HNQs and degrees;
- programme design;
- learning, teaching and assessment;
- student support;
- specific articulation agreements.
The remaining sections of the Guidelines consider these areas in more detail and will be particularly useful for institutions that are in the early stages of developing a policy.

**Guideline 1.3**

The institutional policy should take account of the needs of the individual learner when choosing and undertaking a programme. These needs include the need for information about a range of areas such as funding, application procedures, programme content and bridging activities.

Learners find it helpful if easily accessible sources of information are readily available. Institutions will have some established sources of information for learners, including those provided through student associations. They need information about funding, application procedures and the timing of applications; specific credit requirements; programme content; core and option choice; learning, teaching and assessment approaches; bridging activities; induction and the availability of academic and personal support around the time of transfer.

Some institutions for example use a 'one door entry' approach for credit transfer, supplying learners with general information about transferring credit into the institution's programmes and providing particular information about arrangements in each of the subject areas in the institution.

**Guideline 1.4**

The institutional policy should include the institution's approach to specific articulation agreements including the principles it uses to plan and develop, resource, promote and sustain, evaluate and review particular arrangements.

Specific articulation agreements should meet a set of principles developed by the institution and used consistently in its partner arrangements. These principles may already be embedded in the normal quality enhancement processes of the institution. See also section 7.

**Guideline 1.5**

The institutional policy should inform and be informed by other relevant institutional policies.

Other relevant policies include those in areas such as:
- managing information (including mapping and tracking and clarity on what is being tracked and by whom);
- general entry and progression requirements including accreditation of prior learning;
learning, teaching and assessment;
student support;
staff development;
equity and diversity and related policies.

2 Information about programmes leading to qualifications

Learners considering transfer in either direction between colleges and HEIs need easy access to information about the range of opportunities available. They need information about the structure and content of programmes, their entry and progress requirements and details of the range of possible progression routes. This section of the Guidelines is designed to help the sectors as they develop mechanisms to provide the information for learners. A later section looks at supporting learners as they make informed choices about the opportunities.

Guideline 2.1

Colleges and HEIs should develop a brief programme outline/specification for each of their HNQ and degree programmes or clusters of programmes. The outline would be accessible to learners, Careers Scotland and other guidance agencies, employers and the public in general. Each outline should include clear links to more detailed information about programme content.

A national map of up to date, accessible and specific information about the range of opportunities for credit transfer between HNQs and degrees has been published on the MTB Project web site. In time, the programme outlines provided by institutions will be included on the national database www.scqf.org.uk/college2uni.

Guideline 2.2

When a new programme is developed, colleges and HEIs should indicate, where possible, the credit transfer opportunities that have been built into the programme design. They should describe the nature of these opportunities and any specific articulation arrangements that have been agreed and should make this information available on the national database.

It is important that as new programmes are developed, designers should make themselves aware of the range of related programmes offered in colleges and HEIs. A brief outline of this information will be accessible through the national database and will support institutions and awarding bodies as they set a new programme, in the context of other available programmes and of overall sector development in their subject area.
Guideline 2.3

Colleges should provide clear, accurate and accessible information about the range of possible progression routes for learners, including opportunities for entry into, and credit transfer within, degrees. This should be provided, where possible, in pre-entry information, on entry to the HNQ programme and at relevant progression points during the HNQ.

It is helpful for learners if they have information about the range of possible progression routes available to them in pre-entry information, on entry to HNQ programmes and at relevant progression points. It is also useful, at this stage, to have available information about the timing and sequencing of application procedures. Information about the implications of particular progression route decisions such as changes in funding and childcare support, the importance of particular core and option choices and the availability of bridging activities and other specific transition support arrangements is also useful as this may impact on career planning.

Information should link to that provided by Careers Scotland and other guidance agencies.

Guideline 2.4

HEIs should provide clear, accurate and accessible information for learners entering programmes leading to both ordinary and honours degrees about the range of possible progression routes, including information about opportunities to transfer credit into HNQ programmes in colleges from programmes in HEIs. This should, where possible, be provided in pre-entry information and be available at appropriate points within degree programme information.

It is helpful for learners if they have up to date information about the range of possible progression routes available to them on entry to, and during programmes leading to, degrees. Including information about opportunities to transfer credit into HNQ programmes in colleges can be helpful for learners as can details of how to access information about related changes in funding and other support.

