

**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION  
EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Group of National Experts on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning**

**COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT FOR UNITED KINGDOM  
RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING**

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## RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

### List of RNFIL Country Background Reports

A series of 23 Country Background Reports were prepared by the countries participating in the EDPC activity on *Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning*. The series of reports is being made available on OLIS under the code EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1. The list of codes for individual country reports is detailed as follows:

- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART1 – Country Background Report – Australia
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART2 – Country Background Report – Belgium (Flemish Community)
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART3 – Country Background Report – Canada
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART4 – Country Background Report – Chile
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- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART17 – Country Background Report – United Kingdom
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART18 – Country Background Report – Austria
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART19 – Country Background Report – Czech Republic
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART20 – Country Background Report – Denmark
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART21 – Country Background Report – Greece
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART22 – Country Background Report – Iceland
- EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1/PART23 – Country Background Report – Malta

For the participating countries that decided to organise a review visit – either in the context of the Thematic Review (TR) strand of the activity or the Comparative Policy Analysis (CPA) one – an additional document is or will be made available analysing the country situation regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a follow up to the visit (see EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2). The different Country Background Reports and Country Notes will be provided in separate instalments in order to guarantee flexibility (for a given country the PART number will be the same).

The final International Synthesis Report which will be prepared by the Secretariat will draw on both the Country Background Reports and the Country Notes.



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



# OECD THEMATIC REVIEW ON RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

## Country Background Report United Kingdom

September 2007

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## UK COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT

### Component 1. Contextual factors

#### Component 1.1. Demographic change

*1.1.a) How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?*

The text in 1.1.b brings together the information for both 1.1.a and 1.1.b. To provide an introductory overview, Table 1 (below) gives the population distribution across the different political administrations of the UK.

**Table 1: Population distribution across the UK: estimate for mid 2005.**

| Country          | Population | Percentage of total UK population |
|------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|
| England          | 50,431,700 | 83.8                              |
| Northern Ireland | 1,724,400  | 2.9                               |
| Scotland         | 5,094,800  | 8.5                               |
| Wales            | 2,958,600  | 4.9                               |
| UK               | 60,209,500 |                                   |

Source: ONS. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=6>

*1.1.b) What are the consequences of demographic change (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training*

#### Ageing population

As Table 2 shows, the long term trend has been a decline in the under 16 age group and an increase in those aged 16-64 and those 65 and over, a process that is now intensifying and exerting a significant influence on the policy dimension.

**Table 2: Population (thousands) by main age groups, 1976-2004.**

| Year | Under 16 | 16- 64/59 | 65/60 and over |
|------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| 1976 | 13,797   | 32,757    | 9,663          |
| 1986 | 11,645   | 34,725    | 10,313         |
| 1996 | 12,018   | 35,498    | 10,649         |
| 2004 | 11,646   | 37,064    | 11,125         |

Source: ONS. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D9468.xls>

Table 3 gives greater detail for the period 2000 to 2005 and shows that between those dates the total UK population has remained relatively steady at close to 60 million. In 2005 there were 36.4 million people of working age, of whom 26.9 million were either employees or self-employed.

Table 3 also shows that between 2000 and 2005 there was an increase in the numbers of those aged 16-24 and of those aged over 40, but a decrease in the number of those aged between 25 and 39.

Table 3 Population of selected age groups (thousands), 2000-2005

|                | 2000   | 2003   | 2005   |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total          | 56,168 | 57,979 | 58,495 |
| Of which, age: |        |        |        |
| 16-19          | 2,956  | 3,006  | 3,146  |
| 20-24          | 3,534  | 3,651  | 3,808  |
| 25-29          | 4,265  | 3,753  | 3,662  |
| 30-39          | 9,531  | 9,184  | 8,948  |
| 40-49          | 7,851  | 8,113  | 8,479  |
| 50-59          | 7,181  | 7,508  | 7,577  |
| 60-64          | 2,864  | 2,898  | 3,037  |
| 65+            | 9,297  | 9,442  | 9,592  |

In 2001 there were 9.4 million people in the UK aged 65 and over; this is forecast to increase to 12.7 million by 2021. Meanwhile those aged 16-64, estimated at 38 million in 2001, are forecast to peak at over 40.5 million in 2021 before then declining.

### Policy on participation and skills

Government policy is to increase participation in post-compulsory education and training, to widen participation to include groups who have previously been under-represented (including lower socio-economic groups) and to raise the overall skill level of the UK workforce. This policy is driven partly by the need to improve social cohesion and more particularly by the need to make the UK workforce more competitive in the global economy. Demographic changes mean that the increase in overall skill levels must come from raising the skill levels of the existing workforce, as well from increasing the number of young people entering further and higher education.

There are, however, already strong signs that policy priorities in one direction (eg promoting employer-based training, trying to ensure that almost every one can achieve an ISCED level 2 qualification, reducing the number of 16-19 year olds not in education or training) have adverse impacts on other aspects of learning (more limited resources for non-qualification adult learning and for further education for adults).

### Demographics: Further Education and Higher Education participation rates.

Participation within Further Education for full-time students remained, overall, steady over the five years to 2004/5. Within this there were significant increases in the number of 16 and 17 year olds, whilst the number of 18 to 21 year olds remained steady and number of learners aged 22 and above declined. The change within the population of part-time students within FE was more profound; the number of learners aged 16 to 20 declined, the number of those aged 26 to 29 remained steady and there were significant increases in the numbers of students aged 21 to 25 and of those aged 30 or over. With changes to the

funding arrangements the pattern changed in 2005/6, with a sharp decline in learners over the age of 19 (see table below). Early statistics suggest a continuing decline in adult learners in 2006/7.

| Age           | 1995/96 | 2000/01 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 | 2005/06 | % change      |               |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------|
|               |         |         |         |         |         | 1995/6-2004/5 | 2004/5-2005/6 |
| below 19      | 648.4   | 625.0   | 699.2   | 729.3   | 744.0   | 12.5%         | 2.0%          |
| 19-59         | 2,218.3 | 2,503.3 |         |         |         |               |               |
| 60 and over   | 91.1    | 234.4   |         |         |         |               |               |
| unknown       | 94.5    | 39.8    |         |         |         |               |               |
| 19+ & unknown | 2403.9  | 2777.5  | 3,456.1 | 3,476.9 | 2884.8  | 44.6%         | -17.0%        |
| Total         | 3,052.2 | 3,402.4 | 4,155.3 | 4,206.2 | 3628.7  | 37.8%         | -13.7%        |

**Students on FE provision (both full and part time) funded by the Learning & Skills Council in FE colleges and external institutions, selected years 1995/96-2005/06<sup>1</sup>**

There has been a significant increase in the numbers of learners on first-degree (Bachelor) programmes. The numbers of those on full time programmes has increased over the five years prior to 2003/04 by 104,000 or 11%. Within that, the majority of the increases have occurred for those aged 18 to 24; the numbers for those aged 25 and above have remained steady. The numbers of those on part-time first-degree courses have increased considerably over the same period, by 108,000 or 113%. The increase in numbers occurs for all ages, but population projections for 18-20 year olds predict a sharp decline after a peak in 2011.

Government policy is to increase participation in higher education (including HE level sub-degree courses), so that by 2010 up to 50% of 18-30 year olds will have participated in higher education. This ‘HE Initial Participation Rate’ (HEIPR) was 39% in 1999-2000 and had risen to 43% by 2005-06.<sup>2</sup>

Demographics, ethnicity and job-related training rates

Data for participation in job-related training is derived from the Labour Force Survey and covers both employer-provided training and education and training in publicly funded institutions. The numbers of people, of working age, participating in job-related training in 2005 has remained steady compared to the figures for 2000. However, within that, there has been a slight increase in participation by those aged 50-64; in absolute numbers this is only an increase of 1,300, but in percentage terms it represents an increase of nearly 19%. It is difficult to know if that change is significant, and is an indication of the ageing population, or not. There are also slight decreases in the numbers of 16 to 24 year olds participating.

In terms of gender, females usually have higher rates of participation in job-related training. With regard to participation, by ethnicity, the percentage of non-whites receiving any training has decreased slightly between 2000 and 2005, though it remains similar to that for whites. It is difficult to make more detailed comparisons because classification of ethnic groupings has changed. However, for 2005 the data shows that both whites and non-whites are more likely to receive off-the-job training than on-the-job training. The one exception to this is for Chinese who are more likely to receive on-the-job training. They are the single ethnic group most likely to receive any training at 19.8%. This compares with 16.1% for whites.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Learning & Skills Council: ILR/SFR02, FURTHER EDUCATION AND WORK BASED LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – LEARNER NUMBERS IN ENGLAND, 2002/03, Tuesday 16 December 2003; ILR/SFR08, FURTHER EDUCATION, WORK BASED LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING – LEARNER NUMBERS IN ENGLAND 2004/05, 8 December 2005; ILR/SFR11, FURTHER EDUCATION, WORK BASED LEARNING AND ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING – LEARNER NUMBERS IN ENGLAND 2005/06, 12 December 2006

<sup>2</sup> Department for Education and Skills, PARTICIPATION RATES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ACADEMIC YEARS 1999/2000 - 2005/2006 (Provisional), 27 March 2007 [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000716/SFR10\\_2007v1.pdf](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000716/SFR10_2007v1.pdf)

Where training is less than a week in duration, participation increases with age. Where training is of a longer duration the pattern is mixed, though overall, participation tends to decline with age, except when training is defined as ongoing or as having no definite limit. There is also a positive correlation between increasing age and increasing participation in off-the-job training up to the age range of 30-39, beyond which participation declines with age.

Refs: Statistics of Education: Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom, 2000,2001,2002,2003,2004,2005. Tables 3.4, 3.8, 3.9, 3.17, 3.21, 3.22. (For population 2000 – table 6.1, for 2005 – table 5.1). Government Actuary's Department and ONS. National Population Projections 2004-based. ISBN 0-230-51666-1. Available at: [http://www.gad.gov.uk/Publications/Demography\\_and\\_statistics.htm](http://www.gad.gov.uk/Publications/Demography_and_statistics.htm)  
Government Actuary's Department assessed 2006, figures adjusted by DfES for academic years.

*1.1.c) Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?*

#### Migration trends

Net international migration into the UK from abroad is now the main factor in UK population growth. In the year to mid-2005, there were an estimated 588,000 people migrating to the UK for a year or more. This is 59,000 higher than the previous mid-year period. Migration from the UK declined by 8,000 to 353,000. As a result, net international in-migration increased to 235,000. The increase in migration was mainly due to a rise in the number of citizens coming from the ten accession countries (A10) that joined the European Union (EU) in May 2004.

The government's Accession Monitoring Report, which covers migration from A8 countries (A10 accession countries minus Cyprus and Malta) shows that up to the end of 2006, 579,000 applicants had registered with the Home Office Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), although many of these would have stayed for short periods only.

The majority of WRS applicants are young, with 83% aged between 18-30. The post-accession working age migrants have boosted the employment rate of A8 migrants from 57% in 2003, to 80% in 2004, taking it above the non-migrant average.

Nevertheless, there appears to be an ageing of immigrants so that those resident aged 25-44 are becoming more dominant than those aged 15-24. There is also a shift towards lower-skilled foreign immigrants in 2005 compared to 2004 (John Salt, Phil Rees. 2005). There does not seem to be a direct impact of demographic change on national migration policy.

#### Migration and refugee policies

In 2006, the UK developed a points based system for non-EU migrants. This might be regarded as a means to ensure that the stream of income-generating migrants (who fill labour market skill gaps or generate income to the UK as students) continues, while the stream of those intent on "abusing the system" is reduced (Home Office. 2005). 'Permanent migrants must be as economically active as possible; put as little burden on the state as possible; and be as socially integrated as possible.' (Home Office. 2005. P21.)

This policy reform may partly be due to concerns over the ageing population and the ratio of those contributing to the welfare state compared to those taking from it.

While the overall impact of immigration from Eastern Europe has been beneficial for the UK economy, there were some transitional issues from the last round of the EU enlargement. In October 2006, in the light of the upcoming further EU enlargement, the government adopted a gradual approach of managed migration from the newest accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania) by limiting the jobs available for

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workers from those nations and taking account of the needs of the UK labour market. In particular, low-skilled workers will have to join existing quota schemes (for agricultural work and food processing jobs) for foreign workers, while skilled workers will be able to apply for work permits or the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme.

References: John Salt, Phil Rees. 2005. Globalisation, population mobility and impact of migration on population. ESRC: Seminar Series. Available at: [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC\\_Seminar\\_Global\\_tcm6-16062.pdf](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Seminar_Global_tcm6-16062.pdf)  
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Accession Monitoring Report, May 2004 – December 2006, A joint online report by the Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue & Customs and Communities and Local Government, February 2007

*1.1.d) Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change?*

### Demographic change and higher education admissions

Demographic change is reflected strongly in higher education admission statistics. The Schwartz report on fair admissions to higher education<sup>3</sup> noted that the number of mature undergraduates (defined as those aged 21 and over) had increased to about 60% of the undergraduate population in 2002/03. In 2001/02, 71% of mature entrants were admitted to HE on the basis of qualifications other than the traditional A Levels – including vocational qualifications, Access qualifications<sup>4</sup>, APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning). While the use of APL and APEL may be increasing, these entrants are concentrated in the newer universities (former polytechnics) and on some vocational courses, such as nursing, that have recently become part of the higher education framework. (The Admissions to Higher Education Review. 2004.)

The policy impetus has been the government-initiated strategy to widen participation in higher education by encouraging applications from non-traditional groups, including those with disabilities, those from the lower socio-economic groupings, ethnic groups and older students<sup>5</sup>. With statistics showing that by 2007 there will be more people over state pension age than aged under 16, the importance of this strategy is evident. Part of the strategy is to recognise a wider range of qualification for HE access, as noted above.

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<sup>3</sup> Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice (the Schwartz report), Department for Education and Skills, September 2004 <http://www.admissions-review.org.uk/downloads/finalreport.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Access to HE qualifications are designed specifically to prepare mature learners for entry to Higher Education. They are usually offered by further education institutions through one year courses (full time or part time) and are validated by one or more neighbouring HE institutions, with places on related HE courses sometimes guaranteed for students successful in the Access course.

<sup>5</sup> The Department for Work and Pensions has committed to tackle barriers to access to education courses by the elderly – from 2006, there is no age limit attached to the new HE student fee loan.

### Widening participation

The strategic bodies that coordinate and fund higher education across the UK lead the widening participation agenda, following ministerial targets. Each university is formally responsible for its own policies and actions, reporting back to the strategic body. For England the strategic body that funds and coordinates is the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and widening participation policies receive prominent attention in the HEFCE strategic plan for 2006 – 2011<sup>6</sup>:

*'We cannot afford to waste talent simply because of a reluctance to foster it. That means continuing to reach out for those for whom HE seems beyond reach, not for any lack of potential, but often for reasons of family or community tradition. This challenge of widening access and increasing participation remains a crucial part of our mission.'* Op cit. page 5

On-going strands of activity are identified in the strategic plan as contributing to the achievement of the widening participation objectives. These are:

- Increasing the demand for HE and the opportunities to access it, including collaborative measures and local, regional or specialist partnerships – for example through Lifelong Learning Networks and through close operation links between universities and higher education colleges on a range of courses;
- Offering new opportunities for HE progression on vocational courses and for lifelong learning, including the new Foundation Degrees;
- Working with HE institutions to embed widening participation in their policies and practices; and,
- Increasing flexibility of HE provision, including part-time, distance and short duration programmes.

The strategic objective of widening participation is not in itself a mechanism for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, but it does encourage access for non-traditional groups into higher education and it does add weight to HE entry through non-traditional pathways. This has implications for:

- the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL); this is the process by which universities recognise qualifications or awards gained prior to the current programme of study, if awarded by a recognised body and based on a validated process of assessment. Examples include certificated learning from UK educational institutions and work-based learning and certificated learning from abroad (for the latter see 1.2.b)
- the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) - see below.

### The accreditation of prior learning

The accreditation of prior learning (APL)<sup>7</sup> is a long-standing mechanism for recognizing prior informal and non-formal learning, both for HE admission and for credit towards HE degrees and other awards. Therefore, we describe below the main features that are common to most higher education APL schemes<sup>8</sup>.

Principles: The principles adopted are commonly applied in higher education, and also in further education settings.

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<sup>6</sup> HEFCE, 2006, Strategic Plan 2006-11, HEFCE, Bristol

<sup>7</sup> There is no single terminology in use here. HE providers typically describe their approach to the accreditation of prior learning under one or more of the following headings: accreditation of prior learning (APL); accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL); accreditation of prior certificated and/or experiential learning (AP[|E/C]L); or, accreditation of prior learning and achievement (APL&A).

<sup>8</sup> The main source for the descriptions below is the UK report for the European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning: J Konrad, 2005, United Kingdom Report, ECOTEC, Birmingham, UK

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- Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of professional judgement;
- The decision-making process, criteria, forms of assessment and outcomes should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair. Where limits exist on the proportion of learning that can be recognised through the accreditation process, these limits should be explicit;
- Information and guidance materials for all parties should be clear, accurate and easily understood;
- The assessment of learning derived from experience should generally be subject to the same internal and external quality assurance procedures as assessment of learning through more traditional routes. Assessment methods must be appropriate to the evidence provided;
- All associated with the accreditation of prior learning should have their roles clearly and explicitly defined. Appropriate arrangements should be developed for training and support;
- Clear guidance should be given to applicants about when a claim for the accreditation of prior learning may be submitted, the process, the timescale for considering the claim and the outcome;
- Appropriate arrangements should be in place to support applicants submitting claims for the accreditation of prior learning and to provide feedback on decisions; and,
- Arrangements for the regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning should be clearly established.

Process: The processes involved are formal ones intended to apply to learners who are seeking entry to a higher education course on the basis of non-standard qualifications or experience of learning (i.e. not the normally recognised qualifications). Alternatively, the learner may be seeking exemption from modules, units or parts of a programme, by showing that they have equivalent knowledge or competences. Levels are derived according to the qualifications or credit and qualifications framework in use in the particular part of the UK. The key steps in the process usually involve: candidate profiling, gathering the evidence, assessing the evidence, accreditation and review.

Assessment: For assessment, the procedures usually follow the guidelines provided by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)<sup>9</sup> for HE, as follows:

- Higher education institutions are able to recognise the significant knowledge, skills and understanding which can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work, both paid and unpaid, through training and professional development courses and through individual activities and interests, including leisure activities and self-directed study;
- The accreditation of learning and achievement is one of the central functions of HE. In exercising this function, HE providers are able to assess and formally recognise nonformal and informal learning through accreditation; and,
- Formal certification of this learning operates within robust and participatory quality assurance frameworks. These frameworks promote public understanding and confidence in both the quality of HE and the standard of its outcomes. A diverse range of approaches and practices for the accreditation of prior learning has evolved across the HE sector. Public confidence in the accreditation of prior learning, comparable to that for learning achieved during more traditional teaching and learning activities, is important if the practice is to be sustained and developed.

A survey of higher education institutions showed that the majority have APL at either institution or departmental levels, or both. (Learning from Experience Trust, 2000.) Because of the relatively autonomous nature of UK higher education institutions, there is considerable diversity of practice between institutions. Analogous arrangements exist in the further education sector, but with greater consistency because of the influence of the awarding bodies. Though not explicit, demographic change is a driver

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<sup>9</sup> UK Quality Assurance Agency, Sep 2004, Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning

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within this, alongside a rising demand for more and more varied provision of education and training, as well as a policy determination to tackle the challenges of widening participation.

References: The Admissions to Higher Education Review. 2004. *Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice*. ('Schwartz Report'). Available at: <http://www.admissions-review.org.uk/downloads/finalreport.pdf>

Learning from Experience Trust. 2000. Mapping APEL: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in English Higher Education Institutions. Available at: [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dfee/heqe/let\\_final.htm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dfee/heqe/let_final.htm)

Department for Work and Pensions. Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Available at: [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/opportunity\\_age/opportunity-age-volume1.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/opportunity_age/opportunity-age-volume1.pdf)

## ***Component 1.2. Internationalisation***

*1.2.a) Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?*

The UK does not have a single policy on the recognition of the qualifications of immigrants. Where this has occurred it has usually been done on a sectoral level.

Workers from other countries in the European Union/ European Economic Area have free rights to work in the UK<sup>10</sup>. The Home Office has adopted a points based system in order to control immigration, from other countries. Points can be gained for, amongst other things, educational attainment. Similarly, the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme allows a migrant to enter the UK for work without having to detail a specific employment offer. Eligibility is decided by a points system covering level of education, work experience, past earnings etc. It is not differentiated by sector, although there are separate arrangements for those who have completed an MBA from the top 50 business schools, or for medical General Practitioners. Equivalences between overseas and UK qualifications are decided by UK NARIC (UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre) – see 1.2.b).

The Home Office's Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) takes the lead in the integration of refugees and other migrants,, with the involvement of the government departments responsible for social benefits, employment, health, housing, and education. Organisations from the public, private, and voluntary sectors also play a crucial role in integration.

RETAS (Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service) assists refugees to get their existing qualifications recognised, and specifically targets resources towards refugee women to counter the social exclusion they face as one of the most under-represented groups in the labour market.

During the winter of 2002/03 the Immigration, Research and Statistics Section of the Home Office carried out a skills audit of refugees. This is the largest ever skills audit of refugees undertaken in the UK, collecting information from almost 2,000 refugees. The results focus on four main skill or qualification indicators: qualifications and education; economic status prior to departure for the UK; occupation; and language. They show the diversity of such skills and experience among refugees, and how these vary among people from different countries and between the sexes.

Overall, before leaving their country of origin, two-thirds of respondents were working, one in ten were students and less than five per cent were unemployed and looking for employment. This distribution of economic activity was similar to that for all UK residents. Almost a half of those persons surveyed had received ten years or more of education, and over 40% held qualifications before they arrived in the UK.

An action research project carried out in the East Midlands developed a transferable skills audit methodology as the basis for tailor-made action plans leading to opportunities for further education, volunteering and work-orientation placements. The project found that many immigrants (asylum seekers or refugees) were highly skilled and motivated to work, but there were various barriers to integration. The greater the period spent out of work (and reliant on welfare support) the harder it was for immigrants to integrate – as motivation was reduced and they became 'de-skilled' (through skill-fade and skill outdated). The authors recommended that the government should consider:

- Mainstreaming skills audit methodologies;

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<sup>10</sup> There are transitory restrictions imposed on newest accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania) by the UK Home Office in terms of their employment in the UK since 2007. For more details, please see 1.1.c)

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- Lifting restrictions on seeking employment; and,
- Establishing a national system to assess and validate skills, experience and qualifications gained outside the UK.

More generally, a European Community initiative, EQUAL, is promoting new ways to combat discrimination and inequalities in the labour market by establishing development partnerships that help refugees with the transition to work. These projects aim to promote education by providing advice, language and cultural training, and employment, including improving employer relations and recognition of the skills and qualifications of refugees. EQUAL also aims to promote capacity-building by influencing service providers and working with local communities.

### Refugees' qualification and skills recognition

The 2000 strategy *Full and Equal Citizens* has led to an improved understanding of the problem of recognition of refugees' skills and to specific action. Important initiatives have included: the development of the Department for Work and Pensions' refugee employment strategy; improved documentation which makes it easier for refugees to find employment; and measures by the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU) (within the Department for Education and Skills) to improve the quality of language teaching for migrant learners. Some sectors, where the skills shortages are most acute, have developed new approaches to help migrant workers and refugees to integrate into the UK labour market. These initiatives aim specifically to build on refugees' existing skills and experience to help them gain access to a particular area of employment.

### Health, Teaching, Engineering Refugee Organisations

The Department of Health operates a Refugee Health Professionals Steering Group, with the aim of recruiting and integrating health care professionals from overseas and has taken steps to encourage refugees with professional healthcare qualifications to continue their career in the NHS. Over the past four years the Department has allocated £1.2 million to over 40 projects throughout England, including:

- Language teaching and communication courses;
- Clinical skills courses to prepare refugee doctors for the clinical competence exam;
- Work shadowing and clinical attachments;
- Mentoring and job clubs.

The British Medical Association, the professional association for doctors, operates the BMA Refugee Doctor Database, which helps to integrate and register refugee doctors with the General Medical Council (GMC), for employment with the National Health Service. The Royal College of Nurses operates a similar database for refugee nurses. These databases operate in conjunction with standard migrant integration projects

The teaching profession is served by the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA), which provides support and guidance for teachers and lecturers wishing to work in education the UK. Scotland also operates the Refugees into Teaching in Scotland (RiTTeS) scheme. These projects aim to smooth the transition into employment, of which APL is a vital part.

Engineering is a less regulated profession than the health or education sectors. This creates both advantages and disadvantages for refugee job seekers. A lengthy re-qualification process is not necessarily required, but this can mean that there is no clear route back into employment. RAISE (an organisation for refugee engineers) works closely with refugee engineers, employment agencies and employers to identify barriers to employment.

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References: Sue Waddington. Valuing Skills and Supporting Integration: A policy report on the lessons learned by developing the skills of asylum seekers as the basis for social and vocational integration. ASSET UK, NIACE. Available at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/ASR/documents.htm>

Home Office. Highly Skilled Migrant Programme. Working in the UK. Available at: [http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/working\\_in\\_the\\_uk/en/homepage/schemes\\_and\\_programmes/hsmp.html?](http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/working_in_the_uk/en/homepage/schemes_and_programmes/hsmp.html?)

Home Office. HSMP Internal Caseworker Guidance V4.0. Available from: [http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/working\\_in\\_the\\_uk/en/homepage/schemes\\_and\\_programmes/hsmp.html](http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/working_in_the_uk/en/homepage/schemes_and_programmes/hsmp.html)

*1.2.b) Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?*

The non-formal and informal learning of refugees and other migrants may be recognised through the same APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) processes as are available to UK applicants to higher education, although migrants may have greater difficulty in providing sufficient evidence of their learning. The processes are described in section 1.1d). APL may be used either as a route into higher education or for credit towards HE qualifications.

### Recognition of knowledge, skills and qualifications gained abroad in the UK

The UK NARIC<sup>11</sup> is the key body that takes responsibility for the formal recognition of qualifications gained outside the UK for purposes of higher education and labour market entry of the holders within the UK. Within the NARIC unit, the UK National Recognition Project (UKNRP) has developed a similar facility for the UK recognition of vocational qualifications that have been achieved in other countries. These equivalences are a strong feature of recognition in regulated occupations such as doctors, nurses and teachers. Migrants who cannot get recognition of their qualifications in these occupations are forced to take jobs other than those for which they are trained.

Many self-regulated occupations, such as several groupings within legal and financial services, handle international recognition through multinational and bilateral agreements. There are signs of increasing cooperation in this respect through the EU's programmes that accentuate sectoral collaboration and developments.

In other respects, strong formal or informal zones of mutual trust exist, whereby recognition of general and vocational qualifications gained abroad are "taken on trust" for entry to the UK labour market, particularly in areas not covered by licence to practice regulations. This is particularly the case in movement between the UK labour markets and the Irish labour market, such that an equivalences chart has been agreed between England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Informal zones of mutual trust operate with some other countries and in particular sectors. The credit frameworks in the four UK countries, and the relationships between them, are set out in section 3.1.e).

### UK nationals learning/working abroad including through EU programmes

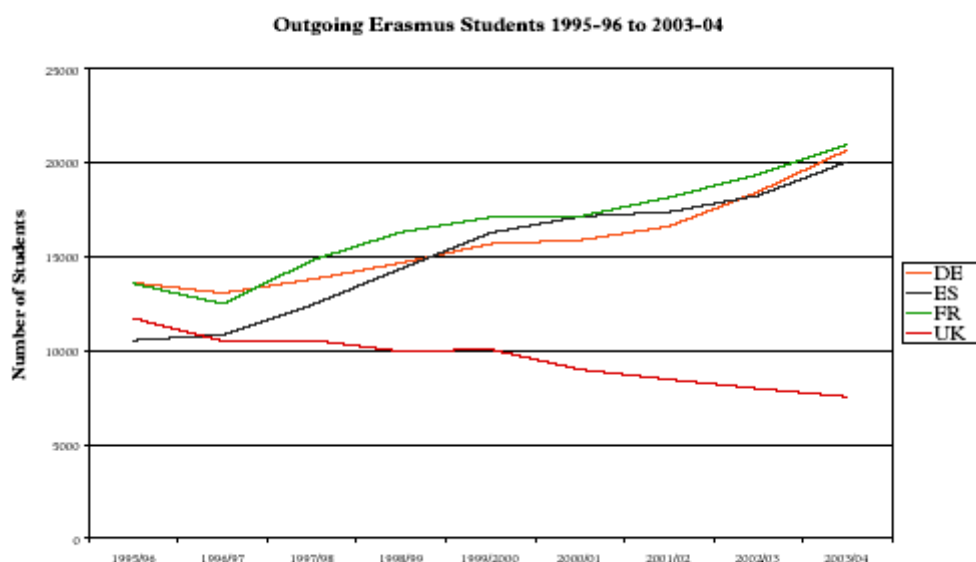
Erasmus (the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is the HE strand of the main European Commission education programme, Socrates. It promotes student mobility within the whole of Europe and is based on partnerships and student exchanges between universities and colleges in 31 countries. The actual time spent studying abroad on the exchanges ranges from a minimum of 3 months to a maximum of 12. All UK universities and many other UK institutions running higher education courses are involved in the Erasmus programmes. Erasmus also provides a wide range of

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<sup>11</sup> The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC) <http://www.naric.org.uk/>

supporting activities, including academic staff exchanges, information exchange networks and curriculum development projects.

In recent years, the number of UK students participating in Erasmus exchanges has fallen from around 12,000 in 94/95 to 7,500 in 03/04. This is compared with rising totals in France, Spain, Germany and Italy. Outward mobility to the new European states in Central and Eastern Europe remains low.



Source: House of Lords Report, ‘Proposed EU Integrated Action Programme for Lifelong Learning’ April 2005

A study in July 2004<sup>12</sup> suggested that the main reasons for this decline were language barriers and financial issues. A further study in November 2004 confirmed that outward mobility is hampered by students’ perceived financial concerns, lack of language competence and attitudinal / motivational factors.

The Leonardo da Vinci (Leonardo) Programme focuses on vocational education and training from upper secondary school level to continuing vocational education and training. It funds placements for trainees in enterprises and training institutions, professional development placements and exchanges for teachers and trainers and others responsible for vocational education and training. These placements are known as “mobility projects”.

The attitudes of UK FE colleges and non-profit organisations involved in running Leonardo programmes are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of the programmes for the personal development and skills training of those taking part. There is significant evidence that Leonardo programmes are particularly successful in areas with high proportions of disadvantaged young people, as a means to tackle local structural unemployment. However, colleges speak of the difficulties of attracting support from the private (business) sector, although several organisations are securing commercial involvement by exploiting good local contacts and engaging in promotion activities. As with the Erasmus programme, many candidates report that the programme structure was not flexible enough to accommodate the needs of older students, or those with work / family commitments.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/>

*UK Leonardo Mobility Statistics (period of 01/06/03 to 31/05/05)*

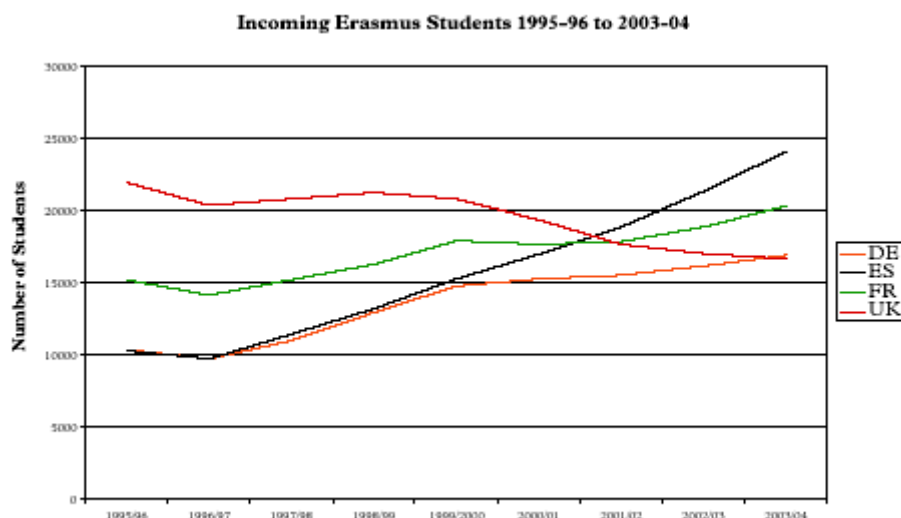
| Target Group                                | Total       |
|---|-------------|
| Initial Vocational Training (up to Level 3) | 1410        |
| Higher Education (HE)                       | 574         |
| Young workers / Recent graduates            | 409         |
| <b>Total Trainees</b>                       | <b>2393</b> |
| Trainers <sup>1</sup>                       | 357         |
| <b>Total Trainees / Trainers</b>            | <b>2750</b> |

Source: Leonardo UK Agency (British Council)

<sup>1</sup> Trainers defined as vocational trainers, HR managers, careers guidance counsellors or language trainers in business / vocational training.

Extent of inward mobility from the EU, including ref to the programmes mentioned above.

The UK is traditionally a net importer of students in mobility programmes. The UK remains popular as a study location, not least because of the advantages of learning in English and the UK's cultural and regional diversity. In recent years, the UK has dropped to 4<sup>th</sup> place behind Spain, France and Germany as a preferred Erasmus destination.



Source: House of Lords Report, 'Proposed EU Integrated Action Programme for Lifelong Learning' April 2005

The UK government are particularly concerned about the declining trend in inward mobility. Issues that contribute to this trend are:

- The increasing competition from continental European universities offering courses in high-quality English;
- Funding barriers in British higher education institutions; and,

- The higher cost of living in comparison with other European states.

### Europass in the UK

Each Member State is responsible for the implementation of the Europass Decision at national level through the designation of a single National Europass Centre (NEC) to coordinate, promote, replace, and develop, where necessary, all the existing documents and existing bodies currently carrying out similar activities. The UK NARIC has been designated as the UK National Europass Centre (UKNEC) to take forward proposals and to promote existing instruments in support of recognition of qualifications and skills and to increase mobility across Europe.

Information is available on the UKNEC website at <http://www.uknec.org.uk>, which was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. Additionally, Europass documents will be made available both in paper and electronic format to citizens through the UK NEC team.

The UKNEC Team closely liaises with the British Council, which is the UK Leonardo National agency and also benefits from the British Council's extensive marketing and promotion activity. The British Council operates a Europass website at <http://www.europass-uk.co.uk>.

### ***Component 1.3. New ICT***

*1.3.a) Provide any evidence of modularisation of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?*

The trend away from end of course examinations and towards modular or unit-based qualifications<sup>13</sup> can be traced back at least to the establishment of the Technician Education Council (now part of BTEC) in 1973, but has accelerated during the last two decades. The establishment of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF – see 3.1.e) is expected to complete this process. Examples of modularisation can be seen in many areas of education and training:

- in level 3 general qualifications, unitised A Levels have replaced end-of-course, final examinations – with each subject now comprising six units (to be reduced to four, larger units) and a formally recognised AS qualification, counting as half an A level, comprising half of the A level units
- most first university degrees (BA, BSc, etc) and sub-degree HE awards (eg HNDs) are now built up on a unit basis.
- National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) (SVQs in Scotland) have been unit-based since their introduction in the 1980s
- most other vocational qualifications are either already unit-based (eg BTECs) or are increasingly being unitised (eg City & Guilds).

Whilst it is certainly true that ICT is now both supporting and enabling the further development of unit based programmes, it would not be accurate to state that ICT developments opened up the way for unitisation.

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<sup>13</sup> The UK refers to modules of learning as 'units', we will continue to use the term unitisation, and unit-based throughout this section.

The current QCF developments in England are exploring a number of information technology initiatives to support credit accumulation and transfer. They include:

Electronic Learner Achievement Record to support:

- credit accumulation and transfer; and,
- registering learners using a prototype unique learner number - Wales already has this in the Unique Learner Identifier (ULI) used in the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR), as does Scotland in the SCN (Scottish candidate number).

National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) (replacing the current OpenQuals system<sup>14</sup>)

- holding details of all qualifications that are accredited by the government's regulatory organisations in England (QCA), Wales (DELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA)
- development of qualifications; and,
- complemented by a web-based accreditation system for qualification awarding bodies.

These developments will require close system integration between the regulatory authorities, awarding bodies and learning providers.

*1.3.b) Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.*

Qualifications for computer programmers were first developed in the 1960s and with the huge expansion in ICT the range of qualifications has been constantly extended to meet the growing need. Qualifications exist at all levels, both for IT professionals and for users of IT. The Sector Skills Council for IT, telecommunications and contact centres, e-skills uk, has an important role, both in defining the occupational standards on which NVQs and SVQs are based and also in advising on the design of IT qualifications of other types in order to ensure that learners gain the knowledge and skills which industry requires.

The range of qualifications available can be divided into the following broad types:

- degrees and sub-degree HE qualifications, such as HNDs, which provide learners with the theoretical and practical basis for a professional career in IT
- broad educational qualifications in IT, which may lead directly to employment, but are equally likely to lead on to further study; examples are BTEC National Certificates and Diplomas and A levels in IT
- National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs and SVQs) which are designed to recognise occupational competence in IT development and support or (at lower levels) in the use of IT
- introductory and more advanced certificates and diplomas for IT practitioners/professionals, offered, for example, by BCS (British Computer Society), City & Guilds and OCR

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<sup>14</sup> OpenQUALS was QCA's public online database of accredited qualifications, providing details of all qualifications accredited to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).  
NDAQ is on <http://www.ndaq.org.uk/>

## OECD study Recognition of informal and non-formal learning: UK country case study

- vendor specific qualifications for IT professionals, including software designers and developers and hardware experts; examples include the awards of Novell, Oracle and Cisco
- introductory awards for computer users, which assess competence in the use of common IT applications; examples include the ITQ (Information Technology Qualification) designed by e-skills uk; OCR's CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) certificate, the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), City & Guilds Certificate for IT Users, Edexcel Diploma in Digital Applications (DiDA)
- vendor specific qualifications for IT users, which assess competence in the use of specific software; the best known example is MOS, Microsoft Office Specialist.

A list of accredited IT qualifications (excluding vendor qualifications and degrees) can be found on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications ([www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk)) by searching in the IT sector subject area.

Eighteen New Technology Institutes (NTIs) were set up across England in 2002. Each institute is a consortium of a university, several further education colleges and private sector partners (vendors). NTIs offer foundation degrees and short courses, which may include vendor qualifications. An evaluation carried out for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) concluded that the NTIs had been moderately successful in meeting their aims and objectives. But found that:

*In the taxonomy of 'initiatives' in FE and HE, the NTI one is another example of setting up partnerships or consortia for a limited purpose. For many successful bidders, the initiative was an opportunity to carry forward something that was already being done or was planned by HE for FE partners, at the cost of repackaging to fit the criteria and of adopting a particular label.* (Section 1.4, p 5. Evaluation of the New Technology Institutes initiative. Report to HEFCE by Universitas. March 2006. Available at: [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/rdreports/2006/rd07\\_06/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/rdreports/2006/rd07_06/))

In terms of the currency that academic qualifications carry compared to certificates by major industries; both are used. Academic qualifications tend to be used as filters to define the level of education that a candidate should have (eg graduate). Specific industry-related qualifications are then used to support evidence of experience/specific expertise. It is the level and relevance of experience that tends to be the deciding factor. There is some evidence of industry qualifications carrying more currency than general qualifications. For example, discussion within the UCISA (Universities and Colleges Information Services Association) notes a shift from ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) to MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist), which may in part be because ECDL is generic and is perceived as only useful to those with minimal knowledge, whereas, MOS, (being based on MS Office) offers higher competency<sup>15</sup>. Some courses are designed to provide dual certification, allowing learners to gain both a recognised educational qualification and an industry certificate.

After about a decade of small scale experimentation, computer-delivered testing ('e-assessment') began to be more generally adopted in the UK in the late 1990s. Some of the earliest adopters were universities, which use computer tests in both formative and summative assessment. Some also use e-assessment to check the existing knowledge and skills of new students – for example to test students' mathematical skills; this enables them to provide remedial tuition for weaker students.

Since 2000 there have been developments in the use of e-assessment in a number of different types of qualification; examples include:

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<sup>15</sup>ECDL discussion. UCISA User Support conference, July 2006. Available at: <http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/groups/tlig/conf/userserv06/discussions/ECDL.pdf>

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- City & Guilds on demand computer testing of subject knowledge in a range of qualifications (hair and beauty, hospitality, construction, engineering, motor vehicles, IT, security, dog grooming) using the Global On-line Assessment (GOLA) system; more than 2 million individual tests have been administered through 2000 registered centres
- multiple-choice testing of key skills (Communication, Application of Number and IT) at levels 1 & 2 by several awarding bodies
- trials and/or implementation of GCSE assessments in science subjects and geography by several awarding bodies including AQA, OCR, Edexcel and CCEA (Northern Ireland)
- developments of computer-delivered tests in a range of Higher National subjects by SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority)
- on-line marking of candidate work (eg a document produced in Word or Excel) in OCR's CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) award.

Within England there have been trials of an ambitious project to develop an e-assessment of ICT skills at Key Stage 3 (age 14) within the National Curriculum Tests. Students are asked to perform realistic tasks using generic software applications.

It is predicted that the development of e-assessment will make assessment more complex as various e-assessment partners will be required (e-test design suppliers, e-test service providers, e-portfolio service providers, technical support providers, scanning bureaux, testing centres.). This marks a change from a single supplier working to a single awarding body and .... will provide a new challenge for regulators<sup>16</sup>. In response QCA has published *Regulatory Principles for e-assessment* (April 2007).

*1.3.c) Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or 'learning assets'? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?*

There is no national e-portfolio within the UK, but there has been considerable activity in both the learning and skills sector and in higher education.

A major driver for e-portfolios in the learning and skills sector has been the need to manage the 'evidence' of learners working towards NVQs and SVQs (see 1.6.b). These qualifications are designed to certificate workplace competence and therefore draw on reports from supervisors and from learner logbooks, as well as from more traditional assessment tools. Some FE colleges and training centres have devised their own portfolios, but there is also widespread use of commercially produced products<sup>17</sup>. Awarding bodies are also developing their own e-portfolios, which may be specific to a single qualification; examples are the CLAIT and iMedia qualification portfolios from OCR. One of the Sector Skills Councils, e-skills uk has developed the e-skills passport, which works with the ITQ (information technology qualification, described earlier). The e-skills passport is a web based skills management system. It is intended to identify skills gaps within organisations (through self-assessment) and provides a record of training and achievement<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Ken Boston, Chief Executive, QCA. Speech 24 October 2005. Available at: <http://www.qca.org.uk/251.html>

<sup>17</sup> See links from <http://www.ocr.org.uk/eassessment/eportfolio.html> and <http://www.city-and-guilds.co.uk/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0AC0478D-BC361353/cgonline/hs.xsl/16076.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.e-skillspassport.com/>

E-portfolios have been introduced in a number of HE institutions, including at St George's Medical School in London and for postgraduate research students and contract research staff at Newcastle University. A list of e-portfolio projects, mainly funded by JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee) is available on JISC's e-learning framework website<sup>19</sup>.

An established example in the health sector is the e-portfolios project<sup>20</sup>. This has been driven by requirements for Personal Development Planning (PDP), (made by the Quality Assurance Agency, who regulates higher education institutions) and the Professional requirements for reflective practitioners who are able to manage and evidence their continuing development. It ran from 1998 to 2005 for medical students in four universities, (Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle, St Andrews) the goals of the project were to:

- Develop strategies to facilitate assessment of curriculum outcomes that are not amenable to traditional instruments of assessment and to integrate e-Portfolios into the managed learning environment;
- Support a reflective approach to evidencing the attainment of programme outcomes; and,
- Encourage students to manage their own learning to a greater extent and to prepare for aspects of work-based and lifelong learning.

In Wales the online service [www.careerswales.com](http://www.careerswales.com) has developed a web-based e-portfolio tool. It is intended to support lifelong learning, by helping people to manage their own career development through the recording of achievements and the comparison of progress against set targets. It also provides tools to create and store CV letters and application letters, and has age-specific sections. In its first year of use 80,000 people have created individual e-portfolios.<sup>21</sup>

### Lessons learnt

Experience from the e-portfolios project has shown that there is a need for constant (formative) evaluation and alignment of the portfolio with teaching, learning and assessment strategies. Where PDP is delivered in the context of the curriculum it has the potential to be more meaningful and engaging to both students and staff – compared to more abstract 'stand-alone' delivery of PDP. Such approaches enable students to connect their personal learning to the defined outcomes of the curriculum as well as their individual learning goals. To achieve this integration it is important that ePortfolios are flexible and easy to customise.

PDP portfolios may be well designed and educationally well intentioned. However, many students are highly strategic and are therefore unlikely to engage in PDP processes unless they are linked to assessment / progression. Where there are not sufficient staff or other barriers to the assessment of the full portfolio, selected parts of the PDP portfolio can be made mandatory for progression – if there is a strong reflective element then grading raises a number of challenges, so a pass/fail scheme may be more appropriate in the first instance. As in other IT applications, user feedback is important in the ongoing developing and refinement of ePortfolio software as well as the related pedagogy<sup>22</sup>.

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19 A list of projects is available at: <http://www.elframework.org/projects>

20 Managed Environments for Portfolio-based Reflective Learning: Integrated Support for Evidencing Outcomes. Information available at: <http://www.eportfolios.ac.uk> . Final report.

21 'Briefing Wales', June 2006. Issue 5. (Available from: <http://www.dysg.org.uk/>)

22 <http://www.eportfolios.ac.uk/>

#### ***Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/ mismatch***

*1.4.a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as 'Regional Development' and 'Learning Regions'?*

##### Context

In many sectors of the UK labour market job-specific formal qualifications have only a limited role in access to employment and progression. Undoubtedly a qualifications drift has taken place, with ISCED level 3 or higher qualifications now expected for access to many areas of employment that previously expected a lower level of qualification. However, the regulated areas of the labour market with licence to practice requirements are restricted to a few sectors, so that, for example, many secondary and tertiary occupations have flexible entry requirements. Employment, HR and promotion procedures often take more account of what a potential employee can do - in other words, informally and non-formally acquired skills and knowledge – than formal qualifications.

##### The UK's employment and productivity paradox

The development of the UK economy over the past decade is characterised by an apparent paradox, with steady growth in GDP per capita growth, but with productivity levels that do not compare well with other advanced economies.

According to OECD, the average annual growth of the UK economy is above the European Union and G7 averages but slower than in USA<sup>23</sup> and considerably slower than in fast developing economies such as China and India. The UK has seen a further expansion of the tertiary sector, and a continuing decline in manufacturing. At the same time, the employment rate among people of working age continues to rise and at 74.7% in 2004<sup>24</sup> is higher than in many other EU member states and other advanced economies; similarly, levels of unemployment are lower. While the long term trend (1990–2003) is a decline in the percentage of 15-24 year olds in employment due to increased participation in upper secondary and higher education, the employment to population ratio of 25–54 year olds has remained high at around 80%, and the ratio for 55–64 year olds has increased from just under 50% to over 55%. This is shown in the table below. Similarly, there has been a steady improvement in the employment-to-population ratio of women: from 58% in 1984 to 70% in 2004.

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<sup>23</sup> OECD, OECD in Figures: statistics on the member countries. Paris: OECD, 2001-2004 (annual publication)

<sup>24</sup> UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>)

**Employment to population ratio by selected age groups (1990 – 2003)**

|      | 15-24 | 25-54 | 55-64 |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1990 | 70.1  | 79.1  | 49.2  |
| 2001 | 61.1  | 80.7  | 52.2  |
| 2002 | 61.0  | 80.6  | 53.3  |
| 2003 | 59.8  | 80.9  | 55.5  |

*Source:* OECD. *OECD Employment Outlook: 2004 edition*. Paris: OECD, 2004.

However, these comparatively strong levels of growth, high levels of employment and low levels of unemployment are associated with relatively low productivity levels. While the UK economy certainly has some high-skills, innovative and highly productive industries and sectors, this level of performance is not replicated across the full range of sectors<sup>25</sup>. In comparison with the performance of the economy of the USA, we can see that the UK has similar levels of employment, but lags considerably in terms of GDP per capita. This lag might be the result of a shorter working week or year than the USA average, though in this respect the UK is closer to USA than is the case for many other EU countries. Crucially, the UK falls behind USA by some 12 percentage points in terms of GDP per hour worked, while a number of other European countries including France, Ireland and Norway are more productive than the USA on this indicator<sup>26</sup>. It is the productivity factor – coupled with the recognition that levels of upper secondary completion in the UK compare poorly with those in many other advanced economies and that many people in the adult and working populations are lacking in basic skills – that provides the motivation for the UK’s strategic emphasis on raising the skill levels of those entering the workforce and of many of those already participating in the labour market.

National skills strategy

A series of government White Papers<sup>27</sup> that relate primarily to England<sup>28</sup> illustrate this strong emphasis on raising skills levels as a key driver for increasing productivity and competitiveness across the UK economy. The 2005 White Paper identifies where there has already been success – 850,000 adults achieved basic and key skills qualifications between 2001 and 2005; enrolments in Apprenticeships<sup>29</sup> have increased three fold since 1997, with more than a quarter of a million now enrolled; just under 40,000 students are undertaking the new foundation degrees<sup>30</sup>; New Deal arrangements are ensuring that record numbers of people have moved from welfare to work, etc.

The focus for the development and recognition of skills in the UK is an inter-departmental national skills strategy, which hinges on bringing coherent innovation through the key agencies, rather than a legislative programme. At the national level a Skills Alliance has been assembled – involving five government

25 Brown P, Green A and Lauder H, 2001. *High Skills: Globalisation, Competitiveness and Skills Formation*, Oxford University Press

26 See Leney, T. et al, 2005. *Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the Contribution of VET*. European Commission, DGE&C, Brussels

27 See for example: DfES, 2003. *21st Century Skills: realising our potential*, The Stationary Office, London. The most recent Skills White Paper is: DfES, 2005. *White Paper – Skills: getting on in business, getting on at work*, The Stationery Office, London

28 Devolution in 1997 gave extensive powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for many aspects of social policy, including lifelong learning (education and training) and the skills agenda. Each of the devolved administrations have developed its own strategies for skills and lifelong learning.

29 Traditional apprenticeships in industries such as engineering and construction largely disappeared in the second half of the 20th century. They were revived as government-funded level 3 Modern Apprenticeships in 1995, with a level 2 scheme (initially known as National Traineeships) added in 1997.

30 Foundation Degrees are sub-bachelor level HE awards in vocational subjects, normally offered as two year courses.

departments, the range of non-governmental public bodies with a clear responsibility for education, training and skills development, education and training providers and the main employer and trade union bodies. Particularly in England, at the regional and more local level, the local Learning and Skills Councils (Local LSCs, responsible for local strategy and for funding) and the nine Regional Development Agencies are responsible for developing effective strategy and partnerships to raise skills levels. In addition, the 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are responsible for the identification and implementation of sector-based strategies, notably including developments in sectoral qualifications and establishing priorities for investing in the skills of the sector workforce. Regional Skills Partnerships have been established to provide a mechanism for determining, region by region, the priorities for economic development and skills. SSCs and employers work together in developing proposals for National Skills Academies<sup>31</sup> (NSAs), which are to build on a further education infrastructure and bring together employers and further education on a sector by sector basis. The network of the NSAs will create Public Private Partnerships, which are led by employers in SSCs, to establish national and regionally networked centres of excellence for training and network development.

Developing qualifications is a key reference point for the skills strategy, as is increasing the numbers of people qualified at ISCED levels 2, 3 and 4. In this respect, the strong emphasis is on developing further the formal qualifications that are available, notably for learners up to the age of 18 or 19, for whom a new system of 14 specialised diplomas is under development. In spite of this strong emphasis of the national skills strategy on formal qualifications, parallel developments are under way in each of the four countries to develop qualification frameworks that are flexible enough to take account of credit accumulation and transfer (rather than recognising only full qualifications) . These are described in section 3.1.e.

*1.4.b) Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?*

It has been widely agreed that the UK faces a significant economic challenge in competing effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of poor productivity performance relative to its major competitors (the US, France and Germany), low levels of skills, innovation and investment in capital in all its forms (physical R&D and human capital). It is evident from data that the skills shortages have persisted in the UK for some time despite some signs of improvement in the skills profile over the past decade. Nevertheless, the UK still does not have a world-class skills base<sup>32</sup>, since:

- The UK has a serious legacy of low skills, is deficient at intermediate and technical levels and also likely to fall behind at degree level and above;
- Those with lowest skill levels are least likely to receive work-based training<sup>33</sup>;
- Skills gaps account for a fifth of the productivity gap with Germany and an eighth of the gap with France and these countries and other international competitors have ambitious strategies in place for further improvement on skills;
- Over one third of adults in the UK do not have a basic school-leaving qualification – double the proportion of Canada and Germany;
- Five million people have no qualifications at all;
- One in six adults do not have the literacy skills expected of an 11 year old and half do not have functional numeracy at that level;

31 Two out of 12 academies were launched in October 2006

32 Skills in the UK: the long term challenge, Interim analysis of the Leitch review of skills, HM Treasury, 2005

33 The Labour Force Survey shows that when asked, over two fifth of graduate employees say they have received training in the past three months compared to just over a fifth of employees without a level 2 qualification and just over a tenth of employees without any qualification.

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- By 2020 nearly 20 million additional people will need higher skill levels than at present, ranging from basic skills to degree level;
- Young people alone will not solve skill deficit problem in the immediate future, as over 70 per cent of the 2020 workforce has already completed their compulsory education and in effect, the government reforms need to be focused on improving the skills of the existing workforce.

The UK already has a range of policies intended to provide employers with the skilled workers needed to improve economic competitiveness, including:

- raising the achievements of young people, including increasing the participation of 17 and 18 year olds in education and training
- upskilling the existing workforce through the employer-based Train to Gain programme (see 1.4.d)
- the network of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), each with the responsibility for identifying skills needs in their sector and developing sector skills strategies to meet those needs
- regular employer surveys in each of the four countries to identify skills shortages<sup>34</sup>

The final report from the Leitch review of skills<sup>35</sup> urged the need for a substantial increase in the UK's skill levels, with a **focus on economically valuable skills**, and recommended a number of measures to achieve this. Following the government's response to Leitch<sup>36</sup>, the main changes envisaged are:

- making more of the funding for skills 'demand led'
- substantially increasing the funding for Train to Gain, although employers will also be expected to make a financial contribution
- merging existing advice and guidance services into a new universal adult careers service, to work with JobCentre Plus to provide each job-seeker with a mix of training and job search opportunities, accessed through an individual Skills Account
- establishing a UK-wide Commission for Employment and Skills to advise Government on skills and employment strategy and targets and to ensure progress towards meeting them
- giving SSCs a greater say in qualifications
- encouraging all employers in England to sign a Skills Pledge to support their employees to become more skilled and better qualified.

*1.4.c) Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.*

The AHC (after housing costs) poverty rate was around 13.5 per cent during the 1960s and 1970s. After peaking in 1996/7, the rate fell back to 19.9 per cent in 2004/05; this equates to 11.4 million people classed as being in poverty AHC. While the mean income has risen by an average of 2.4 per cent between 1996/97 and 2004/05, it appears to have slowed since 2002/03. The national average equivalised income per week for 2004/05 was £427 per week, this compares with a median equivalised income of £349 per week.

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34 National Employer Skills Survey in England, conducted by the Learning and Skills Council (see <http://researchtools.lsc.gov.uk/KMSResearchTools/>); Scottish Employers Skill Survey from Futureskills Scotland (<http://www.futureskillscotland.org.uk/web/site/home/Reports/WhatEmployersThink.asp>); Future Skills Wales (<http://www.futureskillswales.com/eng/content.php?cID=3>); Northern Ireland Skills Monitoring Survey (<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-stats/skills-reports.htm>)

35 HM Treasury, Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills, December 2006, available on [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/leitch\\_finalreport051206.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf)

36 Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England, July 2007, available on <http://www.dius.gov.uk/worldclassskills.pdf>

**Distribution of weekly household disposable income\*, 2003/04**



Notes:

\* Equivalised household disposable income before deduction of household costs (in £10 bands). See Social Trends 36. Appendix, Part 5: Households Below Average Income, and Equivalisation scales.

\*\* There were also 1.8 million individuals with income above £1,000 per week.

Source: Figure 5.12. Social Trends 36. 2005. ONS. Available (including spreadsheet data) at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=13675>

**Quintile share distribution of income (After Housing Costs) for Great Britain 1994/5 to 2004/05**

|  | 94/5 | 95/6 | 96/7 | 97/8 | 98/9 | 99/00 | 00/01 | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 | 04/05 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Quintile shares of total income (%)</b> |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Bottom 20%                                 | 5.9  | 6.2  | 6.0  | 5.9  | 5.9  | 5.9   | 5.8   | 6.0   | 6.0   | 5.9   | 6.0   |
| Second quintile                            | 11.4 | 11.4 | 11.3 | 11.4 | 11.1 | 11.3  | 11.3  | 11.6  | 11.6  | 11.8  | 11.8  |
| Middle quintile                            | 16.6 | 16.5 | 16.6 | 16.4 | 16.1 | 16.3  | 16.1  | 16.2  | 16.3  | 16.4  | 16.3  |
| Fourth quintile                            | 23.1 | 22.8 | 22.9 | 22.7 | 22.5 | 22.5  | 22.1  | 22.0  | 22.1  | 22.3  | 22.0  |
| Top 20%                                    | 43.0 | 43.1 | 43.1 | 43.6 | 44.3 | 44.1  | 44.7  | 44.2  | 43.9  | 43.6  | 43.8  |
| <b>Gini coefficient (per cent)</b>         |      |      |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|  | 37   | 37   | 37   | 38   | 38   | 38    | 39    | 38    | 38    | 38    | 38    |

Source: Department for Work and Pensions. Households Below Average Income. Table A3 AHC. Data from Family Resources Survey (FRS). Supplementary tables available from: [http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2005/excel\\_files/supplementary\\_tables/full\\_suptables\\_excels\\_hbai06.xls](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2005/excel_files/supplementary_tables/full_suptables_excels_hbai06.xls)

The table above shows that the lowest 20 percent of households (in terms of income) have gained, overall, 0.1 percent of income over the past ten years, whilst the top 20 percent have gained an additional 0.8 percent. The top quintile's share of total income is greater than the combined share of the lowest three quintiles.

Figures for the distribution of income by household type show that single people with children are the household type most likely to be in the lowest income quintile.

1.4.d) Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.

Economists and labour market analysts in the UK use the term ‘human capital’ to capture the skills and knowledge possessed by individuals through formal education and through on-the-job and life experiences. It is difficult to measure human capital or skills directly; so formal qualifications are often used as a proxy.

While formal qualifications may not necessarily be relevant or sufficient to undertake a particular job, those applicants without formal qualifications are often likely to be at a disadvantage. Analyses of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data show that those with no qualifications have lower employment rates than those with higher-level qualifications and over half of the working-age population in the ‘concentrations of worklessness’ identified by the Social Exclusion Unit (2004) had no qualifications..

There is also evidence that, for those in employment, possession of qualifications is linked to higher levels of pay, although the ‘rate of return’ (ie the increase in pay from gaining the additional qualification) is higher for academic than vocational qualifications, higher at higher qualification levels and lower for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) than for some other vocational qualifications.<sup>37</sup> For NVQs at Levels 1 & 2 the rates of return are weak overall, but the evidence suggests that there are benefits for some sub-groups and in some occupational areas.<sup>38</sup>

Recent trends have seen a sharp rise in the formal qualifications held by those in employment and it is predicted that qualification levels will continue to rise<sup>39</sup>. There is some evidence that this reflects **demand** changes, with many jobs requiring more formal higher level qualifications than used to be the case. . On the other hand it is clear that there have been major changes on the **supply** side, in part at least in response to government policies to increase participation in higher education. The latter has resulted in a big increase in the numbers emerging on to the labour market with formal qualifications. The proportion of young people with formal qualifications is much higher than for older people (a strong **cohort** effect), countered to some extent by increasing qualification rates for older people as well (an “**upskilling**” effect).

Those who have a negative experience of education at school are less likely than average to engage in learning in adulthood, and so participation in learning reduces with level of educational attainment (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2003). This means that it is particularly difficult to overcome the attitudinal, practical and structural barriers to engaging in learning, faced by the most disadvantaged. Government policy has therefore concentrated initially on those with qualifications below National Vocational Qualification level 2 (equivalent to five A\*–C grades at GCSE), dubbed by Hepworth *et al.* (2005) as the knowledge economy’s ‘skills poverty line’. A number of UK initiatives make provision for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, but this is normally in the context of gaining formal qualifications, rather than giving currency to previously acquired knowledge, skills and competences. Examples are S/NVQs and Train to Gain (both described in more detail below) and courses in Adult Basic Skills.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are designed to accredit competence in the workplace and, as described in 1.6.b) assessment relies heavily on ‘evidence of competence’, which may be drawn from previous jobs or voluntary activity, as well as the candidate’s

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37 Lorraine Dearden, Steven McIntosh, Michal Myck and Anna Vignoles, The Returns to Academic and Vocational Qualifications in Britain, Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics and Political Science, November 2000

38 Lorraine Dearden, Leslie McGranahan, Barbara Sianesi, An In-Depth Analysis of the Returns to National Vocational Qualifications Obtained at Level 2, Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics and Political Science, December 2004

39 R. Wilson and D. Bosworth, Working Futures 2004–2014, QUALIFICATIONS REPORT, Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, September 2006

current role. S/NVQs are therefore, by design, able to provide recognition of informal and non-formal learning where it is relevant to the target qualification.

Train to Gain is an initiative by the former Department for Education and Skills (in England) to help employers to raise the skill levels of those of their workforce who do not currently have a level 2 qualification. It builds on the successful 'Employer Training Pilots', which were introduced in September 2002. In both schemes government funded training is delivered by an approved training provider (which may be an FE college or an independent provider) to meet the needs of the employer and the workforce, following a plan agreed jointly by the provider and employer. Initial assessment of the skills of the workforce is an important part of the scheme and the training is tailored to take account of existing skills, although the end point is intended to be the achievement of a recognised qualification, usually a National Vocational Qualification. An evaluation of the pilots by the Adult Learning Inspectorate<sup>40</sup> found that both learners and employers were enthusiastic, but that there was sometimes too much emphasis on accrediting existing skills for an NVQ rather than developing new ones.

New Deal schemes for the unemployed also attempt to identify the existing skills of the 'client', but this is as an aid to job-seeking rather than as a means to formal recognition. New Deal schemes were introduced progressively from 1999 and each scheme targets a specific client group – young unemployed, long term adult unemployed, lone parents, older unemployed and the disabled. Details of the schemes vary, but each includes a personal adviser to support the jobseeker in identifying potential routes to employment.

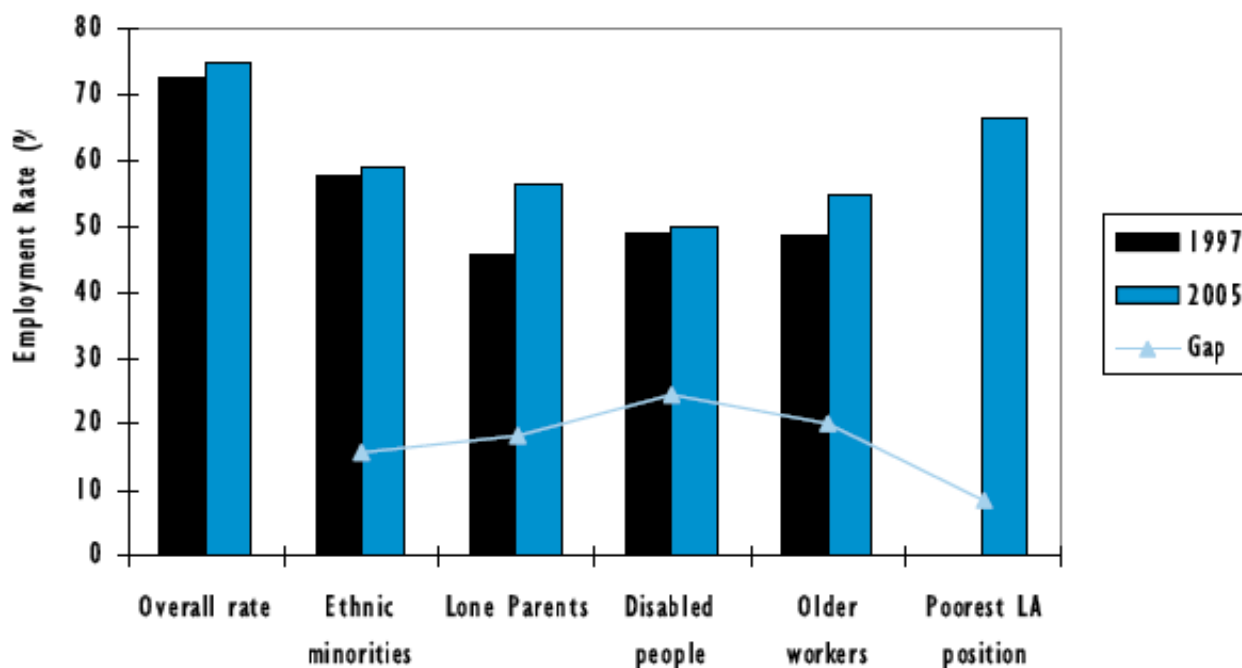
*1.4.e) Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly-skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?*

The government has introduced some evidence-based policy measures targeting certain groups which have below average employment rates (older workers, single parents, NEET, prisoners, immigrants etc) to help them enter labour market. Removing barriers to entry into the labour market is embodied in the government targets "to increase the employment rates of disadvantaged groups", which corresponds closely to the Lisbon employment targets for priority categories. This forms part of an overall approach based on active labour market support measures, tackling discrimination and welfare reforms. Although none of the measures explicitly refer to the recognition of the skills of the disadvantaged groups, an underlying principle of the approach is to build on the skills which people have acquired through informal, non-formal and other forms of experiential learning. Further details of the measures for some of these groups are given below.

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40 Department for Education and Skills, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT Research Report RR695 and Research Brief RB695: ALI Employer Training Pilot Survey, December 2005; available on <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR695.pdf>

### Employment rates of selected groups



Notes: "Poorest LA position" means local authority areas with the poorest labour market position. Figures for these areas are not available for 1997. For disabled people, the earlier figure is 1993.

Source: Chart 4.1 page 41. October 2006. HM Treasury. **Lisbon Strategy for Jobs and growth: UK National Reform Programme: Update on progress** 2006. Available at: [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/international\\_issues/european\\_economic\\_reform/int\\_lisbonstrategy\\_jobs.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/international_issues/european_economic_reform/int_lisbonstrategy_jobs.cfm)

#### Older workers

The key component of the UK National Reform Programme is to enhance the participation of older workers, and to extend working life in order to meet the demographic challenges of the future. The Leitch Interim report pointed out that 60 per cent of the growth in the labour market by 2020 will come from employees aged 50-65; funding skills for adult employees and recognising their prior learning and experience will thus become a more pressing issue for the government and employers.