Information should link to that provided by Careers Scotland and other guidance agencies.

Guideline 2.5

Colleges and HEIs should make available to existing learners and those who are applying for entry, information about specific articulation agreements between their institutions and other named colleges and HEIs. This information should include the currency of the specific articulation agreement and details of the credit transfer arrangements.
The provision of up to date information about specific articulation agreements can help learners as they make decisions about possible progression routes. In particular, any agreement that allows automatic entry into, or specific credit point allocations within, programmes is helpful to learners.

**Guideline 2.6**

Colleges and HEIs should make available to existing learners and those who are applying for entry, information about the bridging activities that they use to support learners when making the transition between a college and an HEI.

Learners need information about:

- the benefits and costs of undertaking the bridging activities;
- the content of the bridging activities;
- who is offering the bridging activity (a college or an HEI, either individually or jointly, or another provider);
- where and how often the bridging activities are offered;
- whether the bridging activities are available to all learners considering a transfer between a college and an HEI or whether the activities are particular to a specific articulation agreement;
- how the bridging activities can be accessed;
- the status of the bridging activities (whether the bridging activities are a requirement, are assessed, credit-rated, core or optional, linked to an ongoing support arrangement).

**Guideline 2.7**

The information generated through working with this section of the Guidelines should be provided in a form which is accessible to Careers Scotland, learndirect scotland, the Students Award Agency for Scotland and any other relevant national, regional and local organisations that offer information and advice to learners.

It is helpful if prospectus or web site information relating to credit transfer is linked reciprocally to other relevant sites and databases, including those associated with student funding and the provision of career planning support, advice and information.

### 3 Credit transfer between HNQs and degrees

Enabling learners to make smoother transitions between colleges and HEIs involves simplifying and clarifying the arrangements for credit transfer. The following guidelines offer support to colleges and HEIs as they develop their current approaches to credit transfer between HNQs and Degrees.
Guideline 3.1

When defining entry and progress requirements, colleges and HEIs should take account of the variety of possible sector routes that learners may have taken before applying for admission to the programmes leading to a qualification.

As the entry and progress requirements for programmes are decided, it is important to consider the range of ways in which learners may have accumulated credit points. Providers of awards should clearly set out their specific credit point requirements.

For example, learners may want to have relevant credit points from a level 8 programme considered for entry to a degree programme at level 9 or as part of the credit point requirement for a particular level 8 or level 9 qualification. They may want to have credit points from a level 7 qualification considered for entry to an HNQ or degree programme at level 8 or as part of the credit point requirement for a particular level 7 or level 8 qualification.

It is important for programme designers to provide a clear rationale for the particular credit point requirements they set for entry to and progress within programmes leading to qualifications.

Guideline 3.2

Colleges and HEIs should include reference to SCQF credit points and levels of learning when stating their entry and progression requirements. Any specific credit point, level and currency of learning requirements should also be stated.

Learners need explicit and accessible information about entry and progress requirements including any requirement in HNQ to degree transfer for particular optional units or sets of units. They also need to know whether the requirements stated provide a guaranteed place on a programme or whether they only provide an opportunity to undertake a procedure that may, for example, involve additional specific credit point requirements, particular grades, or an interview process for selection.

It is helpful for learners if entry and progress requirements of programmes in institutions use a common language to describe these requirements. The use of SCQF credit points and levels of learning to describe the requirements adopts a language that is common to both colleges and HEIs.

Guideline 3.3

In developing credit transfer arrangements between HNQs and degrees, colleges and HEIs should consider giving recognition to other relevant prior learning, both formal and experiential, within each programme leading to a qualification. Entry and progress requirements should include reference to the opportunities provided to accredit prior learning.
It is important that institutions provide information for learners through their entry and progress requirements that make clear the proportion of prior learning, both formal and experiential, that they will accept within their programmes.

**Guideline 3.4**

Colleges and HEIs should have in place appropriate training for staff involved in registry and admissions about the credit and level requirements for entry to, and progress within, programmes leading to qualifications and about other issues related to the understanding of credit transfer.

As more credit links are built between different types of qualification and multiple progression routes emerge, decisions about entry to, and progress within, programmes become more complex. Staff involved in registry and admissions in colleges and HEIs may need additional training to develop their understanding of the SCQF language of credit points and levels as it is applied to credit transfer decisions.

### 4 Programme design

Programme design will be influenced by a number of factors including learner needs, design principles for HNQs, relevant subject benchmark statements for degree programmes, and professional body and other standard setting body requirements. It will also be influenced by the need to develop innovative and flexible solutions to meet developing demand.

**Guideline 4.1**

When the rationale, aims and learning outcomes, and curriculum of an HNQ programme are being developed, the provision of learning opportunities that prepare learners for potential progression to a degree programme should be considered, as well as opportunities that prepare learners to meet immediate employment needs.

This could be achieved through design characteristics such as:

- flexibility of delivery (such as part/full-time) to meet learner need;
- offering multiple entry and exit points;
- providing a core-option balance which supports flexibility and credit transfer;
- offering particular subject-based unit choices to support continuity and transfer potential;
- including an optional bridging unit to prepare learners for a possible transfer;
- providing core skill development opportunities through particular unit choice;
- developing the potential of articulation.
Guideline 4.2

When the rationale, aims and learning outcomes, and curriculum of an ordinary or honours degree are being developed, consideration should be given to the requirements of the range of learners who may undertake the programmes leading to the degree.

This could be achieved through design characteristics such as:

- flexibility of delivery (such as part/full-time) to meet learner need;
- offering multiple entry and exit points;
- providing a core-option balance which supports flexibility and credit transfer;
- offering particular subject-based module choices to support continuity for learners transferring from another sector;
- including optional bridging modules or access to bridging activities;
- providing core skill development opportunities through particular module choice;
- developing the potential of articulation.

5 Learning, teaching and assessment

When learners transfer between a college and an HEI their learning environment changes. Central to the factors which influence the experience that learners have in a particular learning environment are the learning opportunities provided for them and the assessment practice that they meet. This section of the Guidelines considers how colleges and HEIs can support learners as they make a change in both qualification and sector.

Guideline 5.1

Learning, teaching and assessment practice in colleges and HEIs should, as far as possible, take account of the previous learning experiences of learners and the practice in programmes to which learners might progress. Bridging activities, induction arrangement and ongoing learner support can be used to help learners with a change of practice (see the section on student support for further details).

As new HNQ and degree programmes are developed and delivered it is important to take account of the range of learning experiences, including experiences such as e-learning, that learners bring to programmes and their resulting expectations of a learning environment. Although learning, teaching and assessment approaches are developed to meet the learning outcomes of a programme, it is helpful if they can also take account of past learning environments and possible future learning environments in which learners might be asked to learn.
Guideline 5.2

Discontinuity in assessment practice between HNQ programmes and degree programmes can be particularly difficult for learners. Colleges and HEIs should take account of potential assessment discontinuity particularly at the time of transfer and support learners accordingly.

Learners, for example, may be unfamiliar with the use of examinations for assessing their learning. They can be supported around the time of transfer through the provision of particular activities including bridging activities, optional units or modules and ongoing student and staff mentoring arrangements. These support arrangements may be developed as part of a specific articulation agreement or may be more generally available within an institution.

Guideline 5.3

When working towards specific articulation, colleges and HEIs should work together to develop learning, teaching and assessment approaches as part of new HNQ and degree programme design.

It is easier for learners transferring between colleges and HEIs if the approaches to learning, teaching and assessment can provide continuity although it is not always possible or preferable for this to be the case. Learners may be used to very directed learning opportunities and may, for example, find it difficult to deal with too much learner autonomy immediately after transfer. Where approaches are very different, it is helpful if learners are supported, particularly in the early stages after transfer, using, for example, student mentors. Shared staff development and shared use of staff before, during and after transfer can also be helpful.

Guideline 5.4

As new articulated arrangements between HNQ and degree programmes are developed, colleges and HEIs should investigate mechanisms for sharing staff resources.

Shared teaching, staff exchanges and staff shadowing have all been used to develop staff understanding of the learning, teaching and assessment issues related to learner transfer between institutions and as a means of supporting learners during the transfer process.
**Guideline 5.5**

As new articulated programmes are developed, colleges and HEIs should consider the potential of providing mutual access arrangements for staff and students to learning resources such as information and communications technology (ICT), libraries and other specialist accommodation.