Government measures to achieve these aims comprise:

- Tackling age discrimination by introducing regulations to combat age discrimination in employment and vocational training (effective autumn 2006)
- More generous options for delaying taking the state pension, making it more attractive to work for longer
- Measures set out in the Welfare Reform Green Paper to encourage economically inactive older workers back into employment, building on the success of the New Deal 50 plus programme, which has supported over 54,000 job entries from 2003 to 2006:
- Work with employers to extend flexible working opportunities
- Train to Gain (see 1.4d), which benefits unqualified older workers.

The TUC contribution to the Leitch review<sup>41</sup> argues, however, that the current requirement that funding is available only for a first qualification means that many people with outdated qualifications

41 Trades Union Congress, 2020 Vision For Skills, Priorities For The Leitch Review Of Skills Available On <http://www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-12524-F0.cfm#Learn-895-3>

will be excluded. This will have a greater impact, the report claims, on particular groups, for example, older workers and women, especially those returning from career breaks.

### Single parents

Apart from policy actions aimed at welfare<sup>42</sup> (benefits, childcare etc) and discrimination of lone parents and in order to increase economic activity and decrease child poverty in disadvantaged areas, the government enables hard-to-reach economically inactive parents to access learning, training and work opportunities.

### Immigrants

For more details See 1.2 a.

### Prisoners

The government's policy on prisoners aims to reduce re-offending and promote employability by helping prisoners and ex-offenders to gain skills and education qualifications that will help them into employment. There is particular emphasis on basic skills needs, but programmes can also build on prisoners' existing vocational skills.

Refs: Sue Waddington. Valuing Skills and Supporting Integration: A policy report on the lessons learned by developing the skills of asylum seekers as the basis for social and vocational integration. ASSET UK, NIACE. Available at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/ASR/documents.htm>

*1.4.f) Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.*

No data available.

*1.4.g) Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that requires a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?*

### Regulated

For most regulated professions in the UK (eg doctor, nurse, teacher), it is a requirement that practitioners should have completed a specified period of practical experience before registration. Almost always, however, this is carefully supervised and structured and is required **in addition** to formal examinations. It cannot be said, therefore, that this constitutes a recognition of non-formal or informal learning as an alternative to formal learning.

A notable exception is in the social care sector, where new regulations for care homes for older people in England<sup>43</sup> were introduced as a result of the Care Standards Act 2000. The registered manager of a care home for older people must have a qualification at NVQ level 4 in management and care or equivalent and at least 50% of the care staff must be trained to NVQ level 2 or equivalent. The introduction of these regulations (effective in 2005) led to a rapid increase in the take up of NVQs in social care. Because of the emphasis of NVQs on evidence of competence (see 1.6.b above) and because many of the relevant staff were already working in the sector, achievement of the NVQs was based on assessment and recognition of

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42 Welfare Reform and Lone Parents Employment in the UK, CMPO Working Paper no 72, Gregg and Harkness, 2003.

43 Department of Health, National Minimum Standards, Care Homes Regulations 3rd Edition, 2003 See [http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_4135403.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4135403.pdf)

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their existing competence, gained through non-formal or informal learning, with additional learning and assessment where needed.

As the examples below illustrate, other occupations in the UK may draw on evidence of relevant experience, although this rarely involves detailed examination of the skills and knowledge gained from informal learning.

Part regulated:

| Occupation          | Regulated by  | Comments   | Reference  |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>Sports coach</b> | National Governing Bodies                           | The UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC), is a voluntary five-level framework based on national standards, which will give coaches nationally recognised and transferable professional qualifications. A consultation on whether national occupational standards should be devised is underway.  | <a href="http://www.ukcoachingcertificate.org">http://www.ukcoachingcertificate.org</a><br><a href="http://www.skillsactive.com/">http://www.skillsactive.com/</a> |
| <b>Journalist</b>   | National Council for the Training Of Journalists    | Qualification involves a training contract of 18 months to two years a logbook must be completed in order to register before taking a final exam.  | <a href="http://www.nctj.com/index.php">http://www.nctj.com/index.php</a>  |
| <b>Chef</b>         |   | While formal training may be useful it is not required and the only regulation of chefs is through food hygiene regulations. Candidates will work their way up from commis chef, to chef de partie, to sous chef to chef de cuisine. Progression is on recognition of experience and competence.   |  |
| <b>HR manager</b>   | Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) | To work as a human resources officer an HR qualification isn't required, though it is desirable. The CIPD offers membership to those that either complete a CIPD qualification or who undergo Professional Assessment of Competence or Accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL). Members are expected to structure their CPD evidence of which is necessary in order to upgrade membership to chartered level.  | <a href="http://www.cipd.co.uk">http://www.cipd.co.uk</a>  |
| <b>Actor</b>        | Equity  | Membership of Equity, the union representing artists in all areas of arts and entertainment, is essential for most jobs. In order to join Equity evidence of training and employment such as a contract has to be submitted along with the application. Subscription is renewed annually. Employment is dependent, among other things, on experience.  | <a href="http://www.equity.org.uk">http://www.equity.org.uk</a>  |
| <b>Electrician</b>  | Institution of Engineering & Technology             | There is no direct regulation requiring a license to practice for electricians. An apprenticeship or NVQ/SVQ at level 3 in an electrical engineering subject. Is usual. However, where work required in potentially dangerous environments (i.e. chemical factories, safety critical systems) contractors will ensure that electricians are suitably qualified in order to reduce the risk of accidents and therefore being taken to court. Another area that requires qualification to practice is in construction. Part P of building regulations requires that electrical work is inspected by a suitably qualified person. This means that, in effect it must be carried out by a qualified electrician. | <a href="http://www.theiet.org/">http://www.theiet.org/</a>  |

### ***Component 1.5. Social developments***

*1.5.a) What are the newly evolved 'skills and competencies' to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.*

A common feature of the developing qualification frameworks in the four countries of the UK is the inclusion of the key or core skills, which are thought to underpin all learning programmes and are the basic, transferable skills required at an appropriate level for employability, as well as for social participation and daily living. Key skills have featured particularly strongly in vocational programmes and qualifications since the 1980s. For example, an apprenticeship programme now consists in most cases of three qualifications: the National Vocational Qualification (SVQ in Scotland), the Technical Certificate and key skills certification.

The key skills that are most often assessed are: communication, application of number and ICT. The broader key skills, frequently not assessed are: problem solving, managing own learning and performance and working in groups. More recently education regulators have been including more prominently the active skills called on for enterprise, whilst there has been some interest from both educators and financial institutions in including financial literacy in the list of essential life skills.

In Scotland the key skills are usually called 'core skills' and in Northern Ireland 'essential skills', whilst in the English education and training context the first three key skills are being re-defined as 'functional skills'<sup>44</sup> and included in a wider range of qualifications, including general qualifications, specialised diplomas, apprenticeships and as stand alone qualifications.

The UK government has responded to the proposals of the European Commission on the definition and development of eight key competences, by accepting six: communication in the mother tongue, mathematical literacy and basic competences in science and technology, ICT skills, learning to learn, entrepreneurship and cultural awareness. It has not accept communication in a foreign language as a key competence, and doubts the practicality and detail of some aspects of the citizenship skill.

*1.5.b) Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has led to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession?*

It is certainly an important part of government skills and inclusion strategies that a concentration on basic skills and key skills should assist excluded groups and those who face barriers to learning to find a foothold on a pathway to learning and to formal qualifications. The following examples illustrate how:

- Union Learning is a government funded initiative whereby trade unions provide basic skills training for their members.
- The Education to Employment initiative (E2E) has promoted key skills recognition as a way of giving value to the informal and non-formal learning that takes place in settings such as youth and outreach work.
- The learndirect initiative has established flexible ways of taking learning to the learner, for example by developing one-stop-shop facilities in shopping centres, libraries, etc. - and on the internet - to

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<sup>44</sup> See DfES (October 2006) Functional skills – your questions answered. QCA/DfES, London

make opportunities for learning available to groups that are often excluded from or face barriers to learning<sup>45</sup>.

Research provides some evidence of the longer term benefits of this learning:

- research into the progression of learners from Adult and Community Learning programmes, of which three-quarters were 'non-formal', ie did not lead to qualifications, found that 66% went on to do further learning in the following year, with 9% moving from non-qualification courses to qualification courses; there was evidence of other benefits, including physical, mental and emotional well being, confidence, benefits to social life and ability to communicate<sup>46</sup>
- research into adults following programmes of learning for NVQs (which included assessment of their existing skills, including those acquired through non-formal learning) showed that there had been a number of benefits, including progression to further learning<sup>47</sup>
- research into the impact on a group of young learners of participation in a qualification-related 'Skills for Life' (basic skills) course found that those who participated in this learning had improved in self-esteem, attitudes to education and training and employment commitment, although there were no actual improvements in the level of employment or (surprisingly) in the assessed level of basic skills<sup>48</sup>

*1.5.c) Provide evidence, if any, of recognition of this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship?*

There is no direct research that demonstrates that recognition of basic knowledge and skills (covered through Key Skills or Functional Skills) contributes to democracy and citizenship. However, it is generally assumed that such recognition benefits social cohesion and therefore democracy and citizenship. Broadly speaking, this is confirmed by research, most notably from the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, established at the Institute of Education by the DfES. Papers from the WBL Centre<sup>49</sup> have proposed links between participation in education and improved health, 'social capital' outcomes (including race tolerance and political interest), ability to manage life choices, quality of parenting and the educational success of the next generation. Of particular interest are the links between participation in post-compulsory learning (both adult education and on-the-job learning) and self-efficacy, which in turn helps to protect from depression and social exclusion.

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45 See UK ReferNet, 2006, Thematic overview of VET in the UK. UK ReferNet, QCA, London

46 Department for Education and Skills, Research Report RR546 Progression from Adult and Community Learning, June 2004 available on <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR546.pdf>

47 Department for Education and Skills, Research Report RR664: Level 2 Adult Vocational Learning – A qualitative study of motivations, experiences and outcomes, July 2005 available on <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR664.pdf>

48 Department for Education and Skills, Research Report RW50: Evaluation of the impact of Basic Skills learning: Report on Wave 1, November 2005, available on <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/index.cfm?type=5>

49 See especially the abstracts from the London Review of Education conference on <http://www.learningbenefits.net/Publications/LondonReviewofEducation.htm>; also Research Report 8, The Contribution of Adult Learning to Health and Social Capital.

### **Component 1.6. Others.**

*1.6.a) Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential – directly or non-directly – that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.*

At various points in this analysis we make reference to two apparent complexities.

Firstly, Scotland and Wales have clear policies to generate systems for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning as part of the development of their national frameworks for credit and qualifications, while England and the UK as a whole do not, at the overall policy level. We have already dealt with this facet, above.

Secondly, widespread initiatives have been taken with regard to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, without a national scheme in place. This has a significant role in UK workforce skills development. This approach can be best understood through an analysis of the purposes and functioning of the Investors in People (IiP) national standard, which takes account of non-formal and informal learning, as well as learning towards qualifications. Our analysis would be partial and incomplete without careful attention to this strand, and we now turn our attention to it.

Investors in People (IiP) has gained wide currency in the UK and is growing in terms of its international currency<sup>50</sup>. The following quotation from an evaluation of IiP by the SKOPE research team sets out the context in which the IiP scheme has grown and flourishes:

*'The Investors in People (IiP) Standard is notable for its longevity in the rapidly changing policy area of Vocational Education and Training (VET). IiP was introduced in 1991 with the purpose of promoting training and development practice in work organisations. It was at the time one of a number of initiatives intended to address perceptions that the UK's industrial performance was comparatively poor. The objective of the standard is to publicly credit organisations that "invest in their people" through training and development programmes and worker involvement in decision making. Organisations meeting given assessment criteria are rewarded with recognition by the lead body – IiP UK – and become entitled to use the IiP laurel wreath logo. The Standard sits amidst a plethora of ever-changing training initiatives but it remains one of the headline long-term policies for workforce development.... Furthermore, the IiP framework is not only alive and healthy in the UK. Licenses to use it are being purchased around the world.'* (Op cit, Page 4).

IiP is a recognised standard managed by the IiP organisation in London and endorsed by the UK government. Indeed, achieving recognition is an important ambition of most or all government agencies, as well as a wide range of private companies and not-for-profit organisations. In terms of recognition of learning outcomes, the key factor to accentuate is that it is the work organisation as a training organisation or 'investor in its people' that is recognised. IiP is not intended to badge people or learners, but firms and workplaces that become effective learning organisations.

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<sup>50</sup> Much of the information for this section is drawn from an evaluation of the IIP initiative covering the period 1991-2001 conducted by SKOPE. Rosa Fernandez et al, 2005, How long until we get there? A survival analysis of the Investors in people initiative 1991-2001. SKOPE research paper no 56 July 2005, SKOPE, Oxford and Warwick Universities

IiP encourages and rewards (the latter by awarding the widely recognised logo) good practice in the development of learning activity in the workplace. Learning is defined as any activity that develops skills, knowledge or attitudes, including training courses run internally or externally, but also, crucially, informal and self-directed learning, mentoring and planned experience. The scheme is organised through three principles and ten associated indicators<sup>51</sup>. These are summarised below.

Principle 1- Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation through its people:

- A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood;
- Learning development is planned to achieve the organisation's objectives;
- Strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity in the development of the organisation's people; and,
- The capabilities managers need to lead, manage and develop people effectively are clearly defined and understood.

Principle 2 - Taking action to improve the performance of the organisation:

- Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing people;
- People's contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued;
- People are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making; and,
- People learn and develop effectively.

Principle 3 - Evaluating the impact of investing in people on the performance of the organisation:

- Investing in people improves the performance of the organisation; and,
- Improvements are continually made in the way people are managed and developed.

Achieving the standard requires a company to meet a range of some 40 evidence requirements, which are evaluated through a system that combines self assessment by IiP-trained, in-company personnel and external assessment by IiP assessors. Learning activity is key to the human resource development that IiP seeks to recognise. This is demonstrated, for example, through the evidence requirements associated with the indicator of planned learning development. These comprise the following:

- Top managers can explain the organisation's learning and development needs;
- Managers can describe the learning needs, the plans and resources in place to meet them;
- People can describe how they are involved in identifying their learning and development needs and activities planned to meet them; and,
- People can describe what their learning and development activities should achieve for them.

A large number of firms across sectors and types of work organisation is now covered by or working towards the IiP standard. The IiP target is that at least 45 per cent of the UK's workforce is employed by organisations that have achieved, or are working towards, Investors in People status by the end of 2007, and that at least 65,000 small firms (defined as organisations between 5-49 employees) are involved.

We have described IiP at some length because the scheme illustrates well a theme that runs through the first two sections of the UK report. Comparable examples can be found in firms HR policies on appointment and promotion, and in the universities' central admission's process, which requires each UK candidate for entry to complete a personal statement and provide a teacher's reference, in addition to public examination results.

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<sup>51</sup> See [www.investorsinpeople.co.uk](http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk)

In a labour market that is less subject to regulated entry and progression requirements than is the case in some other countries, the recognition of informal and non-formal learning is already an aspect of importance in the careers of many learners and workers, and a recognizable feature in many learning and working organisations. However, this recognition is by and large localized and confined to specific areas of working life and learning. It is not transparent in the sense that, for example, the European co-operation on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning implies, nor are the benefits necessarily open to all, nor does recognition of the outcomes of informal and non-formal learning in one sphere necessarily translate facilitate mobility to another.

*1.6.b) Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.*

Interest in the recognition of informal learning in the UK began in the early 1980s as a result of contact with the United States and in 1987 the Learning from Experience Trust<sup>52</sup> was set up to encourage developments in what was then known as the ‘assessment of prior and experiential learning’ (APEL). There were initially two main strands of activity:

- providing a route into higher education for mature students who lacked the normal entry qualifications. To provide the element of guidance and external validation which was needed for would-be students wishing to take this route, further education colleges began to provide ‘Access to HE courses’, helping the students to identify their skills and to produce portfolios of evidence to support their claims.
- helping the adult unemployed to return to work by identifying their job-related skills and the range of jobs in which these skills could be used. This strand was important at a time of high unemployment, when 40% of the workforce had no formal qualifications and increasing numbers of women were wishing to re-enter the labour market after a career break.

#### APEL as a route to Higher Education

The use of APEL as an alternative route to Higher Education was initially developed with the support of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), which was responsible for validating degrees in the polytechnic sector before 1992 and had a considerable influence on research and development in this field. CNAA also promoted the use of credit frameworks (see 3.2.a) which made it possible to accredit experiential learning within degree programmes and a number of systems for APL were established in various institutions around this period. Both APL for entry to Higher Education and APL for credit within HE courses were fostered by the emphasis given by HE institutions (especially the former polytechnics) to widening access to HE, by encouraging learners from non-traditional backgrounds and providing opportunities for adult returners. Their more vocationally oriented provision gave more opportunities for APL than in the older traditional ‘academic’ universities and APL was seen as potentially attractive in contributing to both greater flexibility and relevance in institutional provision.

Development work under the auspices of the Scottish Vocational Educational Council (SCOTVEC) made a further contribution to APL in Scotland and the creation of the CNAA credit accumulation and transfer schemes (CATS) led to the creation in 1990 of a national Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (SCOTCAT).

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<sup>52</sup> See [www.learningexperience.org.uk](http://www.learningexperience.org.uk)

APL continues to be used as a pathway into higher education and also into further education courses, although many Access to HE courses have changed over time, into formal taught courses with examinations. Nevertheless, APL still has a role and can give exemption from some modules. The majority of universities have Access to HE programmes giving entry to at least some of their courses, usually organised through a partnership with one or more FE colleges.

### NVQs and SVQs

The introduction of National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs and SVQs) from 1986 provided a boost to APEL in the further education (now learning and skills) sector, but switched the emphasis to the use of prior experience in assessment for formal qualifications, so that the preferred term became the ‘accreditation of prior learning’ or APL. NVQs and SVQs are work-related, competence or outcomes-based qualifications, which reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively. S/NVQs are based on national occupational standards, which are statements of performance describing what competent people in a particular occupation are expected to be able to do. The standards cover all the main aspects of an occupation, including current best practice, the ability to adapt to future requirements and the knowledge and understanding that underpin competent performance.

NVQs do not have to be completed in a specified amount of time or in a specific learning institution. They are composed of units that can be achieved when the learner is ready to be assessed, irrespective of how or where the knowledge, skills or competences have been attained. By design, this is a form of vocational qualification that can be achieved through the assessment of previously acquired knowledge and skills - even though it is clear that many of the learners follow a formal course of learning, whether in a workplace, college or combination. Over six million NVQs have been awarded since their inception, but the statistics do not indicate how many NVQs are gained by candidates on the basis of **only** prior informal or non-formal learning<sup>53</sup>.

Since S/NVQs require evidence of competence in the workplace, they are ideally suited to the same procedures as are used in APL and APEL in other contexts: reflection on past and current working experience (and experience outside the workplace, where relevant), identification of the skills gained and compilation of a portfolio of supporting evidence. This may include learner logbooks, observation by an assessor, reports from supervisors, ‘witness statements’ of work the candidate has done and reports or artefacts produced by the candidate, which demonstrate possession of the required skills or knowledge. The evidence used may be drawn from previous jobs or voluntary activity, as well as the candidate’s current role. The concept of ‘evidence’ is now embedded into the S/NVQ process, with the proviso that the evidence must be fairly recent and must be relevant to the skills required by the qualification being sought. (See also 3.3.b)

NVQs are organised into five levels, based on the competences required. See the table that follows.

| Levels  | Description   |
|---------|---|
| Level 1 | Competence that involves the application of knowledge in the performance of a range of varied work activities, most of which are routine and predictable. |
| Level 2 | Competence that involves the application of knowledge in a significant range of varied  |

<sup>53</sup> NVQs – with the associated concepts of national occupational standards, and the functional method of competence analysis - have influenced many outcomes approaches to vocational qualifications in Europe and in other countries. For instance, Finland’s Ministry of Education observed the development of NVQs and adapted the ideas to develop the NOSTE system that is now widely used for recognising informally and non-formally acquired vocation skills, in the workplace.

work activities, performed in a variety of contexts. Some of these activities are complex or non-routine and there is some individual responsibility or autonomy. Collaboration with others, perhaps through membership of a work group or team, is often a requirement.

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**Level 3** Competence that involves the application of knowledge in a broad range of varied work activities performed in a wide variety of contexts, most of which are complex and non-routine. There is considerable responsibility and autonomy and control or guidance of others is often required.

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**Level 4** Competence that involves the application of knowledge in a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities performed in a variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. Responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources is often present.

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**Level 5** Competence that involves the application of a range of fundamental principles across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of substantial resources features strongly, as do personal accountabilities for analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation.

Source: [http://www.qca.org.uk/14-19/qualifications/index\\_nvqs.htm](http://www.qca.org.uk/14-19/qualifications/index_nvqs.htm)

### Other uses of APL

Other uses of APL in the learning and skills sector need to be understood against the background of UK policy, which places heavy emphasis on the use of qualifications to monitor the quality of courses, but leaves the operational side of qualifications to independent awarding bodies, albeit subject to the accreditation of the awarding bodies themselves and of individual qualifications and with the content of many qualifications determined on the advice of Sector Skills Councils, as representative of employer views.

The use of APL in qualifications was strongly promoted by UK public policy in the early 1990s, partly with the aim of increasing the numbers of people with recognised qualifications, but since then priorities have shifted and there is less publicity for APL. Regulations for most qualifications offered in the learning and skills sector give providers considerable discretion over who may be admitted to the course and over course length, allowing prior learning to be taken into consideration, but the practicalities of timetabling and the requirement for reliable final assessment restrict the extent to which this flexibility can be used. Nevertheless, the requirements for external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland state that specification for each qualification must indicate ‘any prior knowledge attainment and/or experience recommended for candidates taking the qualification and, where appropriate, arrangements for recognising prior experience and achievement’.<sup>54</sup>

### Recent developments

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<sup>54</sup> QCA, ACCAC & CCEA, The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2004, available on [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_11313.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_11313.aspx)

The importance of recognising the outcomes of informal and non-formal learning was beginning to be acknowledged again in the research literature from 2000. The Economic and Social Research Council's programme of research into the Learning Society, which was led by Frank Coffield, had reached the conclusion that the UK's research and policy emphasis on raising skills largely through increased take-up of formal qualifications ignored the key factor of informal learning. In reassessing the significance of informal learning ('the structure below the surface'), Coffield<sup>55</sup> stated:

*'There is a strong tendency for policy makers, researchers and practitioners to admit readily the importance of informal learning and then to proceed to develop policy, theory and practice without further reference to it. We must move beyond this periodic genuflection in the direction of informal learning and incorporate it into plans for a learning society'. (op cit page 2).*

Since then a research concentration on informal learning particularly in the workplace has developed, notably through the work of researchers such as Michael Eraut<sup>56</sup>, Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin<sup>57</sup>. The research is now finding its way into the policy dimension, for example through the Department of Trade and Industry's Skills Research Programme<sup>58</sup> and through the Learning and Skills Council's development of a policy for a 'staged process' for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. Indeed, the current enthusiasm for developing credit frameworks where they do not already exist across the national qualifications systems of the UK owes much to a revived interest in the recognition of the outcomes of informal and non-formal learning.

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55 Coffield, F, 2000. The structure below the surface: reassessing the significance of informal learning in Coffield F ed The Learning Society – the Necessity of Informal Learning, ESRC, The Policy Press

56 For example: Eraut, Michael. 2004. 'Informal learning in the workplace' Studies in Continuing Education. Vol. 26. No. 2. July 2004.

57 For example: Fuller, A., Hodkinson, H., Hodkinson, P. and Unwin, L. 2005. Learning as Peripheral Participation in Communities of Practice: A reassessment of key concepts in workplace learning. British Educational Research Journal, 31:1.pp.49-68.

58 See Fuller A, Ashton D, Felstead A, Unwin L, Waters S and Quinn M, 2003, The Impact of Informal Learning at Work on Business Productivity – Final report to the Department of Trade and Industry, The Centre for Labour Market Studies / University of Leicester

## Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements

### Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

2.1.a) Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

#### Overview of the policy position

As a broad policy response, the UK government signalled its endorsement of the importance of informal and non-formal learning and its recognition in the statement of intent agreed at the G8 Summit held in Moscow in July 2006, which states that:

*‘...a focus on quality, and the recognition of the value of informal and non-formal education are at the heart of healthy education systems.’* (Education for Innovative Societies in the 21st Century, paragraph 30<sup>59</sup>).

This reinforces the position that the UK has taken in the discussions at the European level, and a broad consensus exists among policy-makers, researchers and practitioner representatives that this is an important aspect for development. Notably, there is support for policy development, initiatives and funding from ministries in Whitehall that include DfES (the Department for Education and Skills) and DTI (the Department of Trade and Industry)<sup>60</sup>. The latter places importance on the impact of informal learning at work on business productivity<sup>61</sup>, while the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has identified the recognition of formal, informal and non-formal learning of economic migrants as an important economic and social priority. There is similar strong support for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in Scotland and Wales. The UK has a considerable body of research and experience in this respect, with numerous schemes operating on local, regional and sectoral bases. Some schemes relate to further or higher education entry and qualifications or to workplace recognition, others include partnerships involving two or all of these.

Whilst there is no single national scheme for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning operating or developing across the UK, there has been related work, as described below, in the development of credit frameworks and in exploratory projects on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

#### Credit Frameworks

Credit and qualifications frameworks are being put in place in all four UK countries (see 3.1.e) and open up new opportunities for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, even where the implications have not been formally identified:

- the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which will replace the previous separate frameworks in those countries
- The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

#### Exploratory projects on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning

59 Source: [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/uploads/documents/G8\\_DeclarationonEducation.doc](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/uploads/documents/G8_DeclarationonEducation.doc)

60 Following the re-organisation of government departments in late June 2007, the responsibilities of these Departments have been transferred to the Department of Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

61 See, in particular, Alison Fuller et al The impact of informal learning at work on business productivity, final report, DTI, October 2003

In **Scotland** the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) Project has facilitated since 2004 a debate on the recognition of prior informal learning (RPL) within the context of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The key outcome of the project is the development of the SCQF RPL Guidelines (2005)<sup>62</sup> to support the implementation of RPL provision across all post-16 education and training sectors in Scotland. The guidelines will in future be included in the SCQF Handbook. They cover all prior informal learning which has not been previously assessed or credit-rated, including prior learning achieved through life and work experiences, as well as prior learning gained in less formal contexts in community-based learning, work-based learning, continuing professional development and voluntary work. The RPL policy declares that:

*'Developing effective mechanisms for the recognition of prior informal learning is regarded as being fundamental to the success of the SCQF as a tool for promoting and enabling lifelong learning.'*<sup>63</sup>

The Principles on which the Guidelines are based are given in full in the Scottish Contribution to the UK Report.

In higher education in **England**, the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) provides incentives to universities to widen access in terms of the social, ethnic, etc profile of institutions. The main vehicle for this is the widening participation programme, in which APEL (the accreditation of prior learning) plays a significant part.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the funding council for post-16 learning below HE level in England, has developed a staged process for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA), with the intention that:

*There will be a learner-focussed system of recognising both anticipated and unanticipated learning outcomes arising from non-accredited programmes. Quality systems in relation to RARPA will be robust, fit for purpose and meet each learner's needs. Providers will use the approach as a tool for quality improvement and to increase recognition of learner achievement.*<sup>64</sup>

The RARPA initiative draws on the long-standing UK tradition of continuing education through free-standing adult courses provided by local authorities, further education colleges, universities and voluntary organisations. Many come under the government's Adult and Community Learning Fund, and most require part funding by the learner. Some of these are qualification courses (GCSEs, A levels, etc.) but most are non-accredited, and it can be assumed therefore that accreditation is not the learners' primary motivation. Seeking to achieve recognition for the learning outcomes from these courses, the government has given the LSC a remit to develop the RARPA<sup>65</sup> scheme; this entails new forms of recognition for adult and community education, and implies a strong move to develop systems to recognise the outcomes of publicly funded non-formal education. The LSC has developed a five-step 'staged process' for non-accredited provision, as follows:

1. Aims agreed.
2. Initial assessment.

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62 See <http://www.scqf.org.uk/rpl.asp>

63 Source: <http://www.scqf.org.uk/rpl.asp>

64 Source: [http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/welcome\\_rarpa.htm?TTYPE=](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/PolicyandDevelopment/AdultandCommunity/welcome_rarpa.htm?TTYPE=)

65 A clear description of the RARPA scheme for non-accredited adult education and of APL for higher education access is to be found in Konrad J, 2005 (?), United Kingdom paper for the European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal Learning

3. Identification of learning objectives.
4. Recognition and recording of achievements.
5. End of programme: self-assessment; summative assessment; review.

A number of pilot projects<sup>66</sup> have been run by adult education providers, supported by the Learning and Skills Network research and development agency.

A number of sectors, such as the learning professions and nursing, each have their own systems for recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and regional schemes for credit and recognition have existed in areas such as London and eastern England since the early 1990s, without a national scheme developing for England. The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), the UK-wide umbrella body for the developing sector skills councils (SSCs), does not yet feature the recognition of informal and non-formal learning prominently on its website, although a number of the SSCs are developing initiatives in their respective areas.

*2.1.b) Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state – yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.*

We can draw three conclusions from 2.1.a. above:

- Firstly, there is no single legal or regulatory system for the recognition of informal learning across the UK;
- Secondly, Scotland and Wales are developing credit and qualifications systems that specifically include the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, beyond the range of more localised arrangements that are already in place; and,
- Thirdly, while a new qualifications and credit framework is under development for England, it does not contain full, specific reference to the inclusion of informal and non-formal learning. Thus it can be inferred that there is no clear intention at present to regulate for this aspect, even though the door remains open. Nevertheless, recognition is increasingly seen as important in terms of policy, while more localised schemes have considerable usage and currency.

In the following sub-sections we make reference to some actual developments, mainly in Scotland, and then explain the ‘possible reasons for inexistence (sic) and possible future prospects’ for England.

|  |
|--|
| <i>2.1c) Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?</i> |
|--|

Scotland’s New Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) are based on the following Core principles, which are described in full in the separate Scottish Contribution to this report:

- Learner-focussed
- Accessibility
- Flexibility
- Reliability, transparency and consistency
- Clarity of role definition
- Quality
- Collaboration

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<sup>66</sup> For details and case studies see <http://www.lseducation.org.uk/research/centres/RCFTeachLearnCurricQual/rarpa.aspx>

*2.1.d) Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure, which made the change.*

There is no UK legislation which covers the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. The historical background is set out in section 1.6.b), with some additional material in the separate Scottish report.

*2.1.e) What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?*

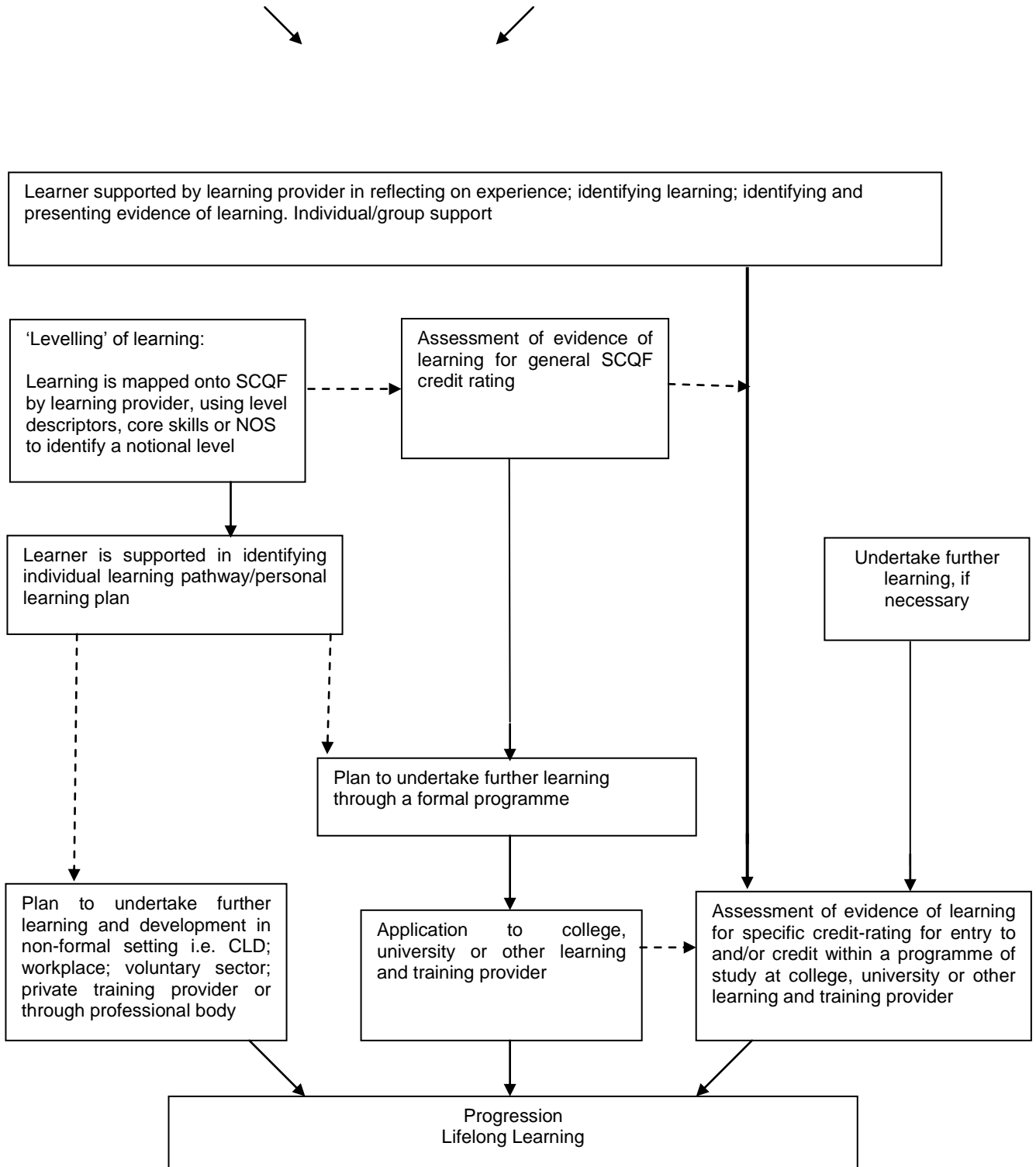
Government departments have overall responsibility for policy. In England, detailed regulations and implementation are delegated to relevant non-departmental public bodies, mainly the funding organisations and the regulatory authorities. In the devolved administrations (especially Wales and Northern Ireland), the government department may have responsibility for implementation as well as for policy.