There are a variety of ways in which mutual access can be arranged. These include associate student status and affiliation schemes. It is also important to consider issues such as student demand, security and data protection when developing mutual access arrangements.

**6 Student support**

As colleges and HEIs develop their credit-based links and enable learners to make informed choices about opportunities to transfer credit, the support offered to learners is an important aspect of the process. Developing the types of support and the ways in which that support is offered are central to facilitating effective transfer decisions and arrangements. Learners themselves are well placed to inform the process and may, as student mentors, be used as one of the sources of support.

**Guideline 6.1**

When developing approaches to student support, colleges and HEIs should encourage the involvement of students or former students, where appropriate, at all stages of the development process and in the review and enhancement of existing support arrangements.

Learners can offer important insights into the working of student support systems and their involvement will help to develop and enhance any arrangements made. Student associations or other representative groups provide a positive resource in this area.

**Guideline 6.2**

Colleges and HEIs should provide student support mechanisms that are appropriate and relevant for all of their students, including those with particular learning needs, irrespective of mode of study, campus location, or whether the students are full or part-time.

It is important that appropriate and relevant student support facilities are provided to meet the needs of all students transferring between a college and an HEI.
Guideline 6.3

When developing approaches to student support, colleges and HEIs should consider the needs of learners who are making a transition between the college and HEI sectors and how these needs are met before, during and after transfer. Colleges and HEIs need to make decisions about who can provide this advice and support.

Learners need support and advice on:

- personal issues such as funding, childcare and other aspects of work/life balance;
- programme issues such as making choices, approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, specific learning needs, access to staff and other resources;
- issues related to the change of culture and expectation.

In a specific articulation agreement, student support arrangements will most likely have been built into the agreement. The same support will not necessarily be available for other learners transferring between the sectors out-with a specific agreement. Institutions need to identify these learners and decide whether their existing support arrangements are sufficient for these learners or whether additional support should be provided. They should also decide who is responsible for providing any additional support.

Guideline 6.4

It is helpful if open day and induction arrangements take account of the nature of the range of learners that the programmes attract.

HNQ and degree open day and induction arrangements cater for full-time learners entering a programme at level 7. These arrangements may be centrally organised and/or programme-based. As more flexible progression routes develop, institutions may need to develop their approach to take account of part-time learners and learners who enter programmes at different levels, but have similar needs to those who enter at level 7. Open day and induction arrangements should be available for these learners.

Guideline 6.5

Colleges and HEIs should identify a clear locus of responsibility for personal development planning (PDP) for learners as they make the transfer between a college and an HEI.

As the expectation that all learners will participate in some form of PDP develops, it is important that learners who are transferring into a programme from another institution are able to benefit from continuity in the PDP process. The process can
be particularly helpful for learners making a transition from one type of learning experience to another. As PDP approaches are developed by institutions account should be taken of the need to maintain continuity in the process for all of the learners within a programme.

**Guideline 6.6**

**Colleges and HEIs should consider the development of bridging activities to support learners transferring between colleges and HEIs. Bridging activities can occur before, during and after transfer.**

Bridging activities can be particular to a specific articulation agreement between named institutions or can be open to a wide range of participants from different institutions.

Bridging activities can take many forms depending on the type of support they are providing. Some learners may need specific subject-based support, others may need skills-based support or opportunities to consider choices through open days where staff from both sectors are available for consultation. More specific subject and skills-based support can be provided through credit-rated units in HNQ or degree programmes that are core or optional in particular programmes. Learners also need opportunities to meet other learners and members of the academic staff in the institution to which they are transferring.

Bridging activities can be individually or jointly developed and delivered or can be developed and delivered by another provider on behalf of a number of institutions.

Student mentors, buddies or student shadowing can be used in bridging activities.

**Guideline 6.7**

**When specific articulation arrangements are being developed, colleges and HEIs should work together as they develop their student support services for learners transferring between colleges and HEIs.**

Support services working together to help learners as they transfer between colleges and HEIs involves working together within and between institutions. Joint working within each institution between all of the student support functions is important. Keeping an open dialogue and providing opportunities to share practice between institutions in each of the student support functions is also an important aspect of developing the service.
Guideline 6.8

When articulation arrangements are being developed colleges and HEIs should support student associations to work together to develop continuity in the student support services they offer to learners transferring between colleges and HEIs.