*2.1.f) Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?*

There is no legal framework for RINFL in the UK.

**RPL: The Learners Journey**

Diagram indicating possible RPL routes for learners, based upon SCQF RPL Guidelines.



*2.1.g) Provide information, if exists, any evaluation of how they work or how they have not worked.*

The Scottish Office Central Research Unit (CRU) published 'Evaluation of the impact of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)' in October 2005. Researchers from the University of Edinburgh, University of Stirling and the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, Glasgow Caledonian University carried out this evaluation, which concludes that:

*...the arrangements for APEL/RPL (Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning/Recognition of Prior Learning) were emphasised [as useful opportunities to strengthen lifelong learning provision], although it was noted that these arrangements have still not been finalised...*

*2.1.h) Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?*

See the separate Scottish report for detail of awareness raising in Scotland.

### Case: England

*What are the possible reasons why a national system for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning is not in existence?*

The complexity that underlies the answer to this question as concerns England is this: We have wide experience of a number of more localised approaches to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning; yet policy makers have not developed (or, perhaps, seen the need to develop) a single overriding system of recognition.

Recognition of informally and non-formally acquired knowledge, skills and competences is in wide usage in several areas of lifelong learning:

- National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (NVQs and SVQs), as described in 1.6.b)
- the recognition of prior learning for higher education (or further education) entry, also described in 1.6.b)
- the developing system of RARPA in adult education (referred to in 2.1.a above).

Emphasis on access to employment or progression in the UK labour markets is less often dependent on specific vocational qualifications as a licence to practice than is the case in more highly regulated labour markets. This may be particularly the case for university graduate employment. Furthermore, company-training policies may tend to emphasise their own schemes such as training schemes and employee appraisal systems, rather than more transparent, national systems.

That there is a strong policy and provider interest in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in England is clear. So, why is there no clear move to 'a national system', implying a single, coherent national system? The answer may lie in several factors. Firstly, issues relating to the formal systems of qualifications substantially drive education and training reforms. Secondly, governance responsibilities are devolved across the administrations of the United Kingdom, shared between a number of non-governmental public bodies and decentralised to schools and colleges alongside independent, chartered universities, all of whom take many of their own management decisions. Thirdly, the labour market is not

highly regulated nor subject to licence to practice requirements, except across a number of clearly defined professions and occupations. Local, regional and sectoral organisations have a good deal of both experience and autonomy to develop appropriate schemes (a bottom up pressure) without there being at present, at least, strong enough drivers at the national level to lead to the development of a single framework, even one couched in broad, enabling terms. The clearest evidence of the robustness of a localised approach to encouraging and recognising informal and non-formal approaches (as well as formal approaches) to training is in the Investors in People (IiP) scheme, which is a national standard (described in some detail in section 1.6.a) above).

*What are the possible future prospects?*

Local systems of credit accumulation and transfer and for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning have developed a localised currency, but - in spite of some powerful championing - have not yet translated into schemes with a national currency. This may remain the case, at least in the short and medium terms. Nevertheless, there are some drivers that may make a national scheme (for England) more plausible. Implementation in other parts of the UK, international developments caused by expectations under the European E&T 2010 and peer learning processes, and domestic employment and skills strategies may also become stronger drivers that provide some push in this direction. There is an ever-stronger emphasis due to demographic and labour market factors for older workers to engage in learning, which can be expected to raise the importance of recognition of skills and outcomes. This will be an interesting issue for the OECD study visit to deliberate.

**Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government**

2.2.a) List all actors in governance and create a matrix of who (e.g. government, quasi-government, assessment centres, public educational institutions, private for-profit education providers, professional bodies, etc.) does what (provides academic/ professional recognition, overseas assessment, etc.) for non-formal and informal learning. If there are more than one body who are responsible for an action (e.g. recognition), list all actors involved and describe how is the coordination managed?<sup>67</sup> If there are more than one ministry of a government are involved, specify which ministries have competencies for what. How clear are the different roles by different actors communicated among themselves as well as to users?

2.2.b) Create the above same matrix for recognition of formal learning for comparative purposes.

Listing of who-does-what for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning

For simplicity, the Table below refers to the actors and their roles for England. A similar table, though with different actors for governance, could be compiled for Wales and for Northern Ireland. For Scotland, refer to the separate Scottish contribution to this report.

To highlight the similarities between the actors for formal and non-formal learning, the tables for 2.2.a) and 2.2.b) have been combined.

| Function                  | Who?  | What – formal learning  | What – informal and non-formal learning  |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| National policy           | Ministries: DfES; DTI; <sup>68</sup> DWP  | Develop a range of policies and remits for education and skills, including qualifications.  | Develop a range of policies and remits for recognition, though not a single, unified policy  |
| Education providers       | Universities, colleges, schools, voluntary sector and private providers<br>An innovation is the new, sector based academies – such as the Unison Open College, sponsored by a trades union, and academies being established in retail, the national Health Service, etc | Provide programmes of learning, with formative assessment and (depending on the type of institution and course) may also provide or contribute to summative assessment. | Operate schemes for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, to a greater or lesser extent. Operate APL, etc.<br>Existing APL schemes have often been developed locally through the work of education and training providers, often in local partnerships – a bottom up approach |
| Human resource management | Large companies/SMEs, Public, private, voluntary sector employers.<br>Organisations include the Confederation of British Industry, British Chambers   | May provide part or all of programmes of learning. Sometimes, especially for NVQs, may contribute to assessment.  | Responsible for HR strategies, including recruitment, promotion, workforce development. Likely to have strategies to enable and recognise the  |

<sup>67</sup> See Component 4.1 for complementary data.

<sup>68</sup> Following the re-organisation of government departments in late June 2007, the responsibilities of these Departments have been transferred to the Department of Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

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|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
|   | of Commerce, etc  |   | outcomes of informal and non-formal learning, particular if they achieve Investors in People status. Informal recognition of informal and non-formal learning is an important part of most UK HR processes – recruitment, promotion, performance management, etc. Responsible for licence to practise, qualification requirements, etc |
| Quality and/or Regulation of qualifications /frameworks | QCA<br>QAA – for higher education   | QCA<br>QAA – for higher education   | QA of curriculum, qualifications and awarding bodies. Project to shift from the NQF to a more flexible Credit and Qualification Framework.   |
| Advice and Guidance                                     | Connexions (ages 14-19)<br>learndirect  | Information on available courses and advice and guidance on choice of course.   | Information, advice and guidance services inform potential learners they are in contact with of non-traditional access and entry opportunities, and of systems such as local APL opportunities for potentially excluded groups   |
| Quality assurance of education and training provision   | OFSTED <sup>69</sup>  | Inspection of schools, colleges and government funded workplace learning  | Inspection of schools, colleges and government funded workplace learning   |
| Strategy and funding for all post-16 learning           | Learning and Skills Council and local LSCs (for post-16 education and skills other than HE)<br>Higher Education Funding Council                                 | Funding of learning provision, including deciding funding priorities and promoting good practice.   | Developing and instituting systems for recognition in non-formal adult learning provision<br>Incentivises recognition, eg through widening participation strategy  |
| Awarding bodies   | Academic and vocational awarding bodies – 4 large organisations (AQA, City & Guilds, EDEXCEL, OCR) and more than 100 smaller ones, often sector specific bodies | Develop qualifications according to specifications, centre recognition, assessment and moderation arrangements.<br>Quality control of assessment, normally involving either external assessment or external moderation/verification of internal assessment. | Develop qualifications according to specifications, centre recognition, assessment and moderation arrangements.<br>Quality assurance of APL procedures.  |

<sup>69</sup> The former Adult Learning Inspectorate has been subsumed within OFSTED

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|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Stakeholders with commitment to recognition of informal and non-formal learning | National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, organisations representing minority or excluded groups' interest, some research groups, unions                                    |  | Raise the debate on recognition at national and local levels, act as champions.  |
| Local or regional credit partnerships   | National Open College Network, Credit East, Northern Universities Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer, Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer | Accredit formal learning – but their qualifications are usually outside the present National Qualifications Framework. | The key focus is partnerships for developing and securing credit accumulation and transfer systems involving further education and higher education providers in a geographical area. Tend to take active interest in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, as well as credit for formal learning |

2.2.c) Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a 'predominance-of-industry' model; 2) a 'predominance-of-public authorities' model'; and 3) a 'shared responsibility' model<sup>70</sup>. Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none of which is suitable to your country, describe your own country model.

We take this question to refer to the development of policies and systems for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, rather than the certification of formal education.

The tradition used to be a 'voluntarist' one in which employers were responsible for their own skills development and systems of qualification or recognition, while universities were responsible for all of their admissions procedures: both these trends led to the establishment of the awarding bodies in England, and also in Scotland and Wales. This pattern was closest to model 1. Over the recent decades the state has developed a strategic role, particularly in the development of policy formation associated with funding strategies and regimes. Linked to this, devolution to the 'devolved administrations' particularly in Wales and Scotland has been a marked aspect of national policy since 1997.

For the recognition of informal and non-formal learning this has led to the developments described in 2.1 and 2.2 above.

With reference to the development of the provisions for recognising informal and non-formal learning in Scotland, the SCQF strategy is government-led, but as a means of operating it depends strongly on buy in and ownership on the part of the main stakeholders. Thus it is closest to Model 3, shared responsibility.

<sup>70</sup> See UNESCO UIE Report (Draft) at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uiie/pdf/recognitiondraftsynthesis.pdf>

Both Wales and Northern Ireland are also closest to Model 3, shared responsibility, with the development of credit frameworks in those countries largely driven by government or government agencies.

In England, the government takes the strategic lead in the national skills strategy, and the key emphasis is on bringing the demand side to the forefront in defining occupational standards and developing qualifications. The setting up of the Sector Skills Councils is the clearest evidence of the priority placed on giving clear expression to employers needs. However, the government has not taken single clear steps to establish an overarching system for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and many of the initiatives in the field have been bottom-up, involving the participation of universities, colleges, and often employers, through local and regional networks. The government is taking a more recent interest through policies such as widening participation and RARPA. It might be best to describe the English model as driven from the bottom up, with government now taking a much stronger interest in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

*2.2.d) Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.*

As this report has indicated, there is no single, identifiable national strategy in which an inter-ministerial approach can be taken. Nevertheless, the developments taking place in Scotland and Wales (described elsewhere) involve, respectively, the full range of stakeholders in Scotland and the cross-departmental initiative of the Assembly in Wales.

As already explained, it is clear that several ministries with responsibility for skills and training in England are interested in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, notably the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

*2.3.b) If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.*

Since there is no national scheme for England, and since the schemes in Scotland and Wales are developing, it is not possible to provide statistics.

Except for specific development projects, there is unlikely to be any budget data available, since the recognition of informal learning is often (as in NVQs) an integral part of the assessment process.

*2.3.c) Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.*

Where RINFL is being used for entry to a course or credit within a course it is normally the training provider recruiting the learners which bears the cost of recognition. Indeed, the cost and time consuming aspects of APL have meant that for a period recognition schemes tended to fall from favour.

Where an employer is funding the training of employees to gain a specific qualification, the costs of RINFL will be included in the overall cost.

For APL in higher education (less so in further education) the candidate is frequently required to bear some of the financial cost, not only through the use of their time, but also in paying a financial contribution<sup>71</sup>.

*2.3.d) How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centers? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programmes exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.*

The UK does not have separate centres for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in the way that this question implies. All assessment centres for S/NVQs, of which there are some thousands, are expected to offer APL to candidates where appropriate and some other providers of learning and skills will be able to do so, in the context of the course or qualifications which they offer.

#### **Component 2.4. Others**

*2.4.a) Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.*

See our response to the last part of section 1.

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<sup>71</sup> See, for example, The University of Lancaster: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/edres/study/alne/credit.htm>

### **Component 3. Description of technical arrangements**

#### ***Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework***

*3.1.a) What term does your country use for 'Recognition of non-formal and informal learning'? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.*

The educational context, and in particular the current reform of the qualifications system, make the distinctions drawn between formal, non-formal and informal learning<sup>72</sup> by the OECD difficult to apply to the current direction of UK education policy. Many of the examples of non-formal and informal learning provided in the guidelines<sup>73</sup> highlight how the approach to reform in the UK is blurring the traditional boundaries between different approaches to learning. This is creating a system where in-house training, computer skills, literacy, numeracy and business skills (listed as non-formal or informal in the guidelines) are recognised within the same national system as qualifications traditionally associated with a more 'formal' setting.

Perhaps the principal difference between the UK and OECD approaches to describing recognition lies in the focus upon 'achievement' as opposed to 'learning' in the UK. The emerging qualifications system is in a sense, disinterested in the mode or approach that the learner may have taken to the achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, the qualifications system will not differentiate between achievements that have been undertaken through a formal programme in a college or university, incremental skills development in the workplace or self-managed distance learning so long as the learning outcomes defined in the unit or qualification have been met.

This makes the traditional distinctions between formal, non-formal and informal learning less significant in a system that will recognise each type of learning through a focus upon the achievement of learning outcomes. Bringing together formal, along with elements of non-formal and informal learning into the same national system is a deliberate attempt to make the UK system more inclusive of a wider range of achievements through an approach to recognition that does not categorise learners as a result of the mode or type of learning they have undertaken.

Furthermore, the system of credit accumulation and transfer that lies at the heart of the current reform programme will further break down distinctions between formal and informal/non-formal approaches to learning. Credit will become the currency of the new system allowing individuals to accumulate or transfer their credits towards or between qualifications, but will not distinguish between the approach to learning that has led to the award of that credit. Again, it is the achievement of learning outcomes rather than the manner in which learning is recognised that is beginning to define the qualifications system in the UK.

The terms of 'informal' and 'non-formal' learning are used differently in different contexts. For example, in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Recognition of Prior Informal Learning project, the working definition of the different types of learning has been used, which derives from that used by the EU in its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000, EU: Brussels):

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72 Werquin, P & Taguma, M (2006) New OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: guidelines for country participation, Pages 4 & 17-18

73 Ibid. Pages 17-18 Non-Formal Learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grids)

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- Formal learning takes place in education and training institutions leading to recognised diplomas and qualifications;
- Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formal certification, e.g. learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and through community-based learning; and,
- Informal learning can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning. The learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to the development of their skills and knowledge. This recognition may only happen retrospectively through the RPL process, unless the experiences take place as part of a planned experiential, or work-based learning programme.

Other terms which are, or have been, in use in the UK are:

- accreditation of prior learning (APL) – this covers all learning, however acquired, with an emphasis on its recognition within a qualification
- assessment of prior and experiential learning (APEL) – this covers all learning, but with an emphasis on that which occurs through life experiences rather than in educational settings; APEL may be assessment towards a qualification or assessment for course entry
- the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) - this is the process by which universities recognise qualifications or awards gained prior to the current programme of study (see 1.1.d)
- recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA) – this relates to non-formal learning

*3.1.b) Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, the impact of such linkages.*

As described elsewhere (1.6.b), there are strong links between recognition of informal and non-formal learning and qualifications, especially S/NVQs, but this is not the only context for recognition.

*3.1.c) What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?*

As described previously (1.6.b), the possibility of recognising informal and non-formal learning is a design feature of S/NVQs. It is also accepted practice in access to HE for learners without the normal entry qualifications (especially mature learners) and for credit within HE and is encouraged within other qualifications. Linkage to the National Qualifications Framework in England has been made more difficult by the limited coverage of that framework, an issue which is being addressed in the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (see discussion in 3.1.e below).

Other difficulties in linking recognition of informal and non-formal learning to the qualifications framework are

- the time required for both learners and teachers to identify the prior learning which has taken place and its relationship to a formal qualification
- the timetabling and economics of course provision, which can make it difficult for a learner with some prior knowledge to attend only for those parts of the course which s/he has not already covered.

*3.1.d) Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing 'legitimacy' both in working life and in the educational system ?*

Linkages are made to both academic and vocational qualifications.

*3.1.e) If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?*

There is no national credit accumulation and transfer system operating across the whole of the UK, but various local and regional reciprocal arrangements for accumulation and transfer of learning exist. Building on earlier developments, credit and qualifications frameworks are now being developed to complete the coverage of each of the four countries of the UK. As the diagram which follows illustrates, there is a relationship between the qualification frameworks of England / Wales / Northern Ireland and Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.

- The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland<sup>74</sup>, currently being developed, is intended to be a broader and more flexible framework than the current National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and to recognise a wider range of learning. It is designed to provide a more inclusive framework in which smaller units of learning (credits) can be recognised, thus enabling learners to build up their qualifications and learning portfolio in a more flexible way. This may open the door to improved recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Unlike some of the earlier frameworks, it does not cover Higher Education.
- In Wales, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)<sup>75</sup> was developed from 2003 under the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly and specifically the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS), with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). CQFW embraces all post-16 and higher education in Wales, including 'all types and styles of learning', and all qualifications.
- The Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) was funded initially (1999-2002) by the Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning to develop a credit framework able to recognise learning in all shapes and forms, no matter how acquired and to give credit for small blocks of learning. This experience has been taken forward into work with England and Wales on the QCF.<sup>76</sup>
- The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)<sup>77</sup> was launched in December 2001, with the aim of enabling employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications and how they relate to each other. Described by the Scottish Executive as an 'enabling framework', it covers both HE and lower level qualifications.

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74 [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_8150.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8150.aspx)

75 <http://www.elwa.ac.uk/elwaweb/elwa.aspx?pageid=1612>

76 <http://www.rewardinglearning.com/development/qualifications/qualifications.html> For earlier work on the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) see <http://www.rewardinglearning.com/development/qualifications/publications/docs/FrameworkDocument2005.pdf>

77 <http://www.scqf.org.uk/>

Each of these frameworks combines the concepts of volume of learning achievement (credit) and the demands made by that learning on the learner (level). The credit value of a unit is determined by the ‘notional learning hours’ (see 3.2.c) which would be required by a typical learner with the knowledge and skills expected on entry, but there is no requirement for courses to be tied precisely to that number of hours, especially where the learners already have some of the required knowledge and skills. This opens up the way to the recognition of prior learning, however the learning was acquired.

| Main stages of education / employment  | England, Wales & Northern Ireland National Qualifications Framework<br><a href="http://www.qca.org.uk/qualifications">www.qca.org.uk/qualifications</a><br><a href="http://www.accac.org.uk">www.accac.org.uk</a><br><a href="http://www.qca.org.uk/openquals">www.qca.org.uk/openquals</a><br><a href="http://www.ccea.org.uk">www.ccea.org.uk</a> | National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland<br><a href="http://www.nfqe.nfq.ie/en/TheFramework">www.nfqe.nfq.ie/en/TheFramework</a> | The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework<br><a href="http://www.sqcf.org.uk">www.sqcf.org.uk</a> |
|--|---|--|--|
| Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training | Entry level<br>Entry Level Certificate (NQF)  | Level 1<br>Level 1 Certificate   | Access level 1<br>Access level 2   |
| Secondary education Initial entry into employment or further education                         | Level 1<br>NVQ Level 1, Level 1 Certificate, GCSEs at grade D-G   | Level 2<br>Level 2 Certificate   | Access level 3<br>Foundation Standard Grade  |
| Continuation of secondary education Progression to skilled employment                          | Level 2<br>NVQ Level 2, Level 2 Certificate, Level 2 Diploma, GCSEs at grade A*-C   | Level 3<br>Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate   | Level 4<br>Intermediate 1, General Standard Grade, SVQ 1   |
| Completion of secondary education Entry to higher education                                    | Level 3<br>NVQ Level 3, A* Levels, Level 3 Certificate, Level 3 Diploma   | Level 4<br>Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate  | Level 5<br>Intermediate 2, Credit Standard Grade, SVQ 2  |
| Qualified/Skilled worker Specialised education and training                                    | Level 4<br>NVQs, Level 4 Certificate, Level 4 Diploma   | Level 5<br>Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate  | Level 6<br>Higher, SVQ 3   |
| Entry to professional graduate employment  | Level 5<br>NVQs, Level 5 Certificate, Level 5 Diploma, Higher National Diploma  | Level 6<br>Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate  | Level 7<br>Advanced Higher, Higher National Certificate, Certificate of Higher Education                 |
| Intermediate / higher education Advanced skills training                                       | Level 6<br>NVQs, Level 6 Certificate, Level 6 Diploma   | Level 7<br>Ordinary Bachelor Degree  | Level 8<br>Higher National Diploma, Diploma In Higher Education, SVQ 4                                   |
| Professional or postgraduate education or employment   | Level 7<br>NVQs, Level 7 Diploma, Level 7 Fellowship, Level 7 Advanced Professional Certificate   | Level 8<br>Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma   | Levels 9<br>Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma/Certificate  |
|  | Level 8<br>Highly specialist Diploma from a professional body   | Level 9<br>Masters Degree, Post-graduate Diploma   | Level 10<br>Honours degree, Graduate Diploma/Certificate   |
|  |   | Level 10<br>Doctoral Degree  | Level 11<br>Masters, SVQ 5   |
|  |   |  | Level 12<br>Doctorates   |

The discussion below outlines the process by which the National Qualifications Framework was replaced by the QCF. Although recognition of informal and non-formal learning has been taken into account in this process, it has not been a major driver for the QCF development.

### Background – the National Qualifications Framework

In 1997, the *Education Act* established the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) whose goals included the creation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). During its development the NQF was populated with qualifications that continue to be regulated in accordance with statutory requirements. These requirements set out the principles and processes by which QCA would regulate qualifications along with its sister organisations, ACCAC (in Wales)<sup>78</sup> and CCEA (in Northern Ireland).

<sup>78</sup> Since April 2006 ACCAC has been incorporated into the Welsh Assembly Government.

The NQF initially categorised qualifications according to five levels and across three types; general, vocationally-related and occupational. In 2004, it was revised to accommodate 8 levels (along with a pre-level 1 or entry level) in order to better align with levels used in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications<sup>79</sup>. The three qualification categories were also dropped. By the beginning of 2006 some 5000 qualifications had been accredited to the NQF.

Nevertheless, studies commissioned by QCA<sup>80</sup> suggest that the regulated market for qualifications represents only the tip of the iceberg of the post-compulsory learning and qualifications market in the UK<sup>81</sup>. Many qualifications exist outside the current NQF; indeed the report estimates that only around 15% of currently available qualifications are accredited within the NQF. The total 'size' of the potential qualifications market in the post-school sector may therefore be in the region of 6 million learners per annum.

Additionally, figures from the PWC report and from the NIACE annual Adult Learners' Week Survey suggest that, in each of the past five years, a figure of between 12.5 and 13 million people have undertaken some form of structured learning in the previous 12 months. From these very broad estimates, it appears that the majority of people who undertake any form of post-school learning activity in the UK do so within an 'unaccredited' context. Of the minority of those learners that undertake some form of accredited learning, a small minority do so within the NQF.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) administers, on behalf of the government, an annual budget of around £9 billion for post-16 learners. It is estimated that the private sector spends a further £23 billion on training, showing the extent of learning (often non-formal and informal) that takes place outside of the regulated market.

A number of well supported criticisms have been levelled against the existing NQF, namely, that it is not responsive enough to the needs of employers, too complicated for users to navigate, overly bureaucratic and not inclusive of a wider enough range of achievements. Certainly, the statutory requirements that underpin the NQF have made it difficult for qualifications that do not follow traditional assessment or quality assurance methods to be accredited within the national system. Moreover, the strong link between qualifications accredited to the NQF and potential public funding from the LSC, may be seen to have disadvantaged the recognition of some of these achievements.

At the same time, within the learning and skills and higher education sectors, there were significant developments relating to the use and application of credit as a means of better recognising learners achievements. In particular the ability for achievements to be broken down into smaller chunks (units) and then accumulated over time or transferred towards other qualifications were both seen as central to attracting non-traditional learners. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were all developing credit and qualification systems based on units.

#### Towards a reformed national qualifications system

These criticisms led to a growing consensus of the need to reform the the NQF. In 2004 QCA published a document outlining the 'New Thinking for Reform'<sup>82</sup>, which led to a period of extended consultation and

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79 The FHEQ is not regulated by QCA. Instead, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) takes responsibility for the assurance of undergraduate degree's and other university delivered postgraduate qualifications.

80 Price Waterhouse Coopers (2005) The market for qualifications in the UK, QCA, London

81 Ibid.

82 QCA Publications (2004) New Thinking for Reform, London

discussion with stakeholders. A Ministerial remit was issued to QCA and the LSC to test and trial a Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) between September 2005 and the summer of 2008.

Two of the stated aims of the QCF are:

- the inclusion of a wider range of achievements (of which non-formal and informal learning are likely to form a part) than existing arrangements; and,
- the development of a system of credit accumulation and transfer. As described above, this is likely to better support learners in the workplace or other settings who need smaller achievements recognised over a longer period of time.

These aims show how the recognition of non-formal/informal learning has influenced the development of the 'formal' system. They also demonstrate how the UK intends to develop a framework capable of recognising achievements regardless of their setting, and how the boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning are blurred, with a focus upon the achievement of credit through the successful completion of learning outcomes.

The following paragraphs outline the key design features of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in line with four key principles:

#### A simpler framework

In particular, QCA and partners have tried to respond to demands for a clearer and more consistent language through which individual achievements are recorded and represented. The QCF will support simpler processes for developing units and qualifications. The framework will support collaboration between awarding bodies, sector skills councils (SSCs) and others in developing units and will also create conditions for unit sharing between different qualifications and awarding bodies. QCA intends to establish a more rational framework, in which fewer qualifications are offered. Specifically, to make the framework simpler, they propose:

- Use of a standard template for all units;
- Support for collaboration between different users of the framework in developing units and qualifications;
- Rationalising unit development through the establishment of a unit databank;
- Use of credit value to indicate the relative size of achievements;
- Development of a credit transcript within which all individual achievements will be recognised; and,
- Establishment of a standard titling convention for all qualifications.

#### A more responsive framework

In designing the QCF QCA has recognised concerns that the existing NQF is too inflexible and not responsive enough to the needs of individuals or employers. Existing arrangements have also made it difficult for providers to offer flexible, individualised learning opportunities that lead to recognised achievements. To make the framework flexible and responsive to the needs of individuals, employers and providers, the QCF will:

- Enable learners to achieve individual units or small clusters of units as well as whole qualifications;
- Ensure that learners can receive recognition for small steps of achievement at frequent intervals through the award of credit;
- Facilitate the transfer of credits between different qualifications and different awarding bodies;
- Establish individual routes to qualifications through the use of flexible rules for combining achievement of credits.

#### A more inclusive framework

As discussed above ('Background'), significant numbers of awards in the learning and skills sector are not currently accredited within the NQF. The QCF will strike a balance between including a wider range of provision while at the same time establishing clear limits to its scope. For example:

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- The QCF is a ‘framework for achievement’, not a ‘framework for learning’. It does not seek to encompass the provision of learning opportunities, nor make judgements about their quality;
- Some achievements are not appropriate to include within the framework, such as those that are not formally assessed (for example in learning for personal and community development); and,
- Only achievements that fall within the specifications of the framework can be recognised<sup>83</sup>.

### A more diverse framework

There is concern that the current NQF is too centralised, places too great an emphasis on standardised outcomes and is over-regulated. The changes described above address some of these issues, but the framework must also recognise diversity, both in terms of what it offers and how people use it. Therefore, in establishing the QCF and developing its operational systems, QCA will consider the possibility that the:

- Existing powers of the regulatory authorities may not be fit for purpose for a wider and more diverse range of achievements;
- Range of organisations approved to develop and award qualifications within the NQF may be too narrow for the intended purposes of a more diverse framework;
- Current design of qualifications within the NQF may be too narrow to accommodate the diversity of achievements that could be recognised within the QCF;
- Current links between approval of qualifications and funding may be too restrictive to support a wide range of achievements across a range of learners, delivered by a range of providers; and,
- Current links between the achievement of qualifications and government targets may need to be redefined in order to achieve the aims of the Success for All and Skills Strategies.

By strengthening the linkages between non-formal and informal learning and achievements within the QCF, legitimacy may be conferred on non-traditional routes to credit and qualification achievement. This will be evaluated through trials of the QCF.

*3.1.f) What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?*

This report has already indicated that HEIs mostly have systems for APL and APEL. Some use them more than others. Barriers include staff, selective preferences of HEIs and questions of status. Employers rely heavily on their own processes of informal and non-formal learning/training yet it remains true to say that neither employers nor their organisations are currently calling for a fully-fledged system of recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

### ***Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer***

*3.2.a) Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory or sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.)*

### Origins of UK credit systems

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<sup>83</sup> The working specification for the QCF can be found at <http://www.qca.org.uk/16368.html>

The origins of credit systems in the UK can be traced back to the Open University, which admitted its first students in 1970 and, from the beginning, espoused a modular degree structure and gave credit for prior achievement. In the late 1970s impetus for the use of credit came from two quite separate sources, as described below. Notwithstanding this common origin in time, and some shared technical and linguistic features, the separate origins of these credit systems still influence the UK picture almost 30 years later.

The first of these sources lies within the Higher Education sector. In 1977 the then Department for Education and Science (DES) commissioned a report on HE credit systems, based primarily on an investigation of HE credit systems in the USA and Canada. This report, known as the Toyne Report after its author, was published in 1979 and led to the establishment of the Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Scheme (ECCTIS). The report also had a significant influence on the work of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), and in the development of systems for constructing and awarding degrees in the (then distinct) Polytechnic sector of HE. By 1984 CNAA had formally established a set of technical specifications and guidelines designed to underpin institutional arrangements for the development of credit systems leading to CNAA-validated degrees in Polytechnics. CNAA also supported the use of APEL, both as an alternative route to Higher Education and also within HE (see 1.6.b) and the credit framework made it possible to accredit experiential learning within degree programmes.

A little earlier the first Open College Networks (OCNs) began to appear. Although the first OCNs had a variety of different purposes and structures, they shared a common interest in developing and promoting learning opportunities for adults, and in particular those adults least well served by traditional provision in the post-school sector. By 1981 the first credit-based model of curriculum design and accreditation had been established within the Manchester OCN, and from this date onwards began a process of developing OCNs in different parts of the UK, and refining the credit systems developed to support the needs of adult learners.

These two emerging credit systems operated in distinctly different parts of the post-schools sector. The CNAA credit scheme operated solely within Higher Education, while OCN systems encompassed a range of provision for adult learners from basic skills to pre-HE entry programmes. The other key distinction was that the CNAA system was national, formally sanctioned and institutionally-based. In contrast OCN credit systems developed completely outside any formal policy structures, had no national institutional presence, and were based on largely informal local networks of adult learning providers.

No figures exist for the number of learners who made use of these systems to transfer credit between qualifications or courses.

*3.2.b) Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?*

The In general, credit for informal and non-formal learning is the responsibility of the same organisations as would credit formal learning in the same area, ie Higher Education institutions, awarding bodies and OCNs.

The stability of the former CNAA system is based on the dual role of UK HE Institutions as both providers of courses and validators of those courses. Thus in HE, the use of credit systems as a curriculum design template, and the accumulation of credits towards HE qualifications, were from the outset seen as related parts of a single, integrated system. The stability of such systems, and the consistency of the credit as a representation of learner achievement, are dependent in HE on this integrated relationship between the delivery of the curriculum and the recognition of learner achievement.

OCN credit systems developed very differently. OCNs themselves do not deliver courses. Their focus is exclusively on the recognition of learner achievement and not on the delivery of learning opportunities. OCN credit systems therefore worked upwards from a definition of learner achievement, rather than backwards from a concept of the academic year. The award of credit was based on the achievement of identified learning outcomes, rather than a period of learning.

OCN credit systems developed throughout the 1980s and 1990s into a significant national system. However this system remained outside and separate from the mainstream development of national qualifications outlined in 3.1 above. It is only in recent years that a process of bringing together these separate credit and qualifications systems has begun. The development of the QCF represents a strategic attempt to unite these separate traditions, but in late 2006 these traditional divisions are still firmly in place.

*3.2.c) How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.*

#### Credit value

The technical specifications of the CNA system were based on the university academic year, and the definition of credit that emerged was presented as a sub-division of this academic year. Thus a year of full-time study in HE was deemed to be 1200 hours in length (ie 30 weeks of 40 hours) and the value of this year was expressed as 120 credits. Thus a single credit was valued as 10 hours of learning (this includes private study time as well as taught hours). This definition still informs the basis of HE credit systems in 2006.

Open College Networks pioneered the use of 'notional learning hours' (nlh) in credit rating. Notional learning hours indicate the length of time which the typical learner will spend on the unit, including both class time and private study. Notional learning hours for any course are therefore always higher than the number of 'guided learning hours', when a teacher is teaching or leading a session, but the ratio between nlh and glh varies according to the type of course and the amount of support which learners need. It is also emphasised that notional learning hours are based on the theoretical typical learner and that real learners may need more or less time, depending upon their ability and any prior knowledge.

Notional learning hours provide an intermediate stage in the calculation of credit ratings. Like a number of other UK credit frameworks, the Qualifications and Curriculum Framework has adopted a system in which one credit represents 10 nlh. Each unit will have a level and a credit value; the credit value is the number of credits that will be awarded for completion of the unit. It is important to emphasise that credit is awarded for achievement, not for time spent learning. The actual time taken by an individual learner to achieve the learning outcomes of a unit has no influence on the credit value of that unit.

Credits will be awarded by the same awarding bodies that are also responsible for awarding qualifications, through an electronic transcript that will be part of a Learner Achievement Record (LAR). Each learner in the QCF will have a LAR. Again it should be emphasised that the LAR will make no distinction between credits awarded through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

#### Key design features of credit systems

One important feature of UK credit systems outside HE that needs to be re-emphasised is that they are concerned with the recognition of learner achievement, not the delivery of courses or the design of the curriculum.

Three key design features of current credit systems are :

- A standard unit format, based on the identification of learning outcomes and the criteria against which assessment of these outcomes will be conducted; experience has shown that a standard format is important in ensuring the consistency of credit value
- The definition of credit as an award made to a learner, recorded in a credit transcript owned by the learner; the bodies that make these awards can be held accountable for their consistency and integrity and in a regulated framework like the QCF, the qualifications regulators can therefore act effectively to maintain and promote credits as the currency of learner achievement.
- The accumulation and transfer of credits towards the achievement of qualifications; credits can be accumulated towards a qualification (in accordance with the rules of combination for the target qualification) and can also be transferred between different qualifications and different awarding bodies. This is critical for the flexibility of the system.

The features of the credit system being adopted make it possible to award credit for learning from non-formal and informal learning opportunities, giving them equal value with credits awarded through other more formal learning.

For more information on the individual credit systems in use in the UK, see 3.1.e.

*3.2.d) What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?*

Mainly, as we indicated elsewhere, credit is either integral to a qualification, including the first degree, or in APL and APEL counts towards exemptions for some modules of the course. Disincentives to both learners and providers include the time and cost of preparation for presentation and evaluation. Some commentators suggest that the cost of assessing learners through APL (for example in NVQs) is as high as for delivering and assessing a formal course.

The main structural incentive under development in England to support the credit system in the developing QCF (Qualifications and Curriculum Framework) will be a new funding regime for the post-school sector based. This funding system is currently at an early stage of development but the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) plans to begin implementation of the new arrangements from September 2008 (i.e. from the beginning of formal implementation of the QCF).

It remains to be seen whether the new funding regime will also support the recognition of achievements through non-formal and informal learning. LSC funding will still be linked to the strategic priorities of government, which are subject to change, as well as to overall budgetary pressures..

*3.2.e) Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.*

#### NVQs/SVQs

The introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Scotland in the late 1980s put into place a suite of qualifications in which the recognition of informal and non-formal learning was integral. Assessment is based on evidence of the candidate's competence, which can come from any setting and can be independent of where the learning took place. S/NVQs are described more fully in 1.6.b and the assessment methods in 3.3.b).

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Since their introduction, approximately 6 million NVQs and SVQs have been awarded across the UK. The annual number of awards for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (excluding Scotland) are given in the table that follows, as well as the cumulative total by level.

### Annual NVQ certification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales Data to 30 June 2006

| Year         | Certificates     |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1988         | 1,195            |
| 1989         | 9,736            |
| 1990         | 47,615           |
| 1991         | 111,221          |
| 1992         | 152,146          |
| 1993         | 201,527          |
| 1994         | 240,567          |
| 1995         | 282,239          |
| 1996         | 377,537          |
| 1997         | 448,299          |
| 1998         | 441,552          |
| 1999         | 429,462          |
| 2000         | 436,569          |
| 2001         | 388,069          |
| 2002         | 382,212          |
| 2003         | 414,469          |
| 2004         | 484,132          |
| 2005         | 555,256          |
| 2006*        | 237,361          |
| <i>Total</i> | <u>5,641,164</u> |

\*partial data – covers the period 1 January to 30 June 2006

Source: QCA database

### Cumulative NVQ certification in England, Northern Ireland and Wales by NVQ Level Data to 30 June 2006

| Level        | Certificates     |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1            | 866,430          |
| 2            | 3,326,919        |
| 3            | 1,231,398        |
| 4            | 203,910          |
| 5            | 12,507           |
| <i>Total</i> | <u>5,641,164</u> |

Source: QCA database

### Recognising informal and non-formal learning within the QCF

Two key features of the QCF offer the potential to recognise achievements from non-formal and informal learning within the new framework. One is that the QCF is concerned exclusively with achievements and not with learning. The other is that the QCF is based on the design, rather than the content, of these achievements. The QCF is therefore potentially comprehensive in scope. Its technical specifications, and

its requirements of users, have been established without reference to any particular subject or occupational sector, to the age of learners receiving awards, to the mode of learning or to the type of learning provider nor to the particular method or instruments of assessment.

The QCF therefore offers the opportunity, in principle, for an adult with learning difficulties to earn credit through personal development skills at Level One offered through a self-help group run by a mental health charity and to be included within the same framework as an accountant undertaking a programme of professional development at a further education college, leading to a Level Five qualification in Financial Management.

In this respect the QCF offers a significant opportunity to establish the principle of equal esteem in the recognition of achievements across formal, non-formal and informal learning in the UK. It remains to be seen whether the future development of the QCF, and the way in which government policies influence the development of particular types of achievement within the framework, will fulfil this potential.

3.2.f) *Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HED system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.*

#### Credit within the HE system

There are a number of ways in which recognition of prior, informal and non-formal learning may be given credit within the HE system:

- many universities give credit for HE level sub-degree qualifications already held, enabling some students to complete a first degree with only one additional year of study; examples of such qualifications are Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, Initial Teaching qualifications, Pre-registration nursing courses<sup>84</sup>
- some universities give credit towards a first degree to S/NVQs at levels 4 and 5, membership examinations of professional bodies and a range of other vocational qualifications at level 4 and above<sup>85</sup>
- universities may also give credit towards a first or higher degree on the basis of learning from work; this is regarded as by no means a soft option, as the learner needs to show that the workplace activities resulted in learning which is relevant to the target qualification<sup>86</sup>
- some HE qualifications, especially those with a strong vocational focus, are designed to include a period of work placement (or to run alongside employment in a relevant vocational area) and this may lead to the award of credit towards the qualification, sometimes on the basis of successful completion of specified tasks or from a work-based project or a reflective diary; Case Studies A and B provide examples
- a few courses preparing learners for HE entry give credit towards the intended first degree course partly on the basis of workplace learning which takes place during the course; an example is the LSBU Nursing Cadet course (see Case Study B).

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84 See, for example the Open University (<http://www3.open.ac.uk/credit-transfer/academic/index.shtml>) and Oxford Brookes University ([http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/applications/credit\\_transfer/credit\\_transfer.pdf](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/applications/credit_transfer/credit_transfer.pdf)). Proposals for a more unified system were made in the Universities UK Burgess Report, Proposals for national arrangements for the use of academic credit in higher education in England, November 2006 ([http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/Burgess\\_credit\\_report.pdf](http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/Burgess_credit_report.pdf))

85 See the Open University (<http://www3.open.ac.uk/credit-transfer/professional/inst000136.shtml>)

86 See, for example, Oxford Brookes University ([http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/applications/credit\\_transfer/credit\\_transfer.pdf](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying/applications/credit_transfer/credit_transfer.pdf))

### Links between the QCF and HE credit systems

One of the objectives of the overall programme of current reforms in the UK post-school sector is to develop ‘operational links’ between the QCF and qualifications offered through HEIs. Work is under way to test out how the ‘articulation’ of these two separate systems might be established. ‘Articulation’ in this context is defined in very practical terms as ‘the facility for a learner to transfer credits awarded by a QCF awarding body towards a qualification offered by an HEI, or vice versa’.

There are a number of technical issues to be addressed if this credit transfer facility is to be established in the foreseeable future. Indeed, some of the technical distinctions described above between HE credit systems and those that have been incorporated into the QCF form the basis of some of these issues. It will also be necessary to establish what in European terms have been described as ‘zones of mutual trust’ between QCF awarding bodies and HEIs before such credit transfer arrangements can be made to work effectively.

If this articulation between the QCF and HE credit systems can be established in the future, it could have an important impact on the recognition of achievements at higher levels through non-formal and informal learning.

### *Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures<sup>87</sup>*

*3.3.a) Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.*

### Distinctions between different forms of assessment in the post-school sector.

The formal UK post-school system has been characterised in the post-war period by a structural distinction between ‘academic’ (sometimes referred to as ‘general’) and ‘vocational’ learning. Practitioners in the sector are very familiar with the concept of an ‘academic/vocational divide’ and indeed several strands of government policy have sought to address the perceived problem of this divide. The development of new ‘Specialised Diplomas’ for 14-19 year-olds is the latest manifestation of these policy attempts to ‘bridge’ this divide.

Although this distinction between academic and vocational learning rests on several factors, one of the ways in which academic and vocational qualifications differ is in their assessment regimes.

An important function of academic or ‘general’ qualifications (especially A Levels) is to differentiate individual performance as a basis for entry to HE, and results are therefore graded; at A Level there are currently six passing grades, A to E. Each candidate’s overall grade is determined by their total score, linked to the judgment of the examiners as to what is the lowest score which meets the criteria for each grade. The aim is to maintain consistency in the standard required to achieve each grade. At the other extreme, Scottish and National Vocational Qualifications are entirely criterion-referenced, designed to recognise the achievement of an explicit set of outcomes or standards, and the only possible results are ‘Pass’ and ‘not yet satisfactory’.

Many other vocational qualifications fall somewhere between these two, with standards tied to explicit or (sometimes) implicit criteria and with results graded, typically on a three or four point scale (eg Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail).

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<sup>87</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

General and vocational qualifications differ similarly in the assessment methods used. General qualifications are assessed mainly through externally set and marked timed examinations, although teacher assessment, externally validated, is used as a component in some practical subjects. S/NVQs, as already noted, use a 'portfolio of evidence'. Other vocational qualifications normally include substantial teacher assessed work, but may also have externally set examinations.

#### Key actors in different assessment processes

Within general qualifications responsibility for setting and marking external examinations and validating teacher assessments (where used) lies with three large awarding bodies (AQA, Edexcel and OCR), together with smaller bodies in Wales (WJEC) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). The same three large awarding bodies (especially Edexcel and OCR) are also major players in the award of vocational qualifications, together with City & Guilds and a host of smaller bodies, some of which are specific to one occupation or sector.

The awarding bodies are all accountable to the qualifications regulators for the quality of assessment and certification of these qualifications, and the regulators themselves take an active role in the design and development of the specifications for these qualifications (especially general qualifications and NVQs), which the exam boards then translate into a syllabus and an assessment regime.

Where fixed date external examinations are used, the question papers are set and agreed by a panel of examiners and marked by a team of assistant examiners (who may be teachers, but must not mark scripts from a school with which they have a connection). The examinations are answered under controlled conditions and controlled through the stringent security arrangements of individual awarding bodies, monitored by the qualifications regulators. The work of the assistant examiners is monitored to ensure that standards are consistent.

Where teacher-led or other local assessment is used, responsibility for assessment rests in the first instance with the teachers or tutors or with first-line assessors employed by the provider of the learning opportunity, or contracted as an assessor by that provider. Assessment judgements are then subjected to scrutiny and confirmation through an external 'verifier', 'moderator' or other individual accountable to the awarding body offering the qualification.

There are some 115 awarding bodies currently offering qualifications within the NQF, but this is only a small minority of the estimated total of 1000 awarding bodies of one kind or another in the post-school sector. A report to QCA in 2005 suggested that around 85% of all qualifications offered to people over the age of 16 lay outside the current NQF. In this area of small, specialised awards, unregulated and for the most part funded through individuals themselves or their employers, assessment processes draw on elements of both these models.

See section 1.3 for uses of ICT in assessment.

*3.3.b) Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principal drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc.).*

#### Definitions

We are interpreting this question as relating primarily to the summative assessment, which is required if learning (by whatever means) is to be recognised. Formative assessment is agreed by practitioners to be an

essential part of the learning process and is tailored to the needs of the individual, but it does not necessarily lead to a statement of achievement which confers recognition of the learning.

It is necessary to distinguish between the following groups of learners:

- those who wish to have their informal and non-formal learning recognised through an established qualification; they will need to follow the regulations of the target qualification, which will usually specify the assessment methods used in the interests of validity and reliability (see below)
- those who are taking a course of non-formal learning, but wish to have some form of recognition of what they have learned. Although ‘non-formal’ learning, by definition, takes place in a learning programme which is not designed to lead to formal certification, the RARPA method (see 2.1.a) provides a means by which they may be able to negotiate their learning objectives and the assessment method and receive recognition
- those who would like their informal learning to be recognised, but cannot match it to an existing qualification; since ‘informal’ learning, by definition, takes place outside a learning programme, it is almost inevitable that its assessment will be retrospective. For these learners APEL using a portfolio is likely to be the best method, but it is not well established except for HE entry (see 1.1.d) and FE entry.

#### Assessment in S/NVQs

Assessment in S/NVQs is normally through on-the-job observation and questioning and the compilation of a portfolio of evidence demonstrating that the candidate has the competence to meet the NVQ standards. The assessor may also test the candidate’s underpinning knowledge, understanding and work-based performance to make sure they can demonstrate the required competence. When new candidates start an NVQ, the assessor will usually help them to:

- Identify what they can do already;
- Agree on the standard and level they are aiming for;
- Analyse what they need to learn; and,
- Choose and agree on activities that would allow them to learn what they need.

At this point, candidates might take a course if that seems the best way to learn what they need. Or they might agree with their employer or supervisor to do slightly different work to gain the evidence of competence they need. The system is used by candidates who already have skills and want to extend them and gain recognition for them, but also by those who are starting from the beginning.

This type of assessment has ‘face validity’ (ie it clearly relates to the target objectives) and is comprehensive in its coverage of the elements of competence, but it is time-consuming for both learner and assessor. It tends to encourage ‘instrumentalism’, by an emphasis on ‘ticking boxes’ rather than on learning. To ensure that assessors in different locations are applying the criteria in the same way, it is necessary to have supervision of the process by ‘external verifiers’, which adds greatly to the cost.

The NVQ model (like the portfolio approach to APEL for HE entry described in 1.1.d) is ideally suited to the assessment of prior learning, including informal and non-formal learning and is the model most commonly used for assessing the outcomes of these types of learning.

#### Recognition through other formal qualifications

The extent to which informal and non-formal learning can be recognised in formal qualifications other than S/NVQs depends on the assessment methods used. If assessment is solely by externally set and marked written or on-line examinations, candidates who have not followed a formal course are usually allowed to sit the examinations as ‘external candidates’. (See Case Study C, Achievement of ECDL.) This is believed to be more common in the examinations of professional bodies at level 3 and above than in the majority of

qualifications offered in the learning and skills sector, but no figures are available. Although external examinations are sometimes considered de-motivating, research in this area conducted by the Learning and Skills Research Centre<sup>88</sup> found that practical tests and multiple-choice tests (especially on-line tests) were accepted, but learners tend to avoid courses and awards with methods which employ extensive writing (coursework, exam essays, etc).

For qualifications which require some form of coursework or project work other than a portfolio, access to assessment is likely to be more difficult for candidates who do not wish to enrol on a course and course organisation may make it difficult for learners to attend selected sessions only.

Recent research in this area conducted by the Learning and Skills Research Centre<sup>89</sup> suggests that the distinction in assessment outcomes between nationally developed qualifications like NVQs with highly specified and controlled assessment regimes, and locally-developed programmes with learner-focused assessment regimes (e.g. Access to HE programmes) are actually much less different than might be expected. This is because of the paramount importance of the personal interventions of assessors and verifiers in mediating the conduct of assessment in NVQs, together with the shared professional competence of subject-based assessors in the Access to HE programme. In other words, in terms of both the reliability and the comparability of assessment outcomes, there is much less difference than might have been expected between a highly prescriptive national qualification and a locally devised and delivered award where the needs of individual learners are paramount.

Some of these lessons from comparative assessment regimes are reflected in the development of the QCF, which will allow different centres to develop different assessment methods leading to the award of credit on the same unit. Indeed, it will be possible for a centre to devise different assessment arrangements for two different groups of learners studying the same unit in that centre.

The impetus behind this development within the QCF is three-fold. One factor has already been referred to above – the apparent comparability of assessment outcomes in formal qualifications (and this is true for both vocational as well as academic qualifications) is not as robust as might be expected, based on centralised and highly prescriptive assessment regimes.

Secondly the design specifications of the QCF itself, and in particular the adoption of a standard format for all units, will provide a different but nevertheless significant basis for establishing comparability in assessment. Thirdly, the future needs of the UK workforce will become increasingly dependent on the recognition of specific skill-sets that may vary greatly between individuals. In this context, flexibility in assessment becomes increasingly important, and there is a necessary trade-off between this ability to assess and recognise individual achievements, and the broad national comparability of these achievements.

It remains to be seen whether the lessons from assessment of informal and non-formal learning can be included within the overall development of an assessment regime within the QCF that can be appropriate to all forms of achievement.

#### Recording and reporting assessments in informal and non-formal learning

The intention of the QCF is that, in due course, all those achievements that can be specified within the technical scope of the framework, and can be validly, consistently and reliably assessed, can lead to the award of credit. Every credit awarded within the QCF will be capable of counting towards at least one qualification. In this respect the QCF explicitly aims to establish the principle of equal esteem between the

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<sup>88</sup> Learning and Skills Research Centre, The impact of different modes of assessment on achievement and progress in the learning and skills sector, 2005

<sup>89</sup> Op cit

recognised achievements of formal, non-formal and informal learning. No distinctions will be made in the processes through which assessments in informal and non-formal learning will be recorded and reported.

It should be noted, however, that although the QCF will establish the principle that all achievements may be recognised within it, the choice of whether or not to submit these achievements to assessment leading to the award of credit should still rest with an individual learner.

#### The drivers and costs of different assessment arrangements

Within the NQF, the regulation of qualifications has produced an increasingly costly and bureaucratic assessment regime in both general and vocational qualifications in recent years. These costs arise in part from the desire to ensure comparability of standards across different qualifications, and partly because of government funding arrangements that require providers in receipt of public funds to meet outcome-related targets expressed in terms of qualification achievement.

The current reforms within the QCF are intended to enable awarding bodies to establish more flexible assessment arrangements that will be less costly for centres (and for awarding bodies themselves) to manage. This should enable achievements through non-formal and informal learning to be assessed within the QCF without undue costs and bureaucracy. No prescription about the type of assessment is built in to the QCF, but awarding bodies are required to assess all achievements validly and reliably within the framework, and will be monitored by the qualifications regulators to ensure that this is done.

*3.3.c) Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?*

#### Academic standards

Academic standards, in the sense of the standards used in Higher Education, are controlled by the individual universities under the oversight of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, whose remit is to 'safeguard and help to improve the academic standards and quality of higher education in the UK.' Individual professions (in fields ranging from engineering and construction to IT, law and health care) often work with university departments to agree a common core of knowledge and skills which should be incorporated into relevant HE courses, in order to ensure an adequate preparation for new entrants into the profession.

The standards for general qualifications below HE level are the responsibility of QCA (SQA in Scotland), but take account of the need for smooth progression routes. Thus the content of individual A Levels needs to provide the knowledge and skills which successful candidates will need if they proceed to an HE course in the same or a related subject.

#### Professional, occupational related national standards

The reform of vocational and occupational qualifications over the past two decades in the UK has been based on the development of occupational standards as the basis for the content of qualifications. Many of these standards have been established through an explicit process, sanctioned by central government through the UK Standards Board, that leads to the establishment of National Occupational Standards (NOS). These NOS are the responsibility of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and form the basis of all NVQs in the current NQF.

In addition to NOS, SSCs also develop other standards that, although not formally sanctioned as NOS, constitute accepted national standards in a sector or area of professional expertise. Such occupational or professional standards may also be developed by professional bodies or other sector-based organisations that are not formally constituted as an SSC. In addition there are standards that are also developed by

central government or its agencies, for example standards in basic literacy or numeracy, in citizenship or enterprise skills.

These occupational or professional standards are seen to have a potentially wide role to play in a sector. They are not simply used to develop qualifications, but may also play a role in developing job descriptions, staff appraisal schemes, professional development programmes and other work-related processes. In order to fulfil this variety of different roles, and to support this range of developments over time, standards need to be established at a level of generality that enables them to be ‘interpreted’ for each of these purposes.

In developing units of qualifications within the QCF, the qualifications regulators will therefore expect unit developers to base the content of units on relevant national standards, but to ‘translate’ these standards into the specific requirements of learning outcomes and assessment criteria within the QCF unit specification. Again it should be emphasised that these standards, and the units that are developed from them, make no reference to the mode or form of learning or to the type of provision or provider who may offer assessment leading to the award of credit based on these standards.

*3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your county of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.*

#### Assessment method, learner achievement and progression

Evidence from another LSRC Project on Summative Assessment and Testing<sup>90</sup> seems to confirm that the method of assessment is important to the progression and achievement of learners in the post-school sector. In other words a positive experience of the assessment process means that a learner is more likely to progress to further learning opportunities, or to meet their achievement goals. Having said this, it is not easy to identify any one particular form of assessment that seems more appropriate than others in supporting and stimulating this progression.

So, for example, the LSRC research identifies adult learners for whom the prospect of a formal test or examination induces apprehension and occasionally fear or panic. However there are other learners for whom the development of a portfolio of evidence and the process of continuous assessment is a burden that creates negative views of the assessment process. There is also evidence from learners undertaking assessment in basic literacy and numeracy that on-line tests are much preferred to paper-based tests.

A recent study of assessment in OCN-accredited provision outside the NQF confirmed that providers used OCN accreditation in part so that they could establish greater control over the process of assessment than the more prescriptive assessment developed through the NQF. Evidence from learners themselves also seems to indicate that assessment is more closely geared to individual needs in a context where the requirement for national comparability in assessment is not a major factor in designing assessment instruments and methods.

In developing an approach to assessment within the QCF, the qualifications regulators are attempting to combine this learner-centred approach developed through credit systems with the requirement to establish consistency and stability of credit awards within a regulated national framework. This is not an easy balance to strike, but it will be essential to the success of the QCF in being able to recognise achievements from non-formal and informal learning within the new framework.

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<sup>90</sup> Learning and Skills Research Centre, Do summative assessment and testing have a positive or negative effect on post-16 learners’ motivation for learning in the learning and skills sector?, 2004

### Learning without assessment?

There has not been any public debate on the right of learners to learn without being formally assessed, which is perhaps surprising. Over recent years a healthy concern about high drop out rates in further education, combined with an rather unhealthy government preoccupation with targets, has led to pressures on colleges to improve the proportion of their learners who complete the course and gain a qualification. Funding has been higher for courses leading to qualifications and a small proportion of the funding for each learner has been conditional on the achievement of the qualification. Achievement rates have indeed risen, but the consequences have also included a switch of provision towards courses leading to qualifications, a proliferation of qualifications designed to allow this to happen and pressure on learners to enter for the final assessment (sometimes at extra cost), whether they want a qualification or not.

*3.3.e) How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalisation context?*

### Quality assurance of outcomes

Where informal and non-formal learning are recognised through the achievement of a formal qualification, quality assurance is the responsibility of the regulatory bodies, QAA for Higher Education and for other post-16 education and training, QCA for England, DELLS (formerly ACCAC) for Wales and CCEA for Northern Ireland. Quality assurance of qualifications includes the validity of the assessment methods, their reliability (in terms of the consistency of standards between assessors, centres and examiners and from year to year) and accessibility to different groups.

### Quality assurance of provision

The quality assurance of the help given to the learner in gaining recognition for his or her informal and non-formal learning falls within the arrangements for quality assurance of learning provision, since most learners seeking recognition are likely to do this through contact with an FE or HE institution. Quality assurance of learning provision is the joint concern of the relevant funding body and inspectorate:

- for higher education, the QAA, together with the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the equivalent bodies in the devolved administrations
- for the learning and skills sector, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)<sup>91</sup> in England and the equivalent funding and inspection bodies in the devolved administrations.

The LSC is leading the development of a new Framework for Excellence (FfE) for the Lifelong Learning sector in England. The FfE aims to establish a comprehensive framework of performance measures designed to promote excellence in the provision of Lifelong Learning opportunities. One of the key performance indicators of the FfE relates to the Quality of Outcomes of learning and providers will be asked to assess their performance against a standard designed to identify excellence in the assessment, review, recognition and recording of learner progress and achievements across all provision funded by LSC.

In addition to the FfE, providers of lifelong learning opportunities are also inspected against the Common Inspection Framework (CIF); one of the key questions in this relates to how providers support learners in achieving their learning goals.

By 2009 it is anticipated that the new FfE and the existing CIF will both be reviewed and reformed to establish a single comprehensive framework within which the quality of provision in the lifelong learning

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<sup>91</sup> From April 2007 Ofsted has taken over the responsibilities of the former Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) for inspection of learning and skills provision for those over 19.

sector in England can be assessed and represented. One of the objectives of the QCF is to ensure that the processes used by regulators and awarding bodies to recognise, monitor and report on the quality of support offered to learners by approved centres within the QCF is consistent with the key performance measures and institutional assessment processes of the new FfE.

### ***Component 3.4. Others***

*3.4.a) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.*

#### The UK approach and the typology of formal, informal and non-formal learning.

As the above sections of this report make clear, the typology which underlies the proposed structure for Section 4 of this report is not necessarily appropriate to the UK context, either as it now is or under the planned new system of credit accumulation and transfer within the QCF in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

There is not (and there will not be under the QCF) a direct match between the characteristics of non-formal and informal learning (such as the type of learning undertaken (eg 'in-company training') or the subject being learned (eg 'literacy or numeracy skills')) on the one hand and the type of organisation offering the learning opportunity (eg 'NGO' or 'trade union'); or the types of people learning (eg 'unemployed' or 'immigrants').

The QCF will further develop a different typology, based not on the characteristics of learning opportunities, but on the willingness of organisations to develop opportunities for recognising achievements, and the desire of learners to seek recognition for their achievements, within the QCF. In principle, any form of achievement could be represented in the framework, and such achievements could then be assessed and lead to the award of credit. There is, however, no assumption that learners will be compelled to seek such recognition, and therefore it is anticipated that many achievements in all forms of learning will continue to be recognised in some way outside the new framework.

## Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour

### Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders<sup>92</sup>

4.1.a) Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list is to map out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognisers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition. Please note, due to the difference of nature of non-formal and informal learning, that the grid for non-formal learning uses a provider of non-formal learning or an input-side as a starting base- first column – as non-formal learning seems to be more recognised after going through a non-formal learning programme. On the other hand, the grid for informal learning uses output/ skills as a starting point because it is not feasible to list all types of informal learning where there is no such supplier as the individual is the active entity to create such learning opportunities. Therefore, there is a separate grid for non-formal and informal learning. The annex also aims to examine characteristics of users for aggregation of data, but please provide micro-level data about users in this section.

#### Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

| Provider of non-formal learning (e.g. universities, for-profit private companies, company's in-house training, government, NGOs, etc.) | Recogniser of such non-formal learning (e.g. government, quasi-government, universities, companies, professional bodies, trade unions, etc.) | Types of recognition received (e.g. academic qualifications – degrees, diplomas, credits, awards, certificates, professional qualifications, etc.) | Regulator (e.g. quality assurance agency, professional body, government, etc.) | Main user(s) (Specify)  |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| See descriptions that follow   |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Working professionals  |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> People after army service  |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> High skilled immigrants  |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Low skilled immigrants   |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)             |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (over 30 years old)   |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30 |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Specify)   |
| Add more.  |  |  |  |   |

#### Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

| Types of skills gained by informal learning (e.g. ICT skills by using computers, literacy by reading books, numeracy, business protocol, | Recogniser of informal learning | Types of Recognition received | Regulatory body | Main users (specify) |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|  |                                 |                               |                 |                      |

<sup>92</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

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|                              |  |  |  |   |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| negotiation skills, etc.)    |  |  |  |   |
| See descriptions that follow |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Working professionals  |
|                              |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> People after army service  |
|                              |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> High skilled immigrants  |
|                              |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Low skilled immigrants   |
|                              |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)             |
|                              |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed (over 30 years old)   |
|                              |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30 |
| Add more.                    |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Specify)   |

### Characteristics of stakeholders

The following component describes key stakeholders involved in non-formal and informal learning in England. The accompanying description of their roles relate to their interaction with the QCF as the principal future means of recognising non-formal and informal learning.

#### The Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

The DfES set the policy agenda for the QCF and have remitted QCA and its regulatory partners in Wales and Northern Ireland to undertake the development of the framework. The former Minister for Skills, Phil Hope MP, through his endorsement of the various skills and 14-19 White Papers, has provided the authority for the QCF to address through a more inclusive and diverse framework the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The Department maintains, through the establishment of a supervisory board (chaired by a senior DfES civil servant) strategic oversight of the work.

#### The regulatory authorities (QCA, DELLS and CCEA)

The development of the QCF is being undertaken by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Department for Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) and the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. While these organisations traditionally interested themselves in formal learning and qualifications, the development of the QCF presents an opportunity, through the integration of non-formal, informal and formal mechanisms to engage in the recognition of achievements outside the scope of the current NQF. To this end, the specifications for the framework have been deliberately written to focus upon learning outcomes and not upon modes of learning to ensure that some non-formal and informal can be recognised within the framework.

#### The Skills for Business Network (SSDA and the SSCs)

The Skills for Business Network (SfBN) is made up of 25 independent employer-led Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) that underpins, support, monitors and funds the network. SSCs have been recently established to articulate employers training and skills interests. The four key goals of the SSCs are to:

- Reduce skills gaps and shortages;
- Improve productivity, business and public service performance;
- Increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce; and,
- Improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and National Occupational Standards (NOS).

The establishment of the SfBN has built on the experience of earlier employer networks (industry training boards, national training organisations etc.) and as such has long been involved in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning as well formal qualifications in the NQF.

### The Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The LSC is a non departmental government body which began work in 2001, taking over the roles of the former Further Education Funding Council and Training and Enterprise Councils. It is responsible for planning and funding education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities and in primary and secondary education. The LSC's annual budget for 2006-07 is £10.4 billion.

### Awarding bodies

One of the idiosyncrasies of the UK system is the large number of exam boards or awarding bodies who are responsible for the delivery and quality assurance of assessment and, in many cases, for curriculum development and assessment design (rather than a national or public agency being responsible for these). Awarding bodies work with learning providers to approve course provision and validate those parts of the assessment which are undertaken internally. They are regulated by the QCA, DELLS and CCEA where their qualifications are accredited to the NQF, but they also offer non-accredited qualifications and work with employers and other providers of learning opportunities which are independent of government funding..

### Unions

Trade Unions through their union learning reps promote and organise learning opportunities for their members and encourage non-traditional learning. The government-funded Union Learning Fund (with an estimated budget £15 million for 2007-08) provides funding to help trade unions use their influence with employers and employees to encourage greater take-up for learning at work in order to improve workforce skills and boost their capacity as learning organisations. The underlying principle is that for many people work is a good place to learn, both in formal learning programmes and through working processes and a culture that encourages informal learning from colleagues.

### Learning Providers

A wide range of providers of both formal and non-formal learning exist – HEIs (higher education institutions), further education colleges, adult education providers, schools, employers, distance learning providers, private providers of government funded work based learning, other private providers of training and education, delivered either on their own premises or in-company and covering a wide range of subjects (languages, business and management skills, ICT, safety and first aid, specialist skills). The voluntary sector also provide a range of learning opportunities, as do non-traditional providers such as trade unions.

### NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is a non-governmental organisation working to advance the interests of adult learners. Their strategic aims are to increase the total numbers of adults engaged in formal and informal learning in England and Wales; and at the same time to take positive action to improve opportunities and widen access to learning opportunities for those communities under-represented in current provision.

### Learners in non-formal learning

Learners potentially include all the categories listed in the stakeholder grid except the NEET group (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training), who are by definition outside the system, appearing, if at all, only in programmes run by the Youth Service or by voluntary organisations.

In principle all categories of learners can use almost all categories of providers. In practice only the employed and more affluent retired people are likely to be able to access provision which is not government funded (either paying for themselves or sponsored by their employer). Those with lower incomes (low skilled immigrants and the unemployed) are more likely to use provision which is (partly) government funded and in which is formal (leading to a qualification) rather than non-formal.

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Recognition of informal learning

The table below illustrates the mechanisms by which people with learning acquired from informal settings can have their learning recognised for specific purposes.

| Responsible actors                                   | What people already have  | What they want to get  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <i>Formal qualifications</i> <input type="checkbox"/>   | <i>Other formal qualifications</i>   |
| Training Providers, Schools, FEIs                    | LEVEL 1 QUALS   | LEVEL 2  |
| Schools / FEIs                                       | LEVEL 2 qualifications  | LEVEL 3  |
| UCAS / HEIs / Training Providers                     | LEVEL 3 qualifications  | HE / Professional qualifications   |
|  | <i>Informal or non-formal learning</i> <input type="checkbox"/>   | <i>Formal qualifications (access, decreased study time, partial qualifications or full qualifications)</i> |
| Training Provider / FEIs                             | For young workers the evidence would include reports from the current supervisor, with observation of work by the supervisor or the assessor.<br><br>For older workers, whose experience may go back a number of years, the 'evidence' may include references from former employers; correspondence with clients; reports, drawings or designs produced by the candidate; or any other material relevant to the specific qualification. | National (and Scottish) Vocational Qualifications  |
| FEIs<br>AVAs (EN, WA, NI)<br>UACES (SC)<br>SWAP (SC) | Learners are encouraged to reflect on the learning, which has resulted from their life activities, and to identify the skills they have developed.  | Access to Higher Education courses   |
| LSC in conjunction with DfES and Ofsted .            | The RARPA process consists of two approaches, a staged process, and quality assurance arrangements, for self-assessment purposes and quality improvement. RARPA is intended to apply to areas other than 16-19 provisions, i.e. adult education, E2E provision and SEN.   | Access to any form of education, recognising prior experience and non traditional education                |

Notes:

AVA – Authorised Validating Agency

DfES – Department for Education and Skills

E2E – Entry to Employment

FEI – Further Education Institution  
HEI – Higher Education Institution  
LSC – Learning and Skills Council

### ***Component 4.2. Access***

*4.2.a) What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HEd, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors*

There are no formal eligibility requirements for entry to the recognition process, but the responsible organisation will need to be satisfied that the applicant has at least some learning which is relevant to the target course or qualification. Providers of learning opportunities are expected to ‘recruit with integrity’, ie to accept onto courses only those who have a reasonable chance of success. In some cases it may become apparent only after the learner has begun a programme of learning that he or she already has knowledge or skills which can be accredited as ‘prior learning’.