Although student associations are at different stages of development in the different sectors, they should, where possible, be encouraged and supported to work together to build on each other’s strengths as they develop their provision for student support.

7 Specific articulation agreements

An institutional policy to facilitate credit-based links between colleges and HEIs will reflect the institution's commitment to widening participation and be embedded in more general strategic policy and planning arrangements in that area. The institutional policy to facilitate credit links (see section 1) will include details of the institution’s approach to specific articulation agreements.

Specific articulation agreements are developed between named colleges and named HEIs. If a specific articulation agreement has been developed this means that specific credit transfer arrangements have been agreed, normally at the programme level.

At the programme level, an agreement can also mean that programmes have been specifically designed to provide and sustain continuity of learning through the HEI and College working together on programme design, learning teaching and assessment arrangements, student support and through the provision of information to learners.

Colleges and HEIs should develop a set of principles that can be used as they plan and develop, resource, promote and sustain, evaluate and review specific articulation agreements. These principles will guide the process of development, support and sustain the programmes within the agreement during delivery and create the mechanisms required to monitor and review the agreements according to the procedures of the institutions involved. These principles may already be embedded in the normal quality enhancement processes of the institution.

Guideline 7.1

When colleges and HEIs want to develop opportunities for credit transfer in new and existing programmes, administrative and programme staff should be encouraged to work together across the sectors and with the Scottish Qualifications Authority in order to build on existing strengths and facilitate the opportunities.
Some specific articulation agreements do not involve joint programme design, but where they do, developing and sustaining collaborative working across sector boundaries takes time and effort and needs to be planned into development and enhancement processes. Joint working on particular programmes is particularly useful at levels 7 and 8.

**Guideline 7.2**

*When developing a specific articulation agreement colleges and HEIs should work together to make decisions about how the agreement will be planned and developed, resourced, promoted and sustained, evaluated and reviewed and about how responsibility for each agreement will be shared.*

Decisions should involve all relevant stakeholders and include decisions about the scope of the agreement including:

- planning and development of the agreement and the programme(s) within it;
- duration of the agreement and the process for ending the agreement;
- role of the person(s) taking overall responsibility for the agreement;
- role of the person(s) within each institution responsible for the day-to-day management of the agreement and the programme(s) within it and for liaising with support staff and other organisations;
- arrangements to develop promotional information and promote the programme(s);
- allocation and use of resources for bridging activities and other additionality;
- student support arrangements;
- staff development activities and ongoing support that will be provided;
- arrangements for the ongoing delivery of the programme(s) in the agreement;
- monitoring, evaluation and review of the agreement and the programme(s) within it, including the use of information on the student experience.

**Guideline 7.3**

The specific articulation agreement should include details of the arrangements to plan and develop the agreement and the programme(s) within it, the duration of the agreement and the process for ending the agreement. The roles of the individual(s) who will take overall responsibility for the agreement and the roles of the individual(s) who will take responsibility for the management of the subsequent delivery should also be clearly specified.
Guideline 7.4

The specific articulation agreement should include details of mechanisms for the development of promotional information for, and joint promotions of, the agreement and the programme(s) within it to learners, to institutions' staff and to guidance agencies and schools.

It is important to develop the mechanisms by which promotional material is developed, if this is not already part of a wider institutional approach to marketing, and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff who promote the agreement. It is also important to consider how to inform the relevant individuals and groups if and when an agreement is ended.

Guideline 7.5

The specific articulation agreement should include details of the allocation of any additional resource made available for the agreement.

This could include:
- the resource required to promote the programme(s) and provide promotional information;
- the additional allocation of academic and support staff time for bridging activities for example;
- the allocation and use of learning resources such as ICT, library facilities and other specialist accommodation for learners within the range of programmes included in the agreement.

Guideline 7.6

The specific articulation agreement should include details of the arrangements for student support.

Learners need support before, during and after transfer between colleges and HEIs in either direction. Any particular support arrangements that are additional to those already in place in institutions need to be specified in the agreement and the locus of responsibility for the provision of these additional support arrangements clearly specified (see Section 6).

Guideline 7.7

The specific articulation agreement should contain information about the arrangements for individual and shared staff development activity in relation to the development and delivery of the programme(s) in the agreement and for the procedures used to monitor the activities.
Individual staff development through working or work shadowing in specific subject-based programmes in partner institutions has been a useful mechanism for staff development within some existing agreements. Arrangements for staff to meet and share understandings not just during the development of an agreement, but also during the delivery phase of the programmes within an agreement have been found to enhance staff learning.

Guideline 7.8

The specific articulation agreement, should contain links to details about the programme(s) within the agreement and their delivery.

This would normally mean links to detailed programme information about:

- the provision of information to learners and who is responsible for providing it;
- entry, progress and credit transfer arrangements;
- continuity of programme design between the institutions involved;
- learning teaching and assessment coherence around the time of transition;
- student support including programme responsibility for bridging activities and induction arrangements;
- programme staff development, individual and shared;
- the quality assurance and enhancement of the programme.

Guideline 7.9

The specific articulation agreement should contain details about the mechanisms that will be used for the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the agreement and the programme(s) within it, in accordance with the quality assurance and enhancement agendas of the colleges and HEIs involved. Monitoring, evaluation and review arrangements should include the use of the staff and student experience of the programmes within the agreement.

Arrangements for the monitoring, evaluation and review of specific articulation agreements will involve working within the parameters of the quality assurance and enhancement approaches used in and HEIs. Part of the process of developing an agreement will involve working out the optimum way to use these different approaches to best effect.
# Appendix 1

## SACCA/ASC College-HEI Working Group Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pamela Abbott</td>
<td>Glasgow Caledonian University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Bottomley</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Bradley</td>
<td>University of Stirling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete Cannell</td>
<td>Queen Margaret University College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Clark/Anne Mearns</td>
<td>Scottish Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Dundas (Chair)</td>
<td>National Access Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith George/Pete Cannell/Alison Crookston</td>
<td>The Open University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Harper</td>
<td>The Robert Gordon University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Harris</td>
<td>Cardonald College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Jakimciw/Ian Beech</td>
<td>Dumfries and Galloway College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Palfreyman</td>
<td>University of Abertay, Dundee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Petrie</td>
<td>Falkirk College of Further and Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Polglase</td>
<td>Association of Scottish Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane Rawlinson</td>
<td>Elmwood College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graeme Roberts/Kate Fowler/Morag Reid</td>
<td>University of Aberdeen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Walker</td>
<td>Scottish Agricultural College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie Ward</td>
<td>University of Stirling (student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David White</td>
<td>Dundee College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joan Menmuir, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, was the Development Officer for the Guidelines.
Appendix 2

A selection of relevant resources

Web sites

www.scqf.org.uk
The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) web site has details of current development work in SCQF and electronic copies of publications such as An Introduction to the SCQF (2001) and SCQF National Plan for Implementation of the Framework (2002). It also contains the sections of the SCQF Handbook including guidelines on credit rating and on credit transfer.

www.scqf.org.uk/college2uni
The web site contains details of the Mapping, Tracking, Bridging project including the national Map of HNQ to degree credit transfer opportunities, and the toolkits to support HEIs, colleges and learners in developing and using HNQ to degree routes.

www.qaa.ac.uk
The web site contains details of the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.

www.scottish.parliament.uk

www.scotland.gov.uk

www.sfc.ac.uk
The web site contains information about the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) funded development work in relation to widening access and participation and has links to all of the colleges and HEIs in Scotland that are funded by SHEFC and SFEFC.

www.sqa.org.uk
The Scottish Qualification Authority web site has details of HNQ developments, the new design principles for HNQs, and descriptors of HNQ programmes. The publications list contains useful follow up documents.
www.snap.ac.uk
The Scottish Network for Access and Participation provides a national forum for the dissemination and review of all aspects of access and participation work being undertaken across Scotland, with the assistance of SHEFC Wider Access Grants, by institutions and regional forums. This includes details of the work of the four regional access forums and provides links to their sites for details of current projects.

http://crll.gcal.ac.uk
The Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning is a joint initiative between Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Stirling. The web site contains relevant papers for background reading and also provides links to other relevant sites and sources.

Publications
MacLennan, A, Musselbrook, K, and Dundas, M (2000) Credit Transfer at the FE/HE Interface. SHEFC and SFEFC