We describe below the likely arrangements under the nascent QCF system.

#### How learners will access the QCF

The QCF will be a regulated framework and the qualifications regulators will exercise their regulatory powers primarily through the bodies that award credits and qualifications – ‘the awarding bodies’. Each recognised awarding body will operate through a network of approved centres. Although many of these centres will be major providers of formal learning opportunities (eg FE colleges) others will be providers of non-formal learning (eg employer-based training or voluntary bodies). However the network of approved centres will extend well beyond these types of provider, because centres are recognised to offer assessment opportunities, not provide learning. Learners will access the QCF via an approved awarding body centre. Access will be triggered through registration with the awarding body through which the centre is approved. ‘Registration’ in this context may be defined as the conscious declaration of the learner’s intention to seek an award within the QCF. There is no assumption in the process of registration with an awarding body that the learner is also enrolling on a course, although in practice the majority of learners will probably enrol on a formal course. It is this separation of responsibilities for the provision of learning opportunities and the conduct of assessment that creates the conditions under which many people engaged in non-formal and informal learning can gain recognition for their achievements within the QCF.

#### Recognising achievements through non-formal and informal learning

Perhaps the best way of illustrating the potentially inclusive nature of the QCF in supporting the recognition of achievements through non-formal and informal learning is through the following four examples, although all of these are in fact quite feasible within the current system:

A young offenders prison is a recognised centre. A qualified assessor visits the vehicle maintenance centre run within the prison on a regular basis, and assesses the practical skills of young offenders working in the centre. The workshop supervisors are involved in the assessment process through the validation of the evidence produced for the assessor by the young offenders.

A community centre in a small village is used to conduct an on-line test. A qualified assessor arrives in the village with a network of laptop computers and sets these up in the community centre. People register at their computer to take the test and the test itself is downloaded from the internet by the assessor through a wi-fi link prior to the test. The assessor invigilates the test, the results are fed back automatically to the learners on completion, and the assessor then verifies to the awarding body that the tests have been

completed under approved quality conditions. Once verified, the credits awarded to successful candidates are recorded in the Learner Achievement Record, possibly before the candidate has walked home.

A qualified assessor conducts an assessment of an individual football referee, by observing a football match. In this instance the combination of the workplace (a football ground) and the presence of a qualified assessor, constitutes a 'centre'.

A 'Basic Skills Bus' parks in a designated place on a housing estate every Tuesday afternoon. From time to time one of the people attending the bus to improve their reading and writing skills opts (or is persuaded!) to take a basic skills test. The next Tuesday a qualified assessor arrives with the bus, the learner in question is offered a quiet space to take the test under invigilated conditions in the bus, and the completed test is verified by the assessor and reported to the awarding body.

All the above examples have two features in common. Firstly, there is no assumption that learners seeking recognition of their skills or knowledge have attended a course at the centre at which the assessment is conducted. Secondly, all successful learners will receive an award of credit(s) for their achievement that is identical in every possible respect to those credits awarded to learners through more formal learning opportunities.

#### The accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)

The separation of the processes of learning and assessment within the QCF create the technical conditions under which learners may be offered the opportunity for their prior experiential learning to be recognised. However it should be emphasised here that the specifications of the QCF include no specific arrangements to support APEL. In other words the offer of APEL to learners within the QCF is supported by its standard specifications and procedures and therefore needs no additional requirements to be established. Within the QCF APEL is one form of assessment leading to the award of credit, and as such it is the responsibility of awarding bodies to establish opportunities for APEL within their structures.

The previous history of APEL (outside HE) in the UK has not led to a widespread offer of APEL within the current NQF. This is partly because the national development of APEL arrangements became linked in the 1990s with the development of NVQs and the attendant bureaucracy of those qualifications, so that APEL developed a reputation as being too difficult or costly to establish. The QCF offers the opportunity to re-establish more 'humane' formats for APEL..

#### Credit transfer

APEL leads to the award of credit for achievements evidenced through learning from previous experience. Within the QCF there will also be the facility to transfer credits between qualifications and awarding bodies, subject to the rules of combination for qualifications.

Learners will therefore be able to achieve credits in the context of non-formal and informal learning (perhaps through APEL) and will then, if they choose, be able to transfer these credits towards a qualification in the QCF, subject to the rules of combination for the 'receiving' qualification. Qualifications may be gained through a mixture of credits gained through APEL and credits from traditional learning.

This credit transfer facility will apply to all qualifications within the QCF, and may be extended in future to credits from other frameworks. For example, work is already beginning to develop a credit transfer agreement between the QCF and qualifications offered within the SCQF. In the much longer term there is no reason in principle why such agreements should not be reached with European credit systems or with other systems overseas.

### Exemptions

In addition to APEL and credit transfer, the specifications of the QCF include a third facility through which the achievements of learners through non-formal and informal learning might be recognised within the framework. This facility is termed 'exemption'. The term exemption is used to describe the facility for learners to claim, and for awarding bodies to grant, exemption from the requirements to achieve credit within the rules of combination for a qualification, based on certificated achievements outside the QCF. These certificated achievements may be whole qualifications from other frameworks (exemption is going to be an important mechanism in the transition from the NQF to the QCF) or may be certificated components, units or stages of qualifications.

Unlike APEL, the process of exemption does not lead to the award of credit for the achievements exempted, as these have already been certificated outside the QCF. In effect the reliability of the alternative form of certification is accepted, and the number and level of credits that may be exempted on the basis of this alternative certification is identified explicitly within the rules of combination for the 'receiving' qualification. Thus a qualification within the QCF may be achieved either through the accumulation (and possible transfer) of credits, or through a combination of credits actually awarded and exemption(s) based on certificated achievements outside the framework.

The facility to claim exemption within the QCF is referred to here, even though in the first instance it is likely to be achievements recognised through formal learning opportunities that are 'counted' through this exemption facility. However, over time, exemption will become an increasingly significant facility within the QCF through which qualifications from overseas can be 'counted' towards a qualification within the framework. It is anticipated in the future that the qualifications regulators will establish a 'register' of agreements on the value of overseas qualifications in relation to the credit system of the QCF. This register will record agreements on exemptions and will gradually build up as a 'case law' record to which all future claims for exemption will be referred in order to underwrite consistency in the development of this exemption facility over time. This is a long-term development within the QCF, and may not feature significantly within the test and trial programme.

### The QCF Learner Achievement Record

All credits awarded within the QCF will be recorded in the Learner Achievement Record (LAR) for the framework. The LAR is an electronic record, owned by an individual learner, and all awarding bodies operating in the QCF must be capable of awarding credits accurately, quickly and securely into the LAR. A prototype version of the LAR is being used through the QCF tests and trials, and the first credits will be entered into the first LARs in 2007. It is possible that some of these credits may be awarded through an APEL process, and very likely (given the scope of the tests and trials) that a number of these initial credits will be achieved through non-formal and informal learning opportunities that currently do not lead to an award within the NQF.

The LAR will also include information about all qualifications achieved by the learner. This information will appear on a separate page of the LAR, and it will be possible for learners to record credits within the LAR without accumulating them towards a qualification. A separate section of the LAR will also record exemptions, so that a learner granted exemption from some credit achievement within a qualification will have a complete record within the LAR of all those achievements that 'count' towards a particular qualification. The LAR will not, however, record qualifications achieved outside the QCF. It is intended to be able to contribute towards, but not to become, a possible future e-portfolio of lifelong learning achievements. But this development lies outside the scope of the QCF itself.

4.2.b) *How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?*

No firm information is available, but the majority of FE colleges (around 400) and HEIs (over 100) have a policy for recognition of non-traditional learning.

4.2.c) *Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of 'click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.)'. Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.*

Scotland is developing such mechanisms.

Information is not widely publicised, but the *learndirect* website<sup>93</sup>, which provides information about over a million learning opportunities, includes brief references to APEL and also to CATS in the 'returning to learning' area of its 'help and advice' section. Many university websites also have a section about credit and the recognition of prior learning (see section 3.2.f).

The UK NARIC (UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre) provides information about the recognition of qualifications gained outside the UK for purposes of higher education and labour market entry within the UK (see 1.2.b).

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<sup>93</sup> <http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk/findacourse/>

### ***Component 4.3. Participation<sup>94</sup>***

*4.3.a) How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels)?*

The lack of a single national scheme means that there are little if any data available.

Statistics compiled by the former Department for Education and Skills<sup>95</sup> show that, of the 621800 NVQs and SVQs awarded in the UK in 2005/06, just over half (55%) were to learners aged 25 and over, who may have gained their award wholly or partly on the basis of recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning. Across all ages females accounted for just over half (55%) of the total awards.

The evaluation strategy for the test and trial programme of the Qualifications and Credit Framework includes a scrutiny of the potential benefits of the QCF in relation to its ability to widen participation in learning leading to awards, and to recognise a wide variety of achievements by a diverse group of learners, including achievements through non-formal and informal learning. Some evidence of this potential will emerge from test and trial sites in early 2007 and will be reported through the evaluation strategy. At this stage no such evidence is available.

*4.3.b) Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.*

See earlier comments on APL and APEL.

Information about the age of learners achieving NVQs and SVQs is derived from data collected by the awarding bodies and reported to QCA and SQA.

*4.3.c) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the ‘learning leads to learning’ and ‘training leads to training’ track? Who constitutes the ‘disadvantaged group’ in your country?*

No recent evidence exists for this.

Disadvantaged groups in the UK include ethnic minorities, immigrants (especially those with low skills or a poor level of English), lone parents, the disabled, older workers and ex-offenders. The NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) group of young people is also amongst the disadvantaged, but less likely to benefit from recognition of prior learning.

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<sup>94</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

<sup>95</sup> DfES Statistical First Release, SFR 05/2007, VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE UK: 2005/06, 22 February 2007  
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000709/SFR05-2007v1.pdf>

#### **Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives**

*4.4.a) Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.) If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.*

No numerical evidence exists, but evaluation studies have shown that the use of APL procedures shortens the process of gaining an S/NVQ (eg in the Train to Gain scheme). ‘Rate of return’ studies (see 1.1.4) have shown the financial rewards of gaining additional qualifications and learners link success in learning and qualifications with career success – in a survey in Wales 70% of further education and work based learning participants said that their learning had helped either ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ in getting a different or better job.<sup>96</sup>

The implementation of the recommendations in the Leitch review of skills (see 1.4.b) will increase the impetus to raise the skill levels of the existing workforce, building on and recognising the skills which workers already have.

It is envisaged that the introduction of the QCF and of new funding arrangements will reduce bureaucracy and costs, support more flexible provision to raise skills levels and meet employer needs and facilitate the recognition of a wide range of learning.

*4.4.b) Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practised subject areas, etc.)*

See earlier comments on APL and APEL.

*4.4.c) Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?*

No evidence which is specific to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning has been identified, but there is considerable literature on the benefits of learning and skills and it can be assumed that recognising learning and (perhaps more important) building on it for further development plays a part in this.

Evidence of the effect of qualifications (however obtained) on the earnings of individuals is discussed in 1.4.d and more evidence can be found in the work of the Centre for the Economics of Education.<sup>97</sup>

A review of ‘The contribution of skills to business performance’ by the Institute for Employment Studies<sup>98</sup> confirmed the benefits to organisations of higher skill levels, but emphasised that other factors

<sup>96</sup> National Learner Satisfaction Survey in Wales 2003/04 [http://www.elwa.org.uk/doc\\_bin/Research%20Reports/satisfaction\\_survey\\_300904.pdf](http://www.elwa.org.uk/doc_bin/Research%20Reports/satisfaction_survey_300904.pdf)

<sup>97</sup> <http://cee.lse.ac.uk/>

<sup>98</sup> See <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RW39.pdf>

(Human Resource management practices, attitude of the workforce and appropriate application of skills) are also important.

The Leitch review of skills (see 1.4.b) and the New Deal programmes (see 1.4.d) are based on the belief that there will be economic, fiscal and social benefits from raising employment levels, for which higher skill levels will be needed.

Evidence of the benefits of learning for citizenship and social cohesion is covered briefly in 1.5.c and is the focus of the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.<sup>99</sup>

#### The QCF, citizenship and employability

Some concerns have been expressed that both the QCF itself and the wider programme of reforms of which it is a part, are still based on an essentially corporatist view of labour market planning that is becoming increasingly out-of-date in relation to the future need for a flexible labour market, based on realistic assessments of the impact of demographic change, migration and future global competitiveness on the future needs of the UK economy.

It is suggested here that much of the demands of the workforce in the year 2020 are unknown. However, UK government strategy for skills development is based on a series of structures and mechanisms (labour market needs analysis, strategic sector plans etc.) that assumes the labour market needs of the future can be known, addressed and met through long-term forward planning. This may not be the case. One argument about the workforce of the future is that it will need to be able to adapt quickly to ever more rapid changes, and that what people know will become less important over time, in comparison to how people learn. Perhaps being a quick, efficient, up-to-date, flexible and motivated learner is the best possible preparation for 2020, and therefore government investment in creating a learning workforce (rather than a skilled workforce) will become a more appropriate future objective of policy.

#### *4.4.d) Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).*

Fiscal incentives for employers are limited to three sectors: construction, construction engineering and recently media. Funding is now available for non-traditional approaches, such as union learning. However, none of these necessarily relate to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

#### *4.4.e) Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?*

Yes, in Scotland.

For England, see the comments at the end of section 1.

#### *4.4.f) Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic world and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?*

See earlier sections

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<sup>99</sup> <http://www.learningbenefits.net/>

*4.4.g) Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?*

See earlier sections

***Component 4.5. Others***

*4.5.a) Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)*

*4.5.b) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.*

### ***Component 5. Case studies on benefits and barriers***

The case studies that follow meet the criteria of showing how the following apply in a context where recognition is diffuse, rather than according to a single national strategy or policy.

Component 5.1. Economic benefits

Component 5.2. Educational benefits

Component 5.3. Social benefits

Component 5.4. Personal benefits

## **Case Study A: Foundation Degree in Health & Social Care (Radiography Route)**

**Student: Jackie Bevan**

**Provider: University of Teesside Validating University: University of Teesside**

**Employer: City Hospitals Sunderland**

This case study is a shortened version of a case study on the Foundation Degree Forward website – see <http://www.fdf.ac.uk/files/CaseStudyJackieBevan.pdf>

Jackie Bevan left school with no interest in further academic study. A succession of jobs followed - and then she got married and had a son. She applied to City Hospitals to work as a Helper in the Radiography Department and did this job for five years. During that time she was able to watch radiographers at work - helping them deal with patients, observing the routines and understanding how things were done and why.

Jackie began to think about getting on with her career and embarked on a Higher Education Access course with a view to considering a university degree. However the Hospital offered her a different opportunity - to get more involved in a professional sense and they interviewed her for the post of Trainee Assistant Practitioner. Jackie got the job and part of the agreement included enrolling for a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care with the University of Teesside. The way this worked was that over a period of two years Jackie would attend the university for two days per week and for the rest of the time she would undertake radiography duties at work.

Jackie found it tough and juggling studies, job and family required careful planning, but she soon began see the relevance of the course to her work and became increasingly confident in her job.

*“Assessments were always related to the job – for instance one important item was a portfolio of my work; the clinical experiences, the relevant policies and protocols, my reflective analysis of what was being achieved. Other assessments tested my research skills and practical clinical performance. It all sounds daunting but you perform well because you are properly trained and supported in your studies and in the job.”*

Jackie completed the course, received her degree in November 2005 and is a fully qualified Assistant Practitioner Radiographer. She now performs a range of radiography duties under her own steam and is continuing with the studies needed to complete her qualification as a radiographer.

Paul Stephenson who is Business Manager at the Radiology Directorate was impressed with the course.

*“During the practical part of the course which is done on site here – the duties performed are closely matched to the specification of the course. So there is no gap between the needs of the university course and those required on the job. Jackie visibly grew in confidence and ability throughout the course, becoming more mature in her judgments and clearly obtaining more job satisfaction.”*

## **Case Study B: Assessment of Practical Skills in the Nursing Cadet Course**

**Provider: London South Bank University (LSBU) Essex Campus, based at Harold Wood Hospital**

**Employers: Three NHS Trusts in Essex**

This case study is derived from research undertaken for the European-funded REVIMP project in which QCA was a partner. It illustrates the use of assessment based on work placements, using the NVQ model, and how credit from a predominantly work-based course can give both entry to Higher Education and credit towards an HE qualification.

The Nursing Cadet course offered by London South Bank University (LSBU) at its Essex Campus, based at Harold Wood Hospital provides a route into LSBU’s pre-registration nursing course for young people and adults who lack the normal academic entry requirements. It is one of a number of nurse cadet or apprenticeship courses across the UK.

The course aims to reduce staff shortages by increasing recruitment into nursing, especially from local people who are likely to stay in the area. It also forms part of LSBU’s ‘widening participation’ work. Nursing Cadet courses have some similarities with ‘Access to HE’ courses, but differ from normal Access Courses in providing a high proportion of practical work in a real work setting.

### **Structure**

The Nursing Cadet course lasts one year, beginning in March of each year. The first half is preparatory and the second half covers part of the normal pre-registration nursing curriculum; cadets who complete the course satisfactorily are exempted from the first 6 months of the pre-registration nursing course.

Much of the time is spent on placement, but there is formal classroom study for one day each week and occasional one-week blocks. Cadets do 3 or 4 clinical placements in different types of hospital ward, and one placement in a Primary Health Care setting (eg attached to a doctor’s surgery). During the placements the cadets prepare for the level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Health and Social Care. This is assessed mainly through observation and oral questioning in the work setting, supplemented by a ‘portfolio of evidence’, which includes a reflective diary written by the cadet and records of activity. These are cross-referenced to the requirements of the qualification. The emphasis is on competent performance of practical tasks (eg taking a blood pressure reading) and on communication with patients

and other staff, including behaviour and attitude. Provision of the NVQ ensures that successful cadets leave with a recognised qualification, even if they do not go on to the full nursing course.

Classroom study includes related theory, together with numerical, written communication and ICT skills and also study skills. The cadet's achievements during the course are considered equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C (the target school leaving achievement).

### **Students and staff**

Students are a mixture of young people and adults. They are selected through an assessment day and interview on the basis of their perceived ability to succeed. Two Practice Facilitators play a crucial role in supporting the cadets, providing extra tutorial support and some pastoral support, where needed, helping in the completion of portfolios and acting as NVQ assessors. Whilst on the wards, cadets work under the direction and supervision of permanent ward staff. The staff/ student ratio is relatively high, reflecting the non-traditional background of the cadets and the high level of support provided.

### **NVQ External Verification**

As with all National Vocational Qualifications, NVQs in Health and Social Care are subject to 'verification' overseen by the awarding body. Verification is designed to ensure that standards of assessment, and hence the standard of performance required to achieve the certificate, are consistent within and between assessment centres. 'Internal verifiers' are appointed from within the centre and check that the assessors are applying the standards consistently; their activity includes observation of the cadets working in their placements. 'External verifiers' are appointed by the awarding body (in this case City & Guilds) and visit centres to ensure that there is consistency between them.

### **Course effectiveness**

Data compiled by the course team in June 2006 showed that of the 191 cadets who had started the course since 2000:

- 19 were currently active
- 138 achieved an NVQ at either level 3 (131) or level 2
- 6 completed the course without gaining an NVQ
- 28 left before the end of the course, of whom 8 had their employment terminated.

This gives a 'success rate' (percentage of starters who gain their target qualification) of over 80%.

Of the 126 who left the course and whose destinations were known:

- 102 began a pre-registration nursing course at LSBU
- 17 entered HE courses elsewhere or other healthcare employment.

Former cadets from this fairly small sample had higher success rates in the pre-registration nursing course than students from the more academic Access to HE courses.

During interviews the cadets showed a great enthusiasm for the course. Aspects which they said they liked included:

- practice-based learning makes it much easier to see the relevance of the theory
- they are encouraged to be reflective

- the emphasis is on the patient as a whole person
- the course provides a better preparation for the pre-registration nursing course than purely academic study.

Other interviewees from amongst the LSBU team said that:

- ward staff like the enthusiasm of the cadets and report that they are eager to learn
- former cadets have better attitudes and professionalism than student nurses from the more traditional route
- in the previous (two year) course, cadets completed a level 3 NVQ, but did not qualify for 'advanced standing', which meant that in the pre-registration nursing course they were repeating some material they had learned in the cadet programme. The change to a one-year course which gives 6 months 'advanced standing' overcomes this problem

## **Case Study C: Achievement of ECDL by support staff in a small company**

This case study, based on an interview with one of the participants, illustrates the use of the European Computer Driving Licence to raise the IT skills of a group of support staff to a uniform level, recognising their existing skills, however gained.

The setting for this case study was a small defence-related company based in the South East of England, which identified a need to ensure that all their support staff had an adequate and up-to-date level of IT skills. The company is an accredited Investor in People.

The support staff were mainly female; many were young and all had a range of existing IT skills, gained from school and from informal learning, including learning at work. The aim was to consolidate this learning, to fill in any gaps, to ensure that staff knew the most efficient ways of using the software and to assess and certificate their skills through the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).

An outside trainer was contracted to run the training in house. For each of the required seven modules of ECDL there was a session led by the trainer, after which participants were expected to undertake some self-directed learning and practice, using the associated book. CBT (computer based training) was also available, especially for those who missed the trainer-led session. In a subsequent revision session the trainer provided any necessary additional help. The time spent with the trainer averaged about half a day per module.

At the end of the learning period for each module the participants took the ECDL test, which is computer-delivered and computer-marked. This meant that results were available immediately. Altogether about 20 staff completed the programme.

The case study illustrates a pattern which is also common in NVQs, where a qualification is used to provide recognition for knowledge and skills acquired through a mixture of prior informal learning, self-directed learning and formal learning.

## Case Study D: Indian Head Massage, a RARPA pilot scheme at Blackburn and Darwen College

This case study gives a brief summary of the RARPA pilot project at Blackburn and Darwen College, supported by the Learning and Skills Network. The college was piloting the staged process of learning recognition<sup>100</sup>.

The Indian Head Massage course was set up in a local primary school by a Family Learning Development Officer for a group of parents whose children attend the school. This group were female, ethnic minority learners. Most of the group had not met each other before and none of them had done any learning “for years”.

To maintain interest, the tutor ensured that the first session included a practical Indian Head Massage activity, but it also included a discussion of learner aims in order to negotiate an Individual Learning Plan. Staff asked learners what experience they had in the subject (they had none!) and what they hoped to do by the end of the course, providing suggestions of possible aims when necessary. This led to a formulation of learning objectives.

During the course the tutor assessed the learner’s development of practical skills and also set a mid-term ‘quiz’ (partly multiple-choice) to test related knowledge. These provided formative assessment, enabling her to help the learners with their weak areas.

At this point the learners reviewed their learning plans and in some cases revised them in the light of their experience of the course so far.

The end of course assessment was conducted by the tutor and a development officer, but also included a self assessment by the learners, who recorded whether they had achieved what they had initially wanted, or indeed more than they originally expected. A number identified an increase in ‘soft skills’ such as self confidence.

The college found that a great deal of peer assessment took place during the summative assessment and found it helpful to capture this on sound recordings.

Amongst the outcomes identified by the college staff were the following:

- All learners had stated that there were no drawbacks to the Staged Process of learning recognition - only benefits
- All learners stated they had achieved their learning goals
- All except one learner stated they had achieved more than they set out to do
- All learners were able to identify an increase in skills from the starting point identified at initial assessment
- All learners were able to identify ‘soft’ outcomes as a result of attending classes, such as an increase in confidence
- All learners had transferred skills they had learnt in the classroom into their own/their families’ lives.

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<sup>100</sup> For full details of the RARPA scheme and the full text of this case study see <http://www.lseducation.org.uk/research/centres/RCFTeachLearnCurricQual/rarpa.aspx>

OECD study Recognition of informal and non-formal learning: UK country case study

- All learners had completed the course and a number had expressed interest in other Lifelong Learning and College courses.

Full Case Study prepared by the College for the National RARPA Pilot Evaluation 2004.

**COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT**  
**SCOTTISH CONTRIBUTION TO UK REPORT**

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## ***Component 1. Contextual factors***

### **Component 1.1. Demographic change**

1. The impact of demographic change, especially concerning migration and ageing populations, is one major policy concern in many OECD countries. Population ageing will increasingly affect most OECD countries over the coming decades. To respond to an ageing labour force, in some countries, the labour market has been opened up to those aged over 55 and to the inflows of immigrant workers in order to sustain economic developments (OECD, 2003). Both ageing and immigrant populations represent diverse communities. Both old workers and immigrants may behave significantly differently for recognition practices depending on whether or not they are part of the active labour force. It also enables a wider policy vision to identify key policy issues such as education and training policies, labour market and human resource development policies as well as migration policies. Therefore, this section aims to explore possible impact of demographic changes on education, training, and recognition of skills.

1.1.a) How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?

#### **Introduction**

As at 30 June 2005 Scotland's population was 5,094,800 which is the third yearly rise in Scottish population in a row. This figure includes a net gain of 12,500 migrants from the rest of the UK and a net gain of 7,300 migrants from overseas. A combination of demographic trends (such as decreasing fertility rate and increased life expectancy) mean that Scotland's population is shrinking and ageing. Scotland will be one of the few countries in Western Europe where population is projected to fall in the next few decades.

The office of Chief Researcher is co-funding a research initiative (which commenced December 2004) with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), supported by the General Register for Scotland (GROS). The programme will investigate three potential drivers of Scotland's changing demography (migration, fertility and the impact of an ageing population).

In Scotland, there has not been a significant change in the proportion of 16-19 year olds in the NEET group (not in employment, education and training) has not changed significantly over the years (1999-2004). In 2004, 35,000 (13.2%) 16-19 year olds were NEET. There are more men (19,000) in the NEET group than women (16,000). Further analyses show that the majority of the NEET group have low or no qualifications.

In Scotland, people in the younger age groups (16-19, 20-24) are much more likely to have a qualification, especially as SVQ 2. This does not necessarily mean that the young are more skilled but that they are more likely to have had their skills accredited. They are also better able to signal their ability in the labour market.

#### **Higher Education**

##### **Age**

There has been an increase in students in higher education in Scotland over the last few years – and a general increase in attendance at all ages apart from the 30-39 age range which has decreased by

46,805 in 2002-3 to 45,285 in 2004-5. In the same period there has been an increase in those aged 50+ attending higher education institutions from 13,955 to 15,145.

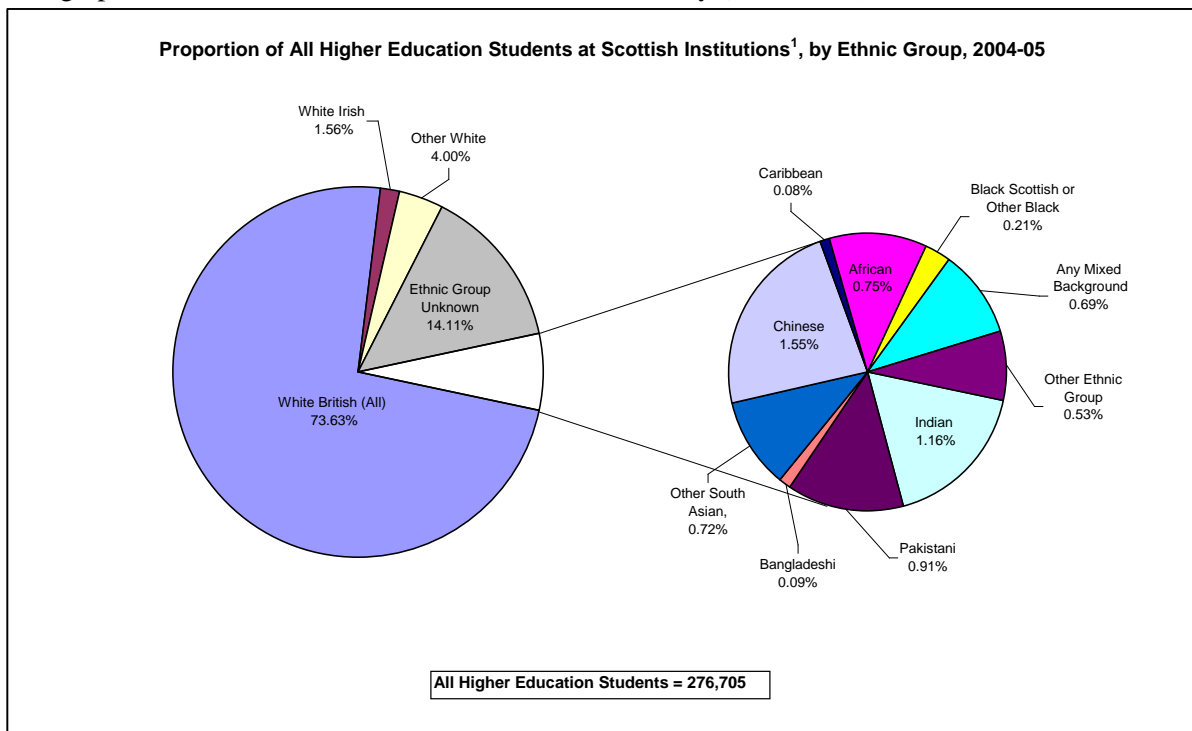
**Gender**

There has been a general trend of increased participation in higher education by women since 1998 in both full-time and part-time study, whereas male participation has remained on a steady trend. There are however consistently more female participants in higher education (for example in 2004-5 there were 120,090 full-time male students in higher education in Scotland and 156,615 female participants).

**Ethnicity**

**Chart 1: Ethnicity**

This graph shows the current breakdown of student ethnicity (2004-2005).



Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

Notes:

1. Numbers include students on Higher Education courses at Higher Education Institutions or Further Education Colleges in Scotland

**Socio-Economic Background**

1.1.b) What are the demographic change (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training.

**Higher Education** \* Lifelong Learning Statistics (2005), p 73).

In 2003-2004, there were 271,865 students attending higher education courses at Scottish institutions, with a further 14,845 at the Open University in Scotland. Over 26,000 of enrolments at Scottish Institutions were on distance learning courses. The total number of students in HE has

increased by 14.1% since 1996-7. The number studying higher education courses in further education colleges has been decreasing in recent years.

### **Further Education**

In 2003-2004, there were altogether a total of 467,170 enrolments at Scotland's further education colleges – the majority on a part time basis. Of these 55,610 were higher education courses (see higher education paragraph). 59,270 enrolments were for non-vocational classes.

There has been an increase in vocational further education enrolments from 1994-95 to 2001-2002 followed by a decrease to 2003-4. Although the number of enrolments has fallen in the last few years, the number of student hours has increased, suggesting that students are enrolling on more intensive programmes of study. In 2003-4, nearly a third of vocational enrolments are students in the 20 and under age group, whilst 57% of all enrolments are women, who outnumber men in all age groups, except the group under 20 years.

### **Training and Adult Learning**

In 2003-4 the majority (74.4%) of the Scottish working age population (3,125,000) has been involved in some type of learning in the previous year. However, the evidence of learning varies across Scotland. For Scotland, as a whole the uptake of training in the workplace has increased steadily over the previous 10 years, with a rise for women being particularly marked. However, some specific training schemes have seen a reduction in a numbers due to the target client group decreasing.

1.1.c) Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?

Scotland's First Minister has set a challenge to attract Fresh Talent to Scotland. The initiative is driven by the demographic projections for Scotland (the only country within the UK whose population is projected to decline) and concern that an ageing population will affect the economic future of Scotland. Fresh Talent aims to help address the demographic challenge by attracting and retaining bright, hardworking, and motivated people from outwith Scotland to live, study and work in Scotland and make a positive contribution to the economy and society.

The Fresh Talent scheme incorporates a number of related initiatives such as the Relocation Advisory Service, the Working in Scotland scheme. Supporting International Students Fund, Scottish International Scholarship Programme, and the Dare to be Digital Programme.

1.1.d) Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change?

## **Component 1.2. Internationalisation**

2. Internationalisation is a growing phenomenon in education and work. International mobility is high on the education and training policy agenda and relevant policies have been developed at regional and international levels such as: the Lisbon Strategy, the Bologna Process, the Copenhagen Declaration, the European Qualification Framework, the European Credit Transfer System for higher education (ECTS), the new credit transfer system for vocational and education and training (ECVET), Europass, and Euro Profile, in Europe; MERCOSUR, in Latin America; ASEAN and APEC, in Asia and the Pacific; and NAFTA, in North America and Mexico; and the UNESCO/OECD guidelines for cross-border higher education, at the international level. Internationalisation is spurred by the increased flow of people due to migration and the growing activities of multi-national firms by transferring functions, expatriating human

resources, and increased foreign direct investment. Internationalisation is an important factor, which has impact on stakeholder behaviour and institutional and technical arrangements for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning especially in a form of recognition of qualification or credit transfer linked to the formal education sector. Therefore, this section aims to explore possible impact of internationalisation of education, training, and recognition of skills.

1.2.a) Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?

The **Scottish Refugee Integration Forum**, which was first published an action plan set up in 2003, was reconvened in December 2005 to update the action plan and address new and emerging issues facing refugees in 2006. The Forum's membership is made up of service providers, voluntary sector organisations, refugees, public sector bodies and professionals working with refugees and asylum seekers. The Forum worked in themed subgroups looking in detail at housing, justice, health, children, positive images, employment and training and community development issues. The Forum identified a series of actions to be implemented by the Executive. One action recommends that the Executive should consider the **creation of a multi-agency pilot recognition and guidance centre** for asylum seekers, refugees and overseas workers. The Centre would use the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework to support the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which would facilitate faster entry into labour market at an appropriate level. The first step in looking at implementing this action would be to set up a working group to look at accurate costings and possible sources of funding, draw up an implementation framework and approach all delivery partners. Other actions in the plan focus on areas of work which should be undertaken to assist the economic integration of refugees more generally. The action plan will appear on the Scottish Executive website shortly and will feed into the Executive's National Strategy on Race Equality which is due to be published soon.

Through the **Scottish Refugee Integration Fund** the Executive has invested over £2m in projects taking forward refugee integration in Scotland. Some projects which have received funding aim to assist refugees to convert their skills/get them accredited/ obtain placements and more permanent opportunities with range of employers. OTAR (Overseas Trade and Assessment Reskilling) was one project which received SRIF funding. It is run by a partnership of organisations including the Bridges Programmes, Anniesland College, CITEC, and the Construction Academy, to create a training and employment route for refugee tradespersons. This course is designed to fast track refugees through Scottish tests, up-skill where necessary, and finally send refugees to employers with both recognised accreditation and vital knowledge about the working practices of the Scottish construction industry. The course is currently open to both with permission to work who has skills in a trade discipline, such as electricians, joiners/carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, painter/decorators, tilers and welders. Stevenson College in Edinburgh also received funding to provide two intensive 10 week programmes of learning opportunities to asylum seekers and refugees to help move on to higher level of employment or study.

The Scottish Executive Education Department funds the **Refugees into Teaching in Scotland** project (RITES) which assists refugees in achieving registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, which is a pre-requisite to gaining employment as a teacher in Scotland. The project has been successful in helping to find opportunities for some to gain experience of our schools in non-teaching roles, for example, as classroom assistants or in a shadowing capacity. The project has in the region of 120 people on their database, all at different stages on the route to achieving registration with the GTCS.

Other projects currently existing with similar objectives include;

OECD study Recognition of informal and non-formal learning: Scottish contribution to UK report

- GOPIP (Glasgow Overseas Professionals into Practice) helping refugee medical professionals into practice
- The refugee doctors scheme: helping refugee doctors into practice
- Working for Health scheme; which aims to help refugees into entry level jobs in the NHS

1.2.b) Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?

The recognition of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning promote cross-border mobility was not recognised as a key driver for higher education institutions when questioned during the development of the SCQF Resource Pack on RPL. The main aims (as identified, for instance, by Glasgow Caledonian University) were to:

- ◆ Provide a vehicle to support students, to prepare and RPL claim for credit within their programme of study;
- ◆ Complement Personal Development Planning approaches;
- ◆ Contribute to the widening access and participation agenda through opening new routes into programmes for new learners who would otherwise consider HE as an option;
- ◆ Highlight the role of educational guidance and personal development planning (PDP) for all learners; and
- ◆ Give transparency to the implementation of RPL measures throughout the university.

There are no national Scottish policies to recognise learning outcomes to specifically promote cross-border mobility.

### Component 1.3. New ICT

3. The increasing use of ICT in daily life (school, work, households, public domains, etc.) means that ICT is also transforming education and training in various ways, ranging from teaching/learning, administration, research, to social networking. The ever-changing new ICT can have an impact on the institutional and technical arrangements by establishing new qualifications<sup>101</sup> to recognise new skills that are required for a knowledge society, such as ICT literacy. It may also have an impact on the individual by giving an incentive to take up the recognition process by using a new way of recording and accumulating the individual's learning assets. One relevant example to recognition is the *e-portfolio*<sup>102</sup>. E-portfolios are often discussed as an emerging trend to record learning achievements and to manage knowledge or skills assets and as a potential tool to further develop the knowledge society/economy. Also, the length (e.g. shorter training due to the emerging learning objects) may act as an incentive for an individual to take such training and get the outcomes recognised. The impact of ICT on the issue of recognition is important to explore as it will affect both the demand and supply sides of recognition.

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<sup>101</sup> E.g. Certificates issued by industries such as Microsoft and Cisco, the European Computer Driving Licence, the International Computer Driving Licence, etc.

<sup>102</sup> To date, there is no single definition of e-portfolio. An e-portfolio broadly refers to an electronic way for learners to store, present and manage their learning achievements. E-portfolios can include electronic copies of assignments, essays, test papers, reports by assessors and teachers, CVs, testimonials (written and verbal), comments from peers and colleagues in work. They can store or link to (for example) audio evidence, video evidence, plus video links to the workplace, school or college for 'live' interviews and web links to relevant Internet sites.

1.3.a) Provide any evidence of modularisation of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?

In late 2004, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) carried out a review and consultation process. The aim of the review was to establish qualification titles and design principles which would fit together in a modularised system of qualifications which are:

- ◆ Fit for purpose and up-to-date;
- ◆ Simple to understand; and
- ◆ Straightforward and cost-effective for centres and SQA to operate.

Additionally, the system was aimed to enhance progression opportunities for candidates who wish to continue with studying or who wish to move into employment.

The SQA are responsible for three main types of qualifications which are maintained in partnership with education, industry and government.

- Units
- Courses

#### **Group awards.**

Most Units are designed to take 40 hours of teaching time to complete. You achieve a Unit by passing an assessment. National Units can be taken at schools, colleges, and in other training centres. These National Units can be built up into National Courses, National Progression Awards (NPAs) and National Certificates (NC).

The National Qualifications (usually taken in usually consist of three National Units, plus there is an exam for all levels at Intermediate 1 and above. Each of the units counts as a qualification in its own right (as a National Units), so even if students don't pass the whole course they can still get credit for the units they have successfully achieved.

Higher National Units are mainly taken at college. They are the building blocks of Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas, though they are used as qualifications in their own right. Higher National Units cover the skills and knowledge that people need in jobs in middle management and technician skills. These skills and knowledge are often used for progression to Higher Education.

Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Units are based on 'national occupation standards' which are drawn by government-sponsored bodies called Sector Skills Councils, which are made up of trade bodies, employers and specialists. Each SVQ Unit defines one aspect of a job or a work-role, and says what it is to be competent in that aspect of the job. To achieve the Unit, candidates have to produce evidence to show they are competent. SVQ Units can be built into Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). They are sometimes used in wider schemes, such as Modern Apprenticeships.

In 2006, the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) contained Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) information for the first time. Candidates can see at a glance

how many SCQF points they have built up and at what level. All national qualification Standard Grades are worth 24 points.

In Scotland, the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access has developed a website ([www.scfq.org.uk/college2uni](http://www.scfq.org.uk/college2uni)) to enable learners with an up-to-date map of the possible routes from your qualification, and your institution of study into the next stage. For providers of learning, the website can provide guidance on how to go about establishing better links between one institution and another, as well as helping identify some of the differences between FE & HE teaching, learning and culture, and how these might affect a potential student making the transition.

1.3.b) Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has produced a suite of IT user qualifications called PC Passport.

| Beginner<br>SCQF 4  | Intermediate<br>SCQF 5  | Advanced<br>SCQF 6  |
|---|---|---|
| Three mandatory Units:<br><br>> Word Processing<br>> Spreadsheets<br>> Internet | Four mandatory Units:<br><br>> Word Processing<br>> Spreadsheets<br>> Internet<br>> Presentations | Five mandatory Units:<br><br>> Word Processing<br>> Spreadsheets<br>> Internet<br>> Presentations<br>> Database |

These courses are **highly vocational**, focusing on **industry standard** software and skills but are not directly related to a specific software manufacturer but instead they seek to teach transferable skills that can be used in a range of environments. The qualification is available to any centre meeting SQA's approval criteria and is open to anyone who wants to develop and improve their IT skills.

1.3.c) Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or 'learning assets'? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?

There is no proposed national e-portfolio policy in Scotland. However, there are a number of institutional level developments such as that been undertaken by the University of Paisley. The university is involved in a project aimed to explore and develop enhanced learning information to inform admission and transition into higher education. The project draws together personal development planning processes in schools, further education and higher education. The university is collaborating with the University of Nottingham, Leeds, Paisley and the University Central Admissions Service.

There is also no centralised approach to the development and implementation of Personal Learning Planning which is also handled at institutional level.

#### Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/ mismatch

4. Strategies for a move towards a knowledge economy and integration into the global economy should be planned in line with the development of sustainable labour force and active citizenship. This would require appropriate skills formation and matching at various levels: i.e. constant progression of individuals' skills and capacities, better allocation of human capital within organisations, greater flexibility in transferring skills from sector to sector at a society at large, and more focus on regional economic developments such as Learning Regions. The recognition of skills, knowledge and experience (i.e. non-formal and informal learning outcomes) seems to be of increasing importance in giving such human capital assets visibility and portability. Therefore, the economic macro picture of a country (national economic policies, labour policies, etc.) will allow us to add a dynamic dimension of analysis, rather than a snap shot of current practices, to our study.

1.4.a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as 'Regional Development' and 'Learning Regions'?

The first *Framework for Economic Development in Scotland* had a clear vision 'to raise the quality of life of the Scottish people through increasing the economic opportunities for all on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis. This remains the vision of the Scottish Executive.

Although Scotland's birth rate is not a matter for Government, but links between a stable population and economic prosperity recognised and at the heart of the Executive's thinking. The *Framework for Economic Development in Scotland* notes that an economy, whilst Executive's Enterprise Strategy, *Smart Successful Scotland*, makes specific reference to the need to encourage people to live and work in Scotland.

In Scotland, the population decline will tend to reduce economic growth if less labour is actively engaged in production. Since economic prosperity is certainly promoted by a strong and growing domestic market in which domestic enterprises can build a firm operational base, measures which seek to halt and ultimately reverse the decline in the population can have a positive impact on economic growth.

It is also important to emphasise that, apart from overall population numbers, the structure of the population and especially its age and skill profile are important determinants for the composition of the labour force and employment trends. Moreover, the labour market itself will respond to demographic changes. Scottish Ministers' aim is to reverse the population decline and continue to maintain the necessary skills within the Scottish labour force.

Increasing Scotland's economic growth rate will be secured through sustained increases in our competitiveness in international and domestic markets. This competitive edge will itself fundamentally depend on raising the underlying productivity of both our enterprises and of our public sector. This will be achieved in a number of ways, including:

- **basic education and skills** of our key resource - our people - and their capacity to renew and enhance these skills on a continuing basis. A skills and learning strategy must embrace the full range of skills, including basic skills of literacy and numeracy for all; the skills required of employees, managers and entrepreneurs; and the skills of our research and academic community.

We must improve the skills of the whole population through further support for the basic education system, by strengthening lifelong learning, and by nurturing higher and further education. This must include a concern for raising our manual and vocational skills. Better skills are the key to

improving individual life chances, increasing the flexibility of the labour force and maintaining competitiveness. Scotland has to embrace the *knowledge economy* and the reality of continual learning if it is to compete in the global marketplace.

- ***Creating the generation of knowledge*** is a key element in the growth of the Scottish economy. Competition in the knowledge-intensive global markets will be as acute as in the labour-intensive markets in which Scotland once prospered

The Framework for Economic Development looks to build up economic activity throughout Scotland by promoting skills, enterprise and innovation everywhere. However, beyond this, there may be a need for targeted regional interventions to promote more balanced growth and social inclusion. Encouraging economic dynamism throughout Scotland should improve both the size of the national economy and the relative distribution of regional shares in wealth and employment creation. Given that, in global terms, Scotland is small enough to be promoted as a single region, it is important to highlight this perspective rather than the perspective of constant and at times negative competition between Edinburgh and Glasgow or between the Central Belt and rural areas.

### ***Regional Development within Scotland***

Resource endowments and economic legacies vary across Scotland, which means there are different development challenges. Some local economies are overheating, with pressure on skilled labour supply and traffic congestion. In other areas, traditional industries are in decline, with business and public services suffering from a loss of critical mass. Regional intervention to reduce the local constraints on economic adjustment and dynamism can help to address such challenges.

Traditionally, regional policy in Scotland (and throughout the UK) was founded on intervening in under-performing areas or regions to reduce geographical disparities, particularly in unemployment, and improving the overall economic performance of the region and economy. This underlying objective remains broadly as before but the range of policy instruments employed by the Executive has changed significantly over the last 20 years.

The range of policy instruments goes beyond providing aid to firms to encourage investment and employment (regional selective assistance). Structural Funds Programmes support a number of activities including infrastructure investment, support to small manufacturing enterprises and skills training as well as policies to support social objectives.

The degree (and level) to which these policies can operate across different geographical areas is determined by European Union regulations, which reflect the EU policy goal of promoting economic and social cohesion across Member States. Moreover, the extent to which support can be given to the private sector is governed, to some extent, by the coverage of the assisted area maps within regions. The current maps were determined on the basis of the performance of different spatial areas, using a range of indicators, relative to the EU average.

- 1.4.b) Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?

Futureskills Scotland (FSS) was set up on behalf of Scottish Ministers in order to analyse the labour market to inform policy making, improve the availability of labour market information in Scotland, and work closely with Careers Scotland to provide the organisation and its clients labour market information. In 2004, FSS published the Employers Skills Survey in 2004 (to be updated in 2007) which outlined employer's views on vacancies, hard-to-fill vacancies and skill shortages. Four key messages emerged:

- ◆ Just under half (46%) of vacancies were hard-to-fill in 2004, equivalent to 1.7 per cent of employees and affecting one in ten workplaces which suggests that the market operates effectively to fill vacancies;
- ◆ The number of skill shortages vacancies was small, equivalent to less than one per cent of all employees and just five per cent of workplaces. However, most hard-to-fill vacancies (55%) arose because of skill shortages. This is a change from 2002 and 2003 where the majority of hard-to-fill vacancies were caused by reasons other than a shortage of skills;
- ◆ Hard-to-fill vacancies and skill shortages were more common in growing businesses; and
- ◆ As in previous years' surveys, it was 'softer' core skills such as oral communication, customer handling and problem solving which were most commonly cited as lacking in applicants in skill shortage vacancies.

The Framework for Economic Development (FEDS) addresses the issues of skills shortages, skills developments and skills mismatch. This is described further in Section 1.4a.

1.4.c) Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.

The Executive's Lifelong Learning Strategy has a vision for: "The best possible match between the learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which will strengthen Scotland's economy and society". Within that vision, the objective of its policies for skills, further education and higher education is to create a system of learning provision within which people of all ages, backgrounds and capacities can move and progress freely through different episodes of learning throughout their lives.

Scotland is experiencing major demographic change. Our population is both ageing, driven by rises in life expectancy, and shrinking, a result of falling birth rates. By 2031 the number of people aged 65 and above is projected to rise from 16% to 26% of the total population. Given that older people (age 50 and over) will become an even more significant part of our workforce in the 21st century, it is clear that we need to encourage employers to concentrate on engaging much better with this age group. By encouraging older people to engage in learning, these individuals will be better equipped to carry out their job as well as being given greater confidence that they can continue to play a productive role in our economy.

The Scottish Executive has developed an older learners programme - "Experience Counts" - which aims to help older people currently in work develop and improve their skills, in particular their employability skills. The programme encourages Sector Skills Councils to collaborate with colleges and learning providers to develop and deliver bite size or taster courses aimed at older workers within their sector.

1.4.d) Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.

No Scottish data is available. However, the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning has been identified in recent national development work as a mechanism which can be integrated within employing organisations' induction and training provision. RPL enables a more effective targeting of training provision by recognising and building on the existing skills base of the workforce. Management and leadership; soft skills and employability skills are identified by all industry sectors as common priorities in terms of skills development. Recognising such skills which already gained through prior learning as part of the process of training provision is supported by agencies such as Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Sector Skills Councils.

1.4.e) Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly- skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?

It has been recognised in Scotland that the recognition of prior learning would be a useful tool for a broad range of people. The diversity of the labour workforce requires employment sectors and employing organisations to more effectively target, and meet the training and development needs, of new employee groups:

- ◆ Women returners;
- ◆ Older People;
- ◆ People who lack formal qualifications; and
- ◆ Refugees and migrant workers.

There has been no research to gather data on these specific groups but much anecdotal evidence from a broad range of stakeholders who were recently questioned (July- November 2006) as part of a Scottish Executive study. The focus of this recognition is likely to be core, employability skills; confidence-building and the identification of ways in which existing skills can be developed further. In some sectors, such as social services; health and construction, recognition will also focus on vocationally specific skills and knowledge. A key driver for this recognition is legislative requirements for a qualified workforce.

1.4.f) Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.

Scottish Analysts have advised that there is no such data as there is little information gathered outside the economy.

1.4.g) Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that requires a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) have worked with a number of professions who use RPL to support entrance to the profession. These include nursing and the social care (particularly Nursery Managers who now require to have a degree qualification under new regulation).

#### Component 1.5. Social developments

5. Learning for leisure and pleasure and for personal development is very common in some OECD countries, and it is said that it yields benefits associated with democracy and citizenship and, such participation in civil society will affect economic and social benefits of individuals and, thus, have a positive benefit on the whole of society (World Bank, 2002). A new diverse set of competencies and skills required to participate in the knowledge society and economy is being defined (OECD, 2003c; Rychen and Salganik, 2003; European Commission, 2002). Individuals are expected to be self-reliant in relating to their own learning to acquire new skills and capacities such as media literacy, environmental literacy, health literacy, science literacy, ICT literacy, financial literacy, cultural literacy, literacies for the workplace, etc<sup>103</sup>. However, many of the new skills and ‘illiteracies’ are gained through non-formal and informal learning. Not recognising such skills and capacities may lead to a loss not only for an individual but also for an organisation and even for a society at large. Analytical work on the social aspects and the costs of the failure to recognise such skills and capacities could be an added value of our study.

1.5.a) What are the newly evolved ‘skills and competencies’ to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.

The SCQF levels each have accompanying descriptors which outline the generic learning outcomes of each level. These descriptors have been developed through consultation and demonstrate learning and qualifications earned in different contexts, such as in the workplace or in classroom study, and by a variety of modes. However, they can only be applied to learning which has been or can be subject to valid, reliable and quality assured assessment.

At each level five headings have been identified to make the descriptors manageable. These are:

- knowledge and understanding – mainly subject based;
- practice: applied knowledge and understanding;
- generic cognitive skills, eg evaluation, critical analysis;
- communication, numeracy and IT skills; and
- autonomy, accountability and working with others.

These level descriptors mirror the 5 ‘Core Skills’ which are embedded into Scottish national qualifications. These are communication, numeracy, problem solving, IT and working with others. These skills should give individuals the ability to function as active, enterprising, and responsible members of society.

1.5.b) Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has led to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession?

In order for children to benefit fully from school education they need to obtain a sound basis of knowledge and skills in literacy and numeracy. The Scottish Executive Education Department

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<sup>103</sup> A new literacy approach is discussed in the ASEM lifelong learning thematic report 2: integrated approaches in lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. Available at: [http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem\\_thematic\\_report\\_2.pdf](http://www.uvm.dk/asem/reports/asem_thematic_report_2.pdf)

have undertaken a series of initiatives to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy as part of their National Priorities. This initiative increased the pass rates for Higher English (SCQF level 6) for Diet 2005 at 68% compared with 66% in 2004. The pass rate for Higher Maths remained unchanged in the same period.

Scotland's Core Skills are embedded in the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme which is aimed at growing Scotland's economy and tackling Skills Shortages. The MA programme has been a huge success – there are currently 32,000 MAs in training. Since 1995, more than 49,000 have successfully completed the programme. This year (2006) 17,500 employers are involved in the programme – a record number since the programme began and an increase of 36% in the last 2 years alone.

Recent research carried out as part of the SEN Skillseekers & MA evaluation has shown that 70% of MAs said they would be more likely to undertake future training as a result of the positive experience they had on the programme. In addition, more than half of those who don't complete their MA have a positive outcome (for example, change employer, move to another employer paying higher wages, change VQ, move into further or higher education, gain promotion and so on).

**Table 3.48 Outcomes by completion**

| <b>Completed your training</b> | <b>Skillseekers</b> |             | <b>MA 16-24</b> |             | <b>MA 25+</b> |             |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Working for an employer        | 110                 | 71%         | 168             | 87%         | 226           | 94%         |
| Self-employed                  | 3                   | 2%          | 2               | 1%          | 9             | 4%          |
| Studying or training full-time | 18                  | 12%         | 14              | 7%          | 1             | 0%          |
| Not working or studying        | 22                  | 14%         | 9               | 5%          | 4             | 2%          |
| Working and studying           | 1                   | 1%          | 1               | 1%          | 0             | 0%          |
|                                | <b>154</b>          | <b>100%</b> | <b>194</b>      | <b>100%</b> | <b>240</b>    | <b>100%</b> |

Completers of MAs were more likely to get a salary increase (32 percent), take on a better position (30 percent) and to be given new responsibilities (49 percent) than the non completers.

The report on the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Strategy (**Scottish Executive Social Research 2006** ISBN 0 7559 2987 X) provides evidence that recognition of literacies learning has led to increased confidence, further uptake of learning and more involvement in communities.

1.5.c) Provide evidence, if any, of recognition of this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship?

'Education for Citizenship in Scotland', Learning and Teaching Scotland 2002, describes citizenship as being about : the exercises or rights and responsibilities within communities at local, national and global levels; and making informed decisions, and taking thought and responsible action, locally and globally. Responsible citizenship is also one of the four purposes of 'A Curriculum for Excellence'. The strategies for learning and teaching that support education for citizenship also contribute to the other purposes of 'A Curriculum for Excellence' – they help to

develop young people's ability to be effective contributors, successful learners and confident individuals.

One of the key aims in developing the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was to *'help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential'* There is little hard facts on how RNFIL can contribute to greater democratic involvement or citizenship. However, previous projects and studies have identified that RPL can support institutional widening of participation and access agendas by encouraging the participation of non-traditional learners in lifelong learning and enabling people who lack formal qualifications to gain access. Anecdotally, the raising of confidence in learners who have undergone RNFIL can have positive benefits in other aspects of a learners life. RPL ,particularly within the context of community learning and development is viewed as a means of supporting learner empowerment.

#### Component 1.6. Others.

1.6.a) Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential – directly or non-directly – that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

Anecdotal evidence suggests the lack of general interest by employers who often need to be convinced as to the bottom-line increase in profits measured against the cost of implementing a system of RPL. However, this is not across all sectors in Scotland and work has to be done by business and enterprise representative bodies to promote the benefits.

The increasing diversity of the student population, largely as a result of demographic change, is requiring learning providers to increase the flexibility of their provision – in terms of entry, mode, place , pace and content, in order to effectively target new student groups. The imminent decline of the traditional student base, will mean many institutions will be seeking to attract new student groups such as people in employment; adult returners; refugees; migrant workers and international students. RPL is viewed as an increasingly important strategy in terms developing flexible modes of entry and delivery.

Demographic change will also have an impact on the length of economic participation of individuals. Employees will need to develop and gain recognition of transferable, employability skills as well as the updating of specific skills and qualifications. RPL is viewed as having an important role to play in identifying and helping to develop employability and meta-cognitive skills which will enable people to transfer more easily to different employment contexts and to learn new job specific skills.

1.6.b) Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.

The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) developed in Scotland in the early 1990's as a route for those with low formal qualifications to gain access to Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) alongside the traditional routes based on the assessment of formal learning

through National qualifications. The policy goal was to improve access to programmes of post-compulsory education leading to formal qualifications.

<sup>104</sup> Since its introduction in the late 1980s with the development of the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (SCOTCATS) and its integration within SQA (then SCOTVEC) provision, RPL (or APEL) has remained a marginal institutional activity within further and higher education. Prior to the development of the SCQF RPL guidelines (2005) there were no overall nationally agreed principles for recognising and credit rating non-formal and informal learning in a consistent manner. RPL developments take place within the context of institutions, some of which are supported through nationally, or European-funded development projects.

#### *RPL within HEIs*

RPL activity, while not a widespread activity, tends to take place in the ‘new’, or post-1992 universities which continue to place a greater emphasis on widening access to higher education, especially amongst adult returners. Little RPL activity takes place within the older universities. Within most of the new universities, RPL provision is not mainstream but is undertaken in particular vocationally specific areas such as nursing and social work. This limited use of RPL continues despite the development of university wide policies and procedures for RPL/APEL within several HEIs which are intended to relate to all or most undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

#### *RPL within colleges*

Despite the development by SQA (formerly SCOTVEC) of APEL support and assessment mechanisms, most RPL activity that takes place within colleges is an informal, non-recorded process for the purposes of access to a programme of study. The formal programmes of study that are undertaken within further education colleges, such as National Courses from Access 1 to Advanced Higher, Higher National Qualifications (Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas), Professional Development Awards and Professional qualifications are designed for college-based delivery. RPL claims for credit are usually regarded as overly complicated and more time-consuming than undertaking the learning through the conventional route

#### *RPL within Community Learning and Development (CLD)*

‘RPL-type’ activity takes place within community learning and development and voluntary sector learning providers, focussing largely on the development of core skills, adult literacy and numeracy, ‘return to learn’ and confidence-building but much of this is not formally assessed or credit-rated.

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<sup>104</sup> Summary of RPL development in Scotland extracted from SCQF RPL Interim Report (SCQF,2004)

*RPL within the workplace*

Equally, there are a few mechanisms to formally, or externally, recognise the wide range of informal learning that takes place within the workplace, unless linked to Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) provision. SVQs are competence-based qualifications based on National Occupational Standards and evidenced largely through work-based performance. A number of employers or training providers who are approved centres regard RPL as an integral part of their SVQ provision. RPL approaches have been developed within these companies which enable employees to provide evidence of their achievement of the competences as a fast track route to completing the qualification. Several of these employers have reported that the recognition of experience and competence has led to increased self-esteem among the workforce – individuals feel empowered to accept new responsibility and have the confidence that the external recognition of their skills has a currency within their industry or sector as a whole.

*RPL within the voluntary sector*

Much of the workplace training and informal learning that takes place in the voluntary sector for volunteers is non-accredited unless linked to SVQ provision or to pre-qualifying work-based degree programmes. In order to facilitate the personal development of volunteers, both personal development planning and the compilation of portfolios is encouraged in many voluntary organisations. This enables volunteers to gather evidence of the learning gained through training as well as through the experience of volunteering. Portfolios can be used to support a request for enhanced responsibility or a change in role or participation in further learning and development, whether non-formal or formal.

*RPL for personal/career development*

A wide range of informal learning is undertaken by individuals through community learning and development activities provided by local authorities, college outreach centres, or Learn direct-recognised centres, within the voluntary sector and within the workplace. This learning is highly valuable to the learner as well as to the community or employer, but is usually non-assessed and therefore not credit-rated. Informal learning activities in these sectors can focus on core skills, such as communication and ICT skills, literacy and numeracy; context-specific skills such as committee skills or vocational skills, as well as confidence-raising, 'return to learn' type provision. Many of the learner groups engaged in these activities are often described as 'hard to reach' learners. External recognition of this learning within the context of the SCQF can enhance the self-confidence of these individuals as 'learners' and can facilitate the identification of further learning pathways as part of an educational and career guidance process.

*RPL for credit (APEL)*

In the early 1990s, SQA (then SCOTVEC) and many HEIs developed APEL mechanisms based on the portfolio approach. This tended to be a flexible, open-ended approach to evidence-gathering, highly learner-centred and therefore requiring highly individualised learner support. The process of compiling a portfolio is a demanding one for learners, particularly for those learner groups, such as adult returners who have been out of the educational system for some time, and for whom APEL was developed as a more

flexible means of enabling access to, and credit within, programmes of study. The assessment of portfolios, particularly those which have been compiled without structured guidance to limit the quantity of evidence, is a lengthier process than other forms of assessment.

As a result, within college/SQA provision, if RPL for credit takes place it is normally managed through 'assessment on demand' i.e. undertaking the normal unit/programme assessment. RPL for entry onto programmes of study takes place during the admissions process, normally through an interview. It is not described or recorded as an RPL process. However the prior informal learning of applicants over the age of 21 is taken into account if they do not have the normal entry requirements. RPL-type activity is also embedded in many Access and Return to Learn programmes provided by colleges.

Within HEIs, most RPL activity has as its focus the gaining of credit within programmes rather than as a means of gaining initial access or entry to a programme as an alternative to traditional entry qualifications. Moreover, most RPL claims within Scottish universities are made at the postgraduate level. This is because institutions find it easier to accredit experiential learning which equates to the specialised, professional learning that is undertaken at postgraduate or post-experience level. Attempts to match the outcomes of experiential learning to the outcomes of subject areas at undergraduate levels are often unsuccessful. The outcomes of most undergraduate programmes are designed to be achieved through conventional delivery, not experiential learning. Even if a match can be made, the perception of the outcomes of experiential learning as lower status knowledge may be reinforced by an accreditation process which requires that it is translated into the form of knowledge recognised in academia.

In sum, RPL activity in Scotland has developed as a limited and marginal activity, largely due to the complexity and time-consuming nature of RPL processes. This issue is currently being addressed through national RPL development work which commenced with the development of the SCQF RPL guidelines. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Implementation Plan (October 2002) details the future developments of the SCQF. One target was to develop and agree a set of guidelines on the recognition of prior learning and experiential learning which would then allow credit rating and levelling on the framework. Specific work has also been undertaken as has been outlined in this report (including Case Studies – Component 5). The SCQF RPL guidelines define two distinctive types of RPL: RPL for Personal and Career Development, or formative recognition and RPL for Credit, or summative recognition.

#### RPL for Personal/Career Development or Formative Assessment

RPL for personal/career development or formative assessment is a process of recognising learning achieved outside formal education or training systems within the context of further learning and development as part of a guidance process. This process can be linked to confidence-building; identifying individual learning pathways; a notional levelling of learning within the context of the SCQF; supporting the transition between informal, non-formal and formal learning; and preparation for the process of RPL for credit.

#### RPL for Credit or summative assessment

RPL for credit or summative assessment is a process of assessing learning achieved outside of formal education or training systems which is recognised, if appropriate, for academic or vocational purposes. This process is also known as **the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)**. RPL can enable a learner to gain entry to a programme of formal learning if the outcomes of their prior informal learning are judged as equivalent to the entry requirements to the programme; to gain credit within a programme of

formal learning if the outcomes of his/her prior informal learning are judged as equivalent to the outcomes of the programme to which he/she is seeking credit.

This distinction has proved to be highly useful in current RPL development work as it embraces a wide range of activity taking place within the non-formal learning context of the community and the workplace as well as activity taking place within formal learning settings within colleges and universities. The two processes are clearly linked and should therefore enable learners to make easier transitions between informal, non-formal and formal learning contexts.

## *Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements*

### Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

2.1.a) Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The Scottish Executive has recently commissioned a study to try to better understand the provision of RPL across Scotland to try to determine future policy direction by the Scottish Executive. The study will be completed by November 2006.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which has full Ministerial support, has already developed guidelines for the recognition of prior learning. This is further outlined in section 2.1b.

2.1.b) Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state – yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a key priority as outlined in the SCQF National Plan for Implementation of the Framework (December 2002). This led to the development of the Guidelines for RPL and sector specific work on the recognition of RPL (Social Services sector and Community Learning and Development). Many universities have used the guidelines to review and revise their institutional procedures for APEL/RPL. The SCQF is not in itself a regulatory framework but it can act as a foundation for regulation in specific sectors, such as the Social Services Sector which will be outlined further in this section.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has been working closely with newly regulated professions and organisations such as the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). This sector is the second largest employment sector in Scotland – 8% of all public sector activity (138,000 people). The social services sector embraces the social work and social care workforce across the public, private and voluntary sectors. The sector is diverse ranging from degree-qualified social workers; to care workers in the community and in residential care; to workers in nurseries, family centres, playgroups and school clubs. The sector faces challenges common to most occupational sectors: increasing use of technology; the global economy and a declining and ageing Scottish population. The SSSC has a growing regulatory role in workforce development and recognition. By 2009, everyone working in the sector will need to be registered to work in the sector and therefore need relevant qualification to demonstrate their competence. For the 6000 social workers who already have a professional qualification this does not present a problem but for the remaining 132,000 – 50% of whom have no formal qualification - this could be seen as a major problem.

The sector is using RPL processes to recognise employees’ existing skills and knowledge. This process will:

- ◆ Build confidence in learners, many of whom are apprehensive about having to re-engage in the formal education and training system; and
- ◆ Quantifies their knowledge and skills in the context of the SCQF enabling their learning achievements to count towards a formal qualification.

The guidance is based on the SCQF-RPL Guidance produced earlier in 2006 but adapted to meet the needs of the sector.

2.1.c) Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?

The SCQF Guidelines on the recognition of prior learning (2005) provide a set of core principles and guidance on the key features of RPL provision. They are applicable across all post-16 education and training sectors in Scotland. They are not prescriptive but are designed to be used by learner providers to develop and operate RPL processes which are responsive to the needs of their particular learner groups.

### Core Principles of RPL

All RPL processes, whether for personal/career development or for entry and credit, should be quality-assured to ensure consistency, transparency and accessibility.

A variety of different approaches to RPL can be developed and utilised by HEIs to meet the needs and goals of different learner groups and to reflect the diverse nature of programmes across HEIs.

All RPL provision should be underpinned by the following core principles. The aim of the core principles is to ensure effective, quality-assured practice that will enable learners, learning providers and employers to have confidence in the outcomes of RPL. By identifying core principles as the parameters within which all RPL provision within the context of the SCQF should operate consistency will be more feasibly achieved.

**The core principles** contained within the SCQF RPL guidelines are:

#### **1. Learner-focussed**

RPL should be a gateway, and not a barrier, to learning. RPL should promote the positive aspects of an individual's learning experience (as opposed to its deficiency). RPL should be a voluntary activity on the part of the learner. The learner's needs and reasons for recognition should be paramount.

#### **2. Accessibility**

RPL should be an accessible and inclusive process, applicable to all learners at all levels. Accessibility can be facilitated through:

- Initial information and advice ( awareness raising);
- Manageable systems in terms of time and money from the perspective of both learner and learning provider;
- Easy to understand and easy to implement processes;
- Embedding of RPL in the programme design stage in order to become an integral part of college and HEI provision, rather than an 'add-on', marginal activity.

#### **3. Flexibility**

A range of different approaches to RPL in terms of both support and assessment should be encouraged to address the diversity of learner needs, goals and experiences across the different sectors.

#### **4. Reliability, transparency & consistency**

In managing RPL processes are necessary to ensure confidence in the outcomes.

#### **5. Clarity of role definition**

The roles and responsibilities of learner; learning provider; and receiving institution should be clearly defined. Staff involved in managing and supporting the RPL process should be provided with appropriate training and support.

## 6. Quality

RPL should be underpinned by Quality Assurance mechanisms. Moderation of RPL for personal and career development should focus on ensuring that the standards of notional levelling are consistently applied. Moderation of RPL for credit should be integrated within existing quality assurance processes and should be available for scrutiny for appropriate external quality assurance, for example by an external auditing body.

## 7. Collaboration

Collaboration between sectors should be encouraged in order to meet the needs of the learner more effectively. Links should be encouraged between learning providers and receiving institutions, and between these and guidance organisations such as Careers Scotland, in supporting learners and potential learners to gain recognition for their prior informal learning within the context of the SCQF. Collaboration should extend to the sharing of case studies; examples of good practice; and approaches to support and assessment.

The Guidelines also identify key features of the RPL process in order to guide providers in their own developments. These are:

1. **initial guidance** on the RPL process
2. **supporting learners** in reflective process, identifying learning through experience ( skills, knowledge and understanding), selecting and presenting evidence of that learning, identifying areas for further learning)
3. **mechanisms for gathering and presenting evidence of learning**
4. **recognition process for RPL claims**
  - a. notional levelling/mapping –individual learning plan; bridging (*RPL for Personal/Career Development*)
  - b. assessment, credit limits, fee process (*RPL for Credit*)
5. **monitoring process** for RPL procedures
6. **support for staff** engaged in support and assessment of RPL
7. integration of provision within **quality assurance** systems

The SCQF RPL Resource Pack was developed (SCQF, February 2006) to support the implementation of the Guidelines. It provides examples of practice in RPL provided by practitioners and organisations across the post-16 education and training sectors in Scotland. The pack contains descriptions of RPL process and procedures that have been developed within particular programmes, towards qualifications or across organisations. The pack also contains RPL procedural documentation and resource material which have been provided by some of the organisations. The purpose of the pack is to illustrate the ways in which RPL can be developed and used within the context of the SCQF.

2.1.d) Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure which made the change.

There is no legislation for the provision of RPL in Scotland. The key drivers to recent RPL work within the SCQF auspices is the need to provide guidelines to cover all prior learning which had not previously been assessed or credit-rated – including learning achieved through life and work experiences as well as prior learning gained in less formal contexts in community-based learning, work-based learning, continuing professional development and voluntary work.

The most important drivers for future development work will concentrate on needs of Scotland's learners especially those who have been disengaged from learning whether within or outwith employment. The development of future priorities will be dependent on a process of prioritisation following a recent Scottish Executive Scoping Study (July – November 2006).

2.1.e) What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/ to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?

The regulation of many professional sectors in Scotland is a reserved matter to the Westminster Parliament. However, in general terms education and training is devolved to the Scottish Executive. The Scottish Executive and partners have worked specifically with the Scottish Social Services Sector to recognise RPL to help with the regulation of the workforce (outlined in section 2.1b above). The SCQF –RPL guidelines are available to be used by any sector but with specific changes to make relevant to sectoral needs.

The credit rating and levelling of RPL within the framework will still be dependent on the SCQF Quality Assurance principles and will be recognised by SCQF credit-rating bodies.

2.1.f) Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?

There is no legal framework to recognise non-formal or informal learning in Scotland

2.1.g) Provide information, if exists, any evaluation of how they work or how they have not worked.

Not applicable.

2.1.h) Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?

The SCQF has undertaken a number of projects and awareness raising communications across education and training sectors in Scotland, including:

- ◆ Increasing employer engagement;
- ◆ College credit-rating pilot convened to credit rate a variety of different types of college devised qualifications;
- ◆ Schools Project to recognise wider achievement;
- ◆ SQA training and development support for Credit Rating to various audiences and contexts. These materials include the SQA Higher National Unit, 'Credit Rating: Principles and Practice', with associated exemplar and training pack for the delivery of a training workshop. The pack includes presentations and sample credit rating activities. The exemplar and support materials will be made available to centres approved to deliver the Unit.

- ◆ Credit rating of professional Qualifications – As the framework is further extended, more professional qualifications are being credit rated and levelled against the SCQF. Having recognised the benefits of their programmes being on the SCQF, Castle Craig Hospital recently had their Diploma in Addiction Counselling and Certificate in Addiction Studies credit rated by Napier University.
- ◆ Quality Enhancement Theme (Higher Education) Flexible Delivery development project ‘ Supporting the Development of the Flexible Curriculum : flexible entry and flexible programmes within the context of the SCQF (2006). Flexible Entry embraces both RPL and credit transfer. The project established an HE Coordination Group for Flexible entry and developed a Flexible Entry Staff development Pack for HE, based on the SCQF guidelines for RPL and credit transfer and illustrated with examples of operational practice drawn from the sector.([www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk))

### Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government

2.2.a) List all actors in governance and create a matrix of who (e.g. government, quasi-government, assessment centres, public educational institutions, private for-profit education providers, professional bodies, etc.) does what (provides academic/ professional recognition, overseas assessment, etc.) for non-formal and informal learning. If there are more than one body who are responsible for an action (e.g. recognition), list all actors involved and describe how is the coordination managed?<sup>105</sup> If there are more than one ministry of a government are involved, specify which ministries have competencies for what. How clear are the different roles by different actors communicated among themselves as well as to users?

#### **List of ‘who does what’ for non-formal and informal learning and recognition of such learning**

| Who?  | What?  |
|---|--|
| Scottish Executive – Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department | Policy, funding and monitoring of adult literacy programmes.<br><br>Policy and Funding of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)            |
| Scottish Executive Development Department                                   | Funding of community learning and development  |
| Scottish Executive Agency Communities Scotland                              | Policy Formulation, support and development work for community learning and development.<br><br>Support and development work for adult literacies programme. |
| Local Authorities   | Providers of informal and non-formal learning  |
| Scottish Qualifications Authority   | Accredits and awards Scotland’s mainstream qualifications and credit-rating body for the SCQF.   |
| Scottish Enterprise   |  |
| Higher Education Institutions   | Provide Continuing Adult Education courses; RPL for entry to programmes and RPL for credit within programmes   |
| Colleges  | Work with Communities, businesses and private learning providers to provide ad-hoc courses   |

<sup>105</sup> See Component 4.1 for complementary data.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | including literacy and numeracy courses; RPL for entry to courses and RPL for credit within programmes |
| Schools  |  |
| Community learning and development providers (voluntary and statutory) | Non-formal learning provision; RPL for personal/career development                                     |
| SQA approved learning and training providers                           | RPL for credit within vocational qualifications  |

2.2.b) Create the above same matrix for recognition of formal learning for comparative purposes.

**List of ‘who does what’ for formal learning and recognition of such learning**

| Who?  | What?   |
|---|---|
| Scottish Executive – Education Department                                   | Policy and funding for school-aged compulsory education.  |
| Scottish Executive – Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department | Policy and funding for post-16 adult education and training.  |
| Scottish Qualifications Authority   | Accredits and awards Scotland’s mainstream qualifications and credit-rating body for the SCQF                                       |
| Scottish Enterprise   | Works with business and individuals to ultimately support the growing Scotland’s economy.   |
| Scottish Higher Education Institutions                                      | Developing, quality assuring and providing tertiary level qualifications.   |
| Colleges  | Work with Communities, businesses and private learning providers to provide ad-hoc courses including literacy and numeracy courses. |
| Schools   | Provide Scotland’s compulsory education system and working with the community to provide adult education.                           |
| SQA –approved learning and training providers                               | Deliver and assesses SQA qualifications   |
| Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE)                              | Evaluation of Scotland’s education system (apart from HEIs).  |

2.2.c) Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a ‘predominance-of-industry’ model; 2) a ‘predominance-of-public authorities’ model’; and 3) a ‘shared responsibility’ model<sup>106</sup>. Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none of which is suitable to your country, describe your own country model.

Scotland has a shared-responsibility model for RPL. The Scottish Executive works with stakeholders to encourage recognition and works with sectors to use the SCQF as a tool to award credit and levels for progression and to support Scotland’s education and lifelong learning agendas.

2.2.d) Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.

The RNFIL is a cross-cutting issue and as such Scotland’s policy reflects the needs of the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD) (with responsibility for post-16 education and training) and the Education Department (pre-16 education). ETLLD has worked with the Education

<sup>106</sup> See UNESCO UIE Report (Draft) at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/pdf/recognitiondraftsynthesis.pdf>

Department (with policy responsibility for education in Social Care) and the Scottish Social Services Council to undergo a RPL process for workers in the newly regulated profession. The Scottish Executive will develop a cross-cutting approach as required to ensure that RPL can be used as a recognition tool.

### Component 2.3. Resources<sup>107</sup>

2.3.a) Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.

There is no over-arching funding body for RPL in Scotland. The financing of RPL is made by those sectors, institutions and sometimes individuals undertaking the process.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) distributes £1.5 billion in funding for teaching and learning, research and other activities in Scotland's colleges and universities. Established in 2005, the Council provides a strategic overview of tertiary education in Scotland to help secure a more coherent system of high-quality learning, teaching and research.

Working in partnership with colleges, universities and other bodies with an interest in learning and research in Scotland the Council will support colleges and universities in:

- the delivery of high quality programmes for learners;
- the investment in modern facilities for learning and research; and
- being flexible and responsive in allowing access to lifelong learning for all.

2.3.b) If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.

Not available for Scotland.

2.3.c) Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.

The cost of undertaking RPL varies depending on where the recognition will take place. For instance, employers or employer bodies will often cover costs themselves as a commitment to workforce development.

The costing mechanism for RPL procedures is determined by providers and receiving institutions.

### **Fees charged in Scottish HEIs**

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<sup>107</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

Some universities do not charge for RPL. The RPL process, whether for entry or credit, is regarded to be part of the admissions process. It is also viewed as part of widening participation strategies through providing a route of entry into the university for non-traditional learners.

At other universities, fees are not normally charged for RPL for entry into a programme, as this is regarded as part of the admissions process. Fees however are charged for claims for RPL for credit. These fees vary across institutions but include the following:

- up to £60 for RPL or RPL and credit transfer claims
- 50% of the module cost.
- full module cost

RPL modules or units are being developed by some providers as a means of attracting funding and enabling part-time learners, for example, to access fee waivers.

2.3.d) How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centers? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programmes exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.

It is not possible to quantify, at this time, the number of RPL assessment centres there are currently in Scotland. Most assessment centres are located within further or higher education institutions where the assessment is often carried out a decentralised 'subject' level. Section 1.2a outlines possible Scottish Executive proposals to create a multi-agency pilot recognition and guidance centre for asylum seekers and refugees. Decisions on the location of RPL assessment centres is taken at institutional and not at central government level.

#### Component 2.4. Others

2.4.a) Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

### **Component 3. Description of technical arrangements**

#### *Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework*

3.1.a) What term does your country use for ‘Recognition of non-formal and informal learning’? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.

In Scotland, since the development of the SCQF RPL guidelines we generally use the term Recognition of non-formal and informal learning, although the terms ‘*Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning*’ or ‘*Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning*’ and ‘*Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)* are also still in use’. However, Scotland accepts the formal definitions of informal, non-formal and formal learning as that derived from the EU Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000, EU, Brussels).

3.1.b) Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, the impact of such linkages.

RPL is directly linked to the development and implementation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Guidance on RPL has been produced and it being used by sectors to illustrate ways in which the SCQF can support recognition and progression.

Individuals making RPL claims for credit do so either to gain entry to programmes as an alternative to traditional entry qualifications or to gain credit within programmes or towards qualifications.

3.1.c) What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?

In Scotland the kinds of qualifications more generally linked to RPL are Scottish Vocational Qualifications (including as part of specific training schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships), Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, degrees (both BA and MA), and professional qualifications.

RPL is more linked to qualifications which are either directly related to the workplace and occupational competence, such as VQs, or to developing professional competence within such areas as social work and nursing.

There are few difficulties in linking RPL to Scotland’s qualification framework for learning which leads to any of the above awards as these will all be based on measurable learning outcomes which can then be assessed and accredited according to the SCQF’s quality assurance principles. The difficulties lie in recognising learning taken outwith ‘conventional’ learning institutions or systems – such as in the home or in the community.

3.1.d) Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing ‘legitimacy’ both in working life and in the educational system ?

There are no differences which are dependent on whether the qualification is vocational or academic as the methods of accreditation and accumulation are the same. The SCQF aims to provide more ‘legitimacy’ to vocational qualifications in providing the means for credit transfer to higher or professional level qualifications.

3.1.e) If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been one of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?

The development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was intended, in the first instance, to bring all Scotland's mainstream qualifications together into one framework. However, the SCQF was designed to enable the recognition of all forms of learning, including non-formal and informal learning. The SCQF was formally launched in 2001 and the following year the SCQF Implementation Plan was produced which detailed the future developments of the SCQF. One target was to develop and agree a set of guidelines on the recognition of prior learning and experiential learning (APEL) which would then allow credit rating and levelling of RPL activities onto the framework. SCQF development work has since ensured that the RPL is fully integrated into developments. The SCQF website ([www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)) contains the SCQF RPL guidelines and an RPL resource pack comprising case studies and exemplars of materials which can support the RPL process.

3.1.f) What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?

A recent study of RPL provision in Scotland has indicated a number of potential barriers to recognising prior learning as noted by key stakeholders. A main concern is the amount of resourcing required to manage an RPL system (including financing, staff training required and the lack of awareness of the benefits RPL can have for learners, employees, business and education and training institutions and providers. Resourcing issues can be hard to quantify in national and local terms and a more strategic national approach will be considered by the Scottish Executive. The majority of Scotland's Higher Education Institute's are aware of the benefits of RPL to widening access to learning. The SCQF is developed in partnership with both Universities Scotland and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (Scotland Office) who represents the sector. The Higher Education sector in Scotland recognises that RPL can also support Continuing Professional Development, Personal Development, employer engagement through work-based learning provision and to increase numbers of postgraduate students in HE.

### Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

3.2.a) Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory or sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.)

There are no formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning in Scotland. However the RPL Guidelines produced by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) can be used by any sector which wishes to develop and operate RPL processes. The guidelines can be found at <http://www.scqf.org.uk/rpl.asp>.

3.2.b) Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?

Within Further and Higher Education the provision for RPL is either managed centrally within the university or is devolved to specific departments. Credit is allocated after the learning outcomes have been assessed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority within the further education sector and by HEIs within

the HE sector .SQA and HEIs and now colleges are credit-rating bodies for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

The credit-rating process for non-formal and informal learning involves a formal assessment of learning which involves determining:

- the **comparability of the learning** to either the:
  - Particular requirements for entry to a programme in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding (*for RPL for entry*);
  - Existing or negotiated individual programme unit or modules (*for RPL for credit against particular units/module*);
    - The outcomes, or competences, for part of a level of a programme or qualification in a particular subject or vocational area (*for RPL for general or specific credit*);
    - The outcomes for an entire level of a programme or qualification (*for RPL for general or specific credit*).
- the **level of credit**
- the **volume of credit**

The assessment procedures for RPL, including arrangements for external assessment or verification, should be consistent with the normal assessment, and general quality assurance, procedures of the institution or organization. This includes the provision of an appeals process in order to protect the rights of the learner.

Prior informal or experiential learning which has been successfully credit-rated should be clearly indicated on a learner's transcript. Management information systems need to incorporate information on credit gained through RPL and can be used to facilitate tracking of the progression of successful RPL claimants.

3.2.c) How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.

In the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework credit is allocated on a notional 10 hours of learning equal to 1 credit point.

3.2.d) What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

The process of RPL can be undertaken by the learner for both personal and professional development and for gaining credit for entry to/or from with formal programmes of study and to avoid duplication of learning. The qualification can then be said to be credit-rated on the SCQF and be recognised as a quality assured and levelled on the SCQF.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority has developed a variety of materials to support training in Credit Rating for a range of audiences and contexts. These materials include the SQA Higher Unit; 'Credit Rating: Principles and Practice', with associated exemplar and training pack for the delivery of a training workshop. The pack includes presentations and sample credit rating activity. Some of the materials were used during a College Credit Rating pilot. The exemplar and support materials will be made available to centres approved to deliver the Unit. The material is also available publicly on the SCQF website [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk).

The incentive for HEIs to give credit for prior informal and non-formal learning is to support the recruitment, retention and progression of non-traditional learner groups as part of widening participation strategies.

3.2.e) Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.

3.2.f) Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HED system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.

### Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures<sup>108</sup>

3.3.a) Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.

#### Assessment procedures for RPL

. Evidence of learning can be gathered through a variety of different mechanisms. The following mechanisms provide an indication of the range of approaches being used, but do not represent an exhaustive list. These can include:

- Reflective Account(HE, colleges, CLD,SVQs, voluntary sector,WBL);
- Project work, (HE,colleges, CLD,SVQs, voluntary sector,WBL);
- Structured Interview/oral assessment , colleges,(HE, CLD,SVQs, voluntary sector,WBL);
- ‘Assessment on demand’, such as exam or assignment (HE, colleges);
- Simulation/observation of practice (SVQs, WBL)
- Mapping of learning outcomes (HE, SVQs,WBL)
- Existing work-based learning practices in evaluation and assessment (SVQs,WBL)
- Profiling(, CLD,SVQs, voluntary sector,WBL)
- Record of Volunteer Learning and Experience (voluntary sector)
- Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Europass Language Passport<sup>109</sup>
- Portfolio (HE, WBL,colleges, voluntary sector)

Learners are provided with guidance on the mechanism(s) to be used and are supported in the gathering or production of this evidence.

Learners making a claim for RPL for credit require support for the RPL process itself, as well as support in the subject, vocational or professional area in which they are making the RPL claim. This is provided through a variety of different means such as:

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<sup>108</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

<sup>109</sup> The Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV) and Europass Language Passport are not yet widely in use, but are tools that could be used following the launch of Europass and within the context of the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). For more information on Europass, visit the Europass website: [europass.cedefop.eu.int](http://europass.cedefop.eu.int)

OECD study Recognition of informal and non-formal learning: Scottish contribution to UK report

- **Written or e-learning materials**, such as student handbooks or self-assessment packs;
- **Individual meetings or tutorials**, where the advisor or tutor can provide focussed guidance to a person about their individual RPL claim;
- **Group sessions**, which can be informal opportunities for peer group support or can be highly structured, task-based and tutor-led, possible as part of a wider programme of learning;
- **RPL modules**, which enables credit to be gained for the learning and skills gained in the process of making an RPL claim;
- **Electronic communication** such as email, on-line discussion fora, audio and video conferencing. This communication can be between the learners and tutors or between learners themselves.

The RPL claim is assessed by an appropriate subject expert(s) whose recommendation is considered and approved by the appropriate assessment board. The assessor is therefore normally a unit/module leader or programme leader .

The following widely applied **assessment criteria** is used by staff within colleges, and universities to assist them in determining whether the evidence presented is satisfactory and appropriate:

- **Acceptability**: is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning outcomes being demonstrated; is the evidence reliable and valid?
- **Sufficiency**: is there a sufficient breadth and depth of evidence, including evidence of reflection, to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes or competences claimed?
- **Authenticity**: is the evidence clearly the outcome of the learner's own effort?
- **Currency**: is what is being assessed current learning? Does the learner need to provide evidence of having kept the learning up-to-date, if the learning experience occurred some time ago?

The assessment process for RPL is integrated within the normal quality assurance mechanisms of the learning provider. This includes arrangements for external assessment or verification.

In many instances, for instance Aberdeen College, the RPL is supervised by staff members who have academic/curricular backgrounds aided by an administrator. In this context, most of the aegis of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and therefore must be supported by robust, relevant evidence which satisfies not only internal quality assurance procedures but also external moderation by the SQA Moderators.

3.3.b) Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc).

The method of assessment is determined by the purpose for which RPL is being undertaken.

If a learner is undertaking RPL for Personal/Career Development (formative recognition) in order to identify an individual learning pathway (rather than seeking the award of credit), the process does not require a formal assessment of learning to take place. However, if a learner is undertaking formative recognition in order to prepare them to undertake RPL for credit (summative recognition), the evidence gathered may be submitted for formal assessment at some future point. If an RPL claim for credit is being made, the learner must make clear statements about what was actually learned and provide supportive evidence that the learning claimed has been achieved.

The key point is that the evidence should be appropriate, in terms of type, level and breadth, to the RPL process being undertaken and should be as streamlined as possible. Many institutions in Scotland are shifting away from resource-intensive portfolio approaches and utilising more streamlined approaches to providing evidence such as structured interviews; reflective accounts and project work. These mechanisms can be used as sole or primary forms of evidence in order to claim credit within programmes.

Assessments can be based on one or more of the following evidence-gathering mechanisms.

- 1. Reflective Account:** this can be produced by a learner, with appropriate support, to demonstrate the process and outcomes of reflection on his or her experience. This approach enables the learner to make clear connections between his or her experiences and the learning which has resulted.
- 2. Project work:** this can demonstrate a learner's prior informal learning if he or she has undertaken a particular work-related or community-based activity, or a project through independent study.
- 3. Structured Interview/oral evidence** is the situation where a learner can provide oral evidence of their prior informal learning through a structured interview. This can provide a good opportunity for the learner to provide further clarification on the nature and outcomes of their prior informal learning and to discuss their goals in terms of further learning and development. The interviewer should record the key points discussed in the interview, so that the process is transparent. An interview schedule or proforma should be developed and used by learning providers to ensure consistency. This proforma can be made available to the learner in advance to enable them to prepare for the interview.
- 4. Observation of practice/simulation** involves direct observation of a learner's skills, knowledge and understanding can take place in a particular context such as the workplace. If the learner does not have the opportunity through his/her workplace practice to demonstrate particular skills and knowledge, a simulation or role play may be used.
- 5. Europass curriculum vitae (CV)** is the backbone of the Europass framework and in its electronic form can be linked to other Europass documents such as the Europass Language Passport and to the Diploma or Certificate supplement, for higher education and vocational education respectively. The Europass CV includes categories for the presentation of information on language proficiency, work experience and education and training achievements as well as additional competences held by the learner in relation to technical, organisational, artistic and social skills. The Europass CV, and other extended CV formats, can be used as evidence of prior informal learning as part of a portfolio or to underpin a structured interview/oral assessment.
- 6. Existing work-based learning practices in evaluation and assessment** such as workplace appraisal or professional development processes can be drawn upon as sources of evidence for RPL claims. This also includes those assessment methods used for SVQs.

7. **Profiling** is a paper-based or on-line tool used within workplace learning and training to enable workers to identify their existing skills and knowledge against national occupational standards (NOS); existing qualifications or units, such as SVQs. This process generates an action plan to meet any gaps in skills and knowledge. Profiling can be an effective RPL mechanism within the workplace.

8. **Record of Volunteer Learning and Experience** is used within workplace learning and training in the voluntary sector and encourages individuals to collect and maintain a record of informal learning to identify how and where they learn through volunteering. It can be used by learning providers to identify where learning occurs and could be utilised as transferable evidence for an RPL claim.

9. **Portfolio** refers to a collection of materials which has been compiled by a learner to demonstrate what he or she has learnt. The portfolio route for an RPL claim enables the learner to decide which learning experiences to draw upon and the particular pieces of evidence he or she will compile to demonstrate the learning outcomes or competences. Evidence can include direct evidence, which is material the learner produced at the time of the experience; reflective evidence, such as reflective accounts; and 'third party' evidence, such as references or testimonials from employers; tutors; colleagues and/or peers.

The process of compiling a portfolio can be highly rewarding, but is often resource-intensive. The learner requires detailed guidance on how to put together a portfolio, and in particular on the nature, range and volume of evidence required to demonstrate the learning.

In Aberdeen College (as a typical example) RPL is credited through one of three approaches:

- **Traditional portfolio production.** Although important this has a limited role because it is often time consuming and costly.
- **Credit transfer.** This is done by mapping pre-existing certified attainment to the sought criteria. The only problem which may arise is if a candidate wishes to claim credit for an examination-based award towards a competence based award. It can be difficult to identify whether a candidate has proved competence in the full range of criteria when undertaking examination questions.
- **Assessment on demand.** If a candidate feels they have the knowledge and experience to undertake assessments without the need for tuition, the assessments may be undertaken immediately.

3.3.c) Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?

Academic standards are determined by HEI quality assurance processes within the HE sector and by SQA for vocational and national qualifications delivered by schools, colleges and SQA-approved centres.

Professional standards and occupational standards are determined by professional bodies and Sector Skills Councils respectively.

3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your country of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.

In Scotland, the recognition of learning is completely at the discretion of the individual if they are undertaking the course of study or training for personal development only.

3.3.e) How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalisation context?

For learning to be recognised and included in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) then the learning needs to comply with the SCQF – Guidance on the Recognition of Prior Learning as agreed by partners and stakeholders of the SCQF. The Quality Assurance process is based on recognised learning outcomes and level descriptors to ensure they are placed appropriately on the SCQF. The Quality Assurance process is the responsibility of providers and their appropriate external auditing body. The SCQF levels can be mapped with the proposed levels and descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework. Therefore, the quality assurance of the learning can be trusted by other qualifications frameworks.

#### Component 3.4. Others

3.4.a) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

While the RPL process is carried out mainly with the view to allowing students to progress along a particular pathway along a particular routeway, in some circumstances it has been used for ‘reverse’ articulation. This may be because students are moving from a qualification offered in a higher education institution (such as a degree course) to a further education institution qualification (from the higher national programme). This may only be in a small number of qualifications because of the problem of mapping between qualifications or between different types of words (examination-based awards to competence-based awards).

**Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour**

Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders<sup>110</sup>

4.1.a) Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list is to map out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognisers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition. Please note, due to the difference of nature of non-formal and informal learning, that the grid for non-formal learning uses a provider of non-formal learning or an input-side as a starting base- first column – as non-formal learning seems to be more recognised after going through a non-formal learning programme. On the other hand, the grid for informal learning uses output/ skills as a starting point because it is not feasible to list all types of informal learning where there is no such supplier as the individual is the active entity to create such learning opportunities. Therefore, there is a separate grid for non-formal and informal learning. The annex also aims to examine characteristics of users for aggregation of data, but please provide micro-level data about users in this section.

**Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)**

| Provider of non-formal learning (e.g. universities, for-profit private companies, company's in-house training, government, NGOs, etc.) | Recogniser of such non-formal learning (e.g. government, quasi-government, universities, companies, professional bodies, trade unions, etc.) | Types of recognition received (e.g. academic qualifications – degrees, diplomas, credits, awards, certificates, professional qualifications, etc.) | Regulator (e.g. quality assurance agency, professional body, government, etc.) | Main user(s) (Specify)   |  |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Working professionals  |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | People after army service  |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | High skilled immigrants  |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Low skilled immigrants   |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)             |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unemployed (over 30 years old)   |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30 |
|  |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Others (Specify)   |
| Add more.  |  |  |  |                          |  |

**Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)**

| Types of skills gained by informal learning (e.g. ICT skills by using computers, literacy by reading books, numeracy, business protocol, | Recogniser of informal learning | Types of Recognition received | Regulatory body | Main users (specify) |  |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--|
|  |                                 |                               |                 |                      |  |

<sup>110</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

|                           |  |  |  |                          |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| negotiation skills, etc.) |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Working professionals  |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | People after army service  |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | High skilled immigrants  |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Low skilled immigrants   |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Retired people (Specified the retirement age in your country.)             |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unemployed (over 30 years old)   |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | NEET (Not in Employment nor in Education or Training) age between 15/16-30 |
|                           |  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Others (Specify)   |
| Add more.                 |  |  |  |                          |  |

#### Component 4.2. Access

4.2.a) What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HEd, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

**Community Learning and Development** (As an example, South Lanarkshire Council). A facility is provided for all learners to identify experience learning for current learning aspirations, and to provide a ‘competence map’ for planning future learning activities’. The course is offered to those wishing to improve their literacy, numeracy and core skills.

**Further Education** (As an example, Aberdeen College). For all full-time students, individual learning plans are completed at entry to their courses. These log prior, certificated attainment. They also record areas where it might be possible to award credit relevant to the programme from pre-existing achievement/experience. This record results from discussions with Class Tutors and, if necessary, a member of the APL team, prior to the commencement of their course and also at on-going review sessions. Part time students also have the opportunity of discussing possibilities of APL at pre-entry guidance or with their tutors. They are also made aware of APL facilities via the part-time study guide published four times per session.

**Higher Education** (As an example, Robert Gordon University). RPL information is provided as part of the course information to all applicants. Following a meeting with RPL applicants and advice and guidance are provided on a needs basis. Where appropriate, a mapping process is used to ensure coverage of content and context for the module/course or part thereof which RPL is being sought, as well as to ensure comparability in terms of quality and standards. All decision s are then ratified by the relevant course/programme assessment centre.

**Vocational Education and Training** (As an example, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Any individual who has been identified as an experienced construction worker may be put forward to complete in a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) programme. A detailed online SkillMatch profile is completed to identify:

- The areas which individuals should already be able to provide evidence for;
- The areas where evidence will not be easy to produce and where additional work is required and/or additional training; and
- The type of evidence which might be available (personal testimony or work records etc).

This means that, upon completion of a SkillMatch profile, the individual has a clear indication of the amount of work required to achieve the qualification and how much of the work can actually be satisfied by providing evidence of various types.

**Voluntary Sector** (As an example Volunteer Development Scotland – a voluntary sector Learning and Training Provider which provides a short one day course to volunteer organisations on Developing Volunteer Portfolios. The portfolios can be developed to assist volunteer organisations in the training and development of volunteers. RPL is highlighted as a means for experience and training may provide evidence which can be assessed at a later date for use in further, higher or employment.

**Professional** (As an example, Napier University). The Napier University RPL process enables students with work experience and professional qualifications within the financial sector to obtain direct entry at an advanced stage of their BA honours degree programme. Effectively, their experiential learning is assessed and exemption granted (credits awarded) towards Level 1 and Level 2 of the degree programme. Applicants are required to complete a questionnaire which asks them to demonstrate the extent to which their experience in the workplace has enabled them to accumulate learning equivalent to the learning outcomes of the first 2 years of the degree programme.

In further education colleges, the completion of certain Higher National Certificates or Diplomas (HNC/D) exempt learners from taking all or part of the professional examinations needed to gain membership of the associated professional body.

4.2.b) How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?

There is no data on the number of educational institutions who practice RPL as much of the recognition is done at a decentralised level within institutions. The acceptance interviews conducted by many further education institutions can also be considered as RPL as the decision on acceptance is made by the relevant departmental staff.

4.2.c) Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of 'click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.)'. Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

Learners, or adults considering returning to learn are generally given preliminary information and guidance on RPL in terms of the principles, policy, procedures and any cost involved by the provider with whom they are interested in undertaking the RPL process. Such information can be provided in written or electronic, web-based form, as well as through discussion.

The University of Paisley, for example, offers workshops to groups of students considering APEL claims. These are facilitated by the APL Coordinator and their purpose is to explain and discuss the procedure for making a claim. Admissions Officers or Programme Leaders in Schools that have developed expertise in APEL may also carry out this function.

Students are provided with the Student Guidelines for RPL and complete and submit an APL/APEL proposal proforma to the APL Coordinator.

In the University of Glasgow information and communication is available in Prospectuses and in other similar sources of information for prospective students, both paper-based and electronic. These materials are expected to specify whether or not applications for RPL will be accepted in respect of each undergraduate and taught postgraduate programme covered by them. They should state clearly the nature of the evidence required for an application for APL and give full details of a first point of contact. Where the Faculty or Department offers further support to applicants, these documents must also explain how to access this, describe the type of support available and state the level of fee that is charged. This type of procedure is typical of support available in other further and higher education institutions across Scotland.

#### Component 4.3. Participation<sup>111</sup>

4.3.a) How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels)?

Due to the devolved nature of RPL activity within organisations, there is no hard data available. As part of the Socrates-funded project, Social Inclusion Through APEL: the Learners' Perspective' (CRL, 2002),<sup>112</sup> an APEL/RPL learner profile emerged. The majority of APEL /RPL for credit claims take place within an HE context. Individuals undertaking APEL at universities were generally middle-class, 20-30, and had previous tertiary level educational qualifications. There was no gender differentiation. APEL/RPL claimants were more likely to be nationals of the country in which they live. RPL processes were not attracting people from minority ethnic groups or other nationalities. APEL claims were generally being made for postgraduate level programmes as part of a professional development/career enhancement process. The key areas for APEL/RPL claims were social work, nursing, health-related occupations, engineering and management. This research indicated that the potential of APEL/RPL to support the entry of non-traditional learners into higher education is clearly not being realised. However, there is increasing RPL activity within vocational qualifications in a range of different sector areas, which is targeting people from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds.

4.3.b) Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

There is no hard data for this, but survey of learners carried out as part of the Socrates-funded project, Social Inclusion Through APEL: the Learners' Perspective' project (CRL, 2002,) indicated that the outcomes of experiential learning often relate more easily to the specialist knowledge or application of skills required at post-graduate level than to the broader-based knowledge associated with the earliest stages of undergraduate study.. The inherent conflict in RPL processes for credit purposes within the context of higher education is that individuals are required to translate their knowledge into forms that are deemed appropriate for assessment and credit rating. This results in a move away from experiential learning to something that is more readily understood by the 'academy'.

The distinction between Mode 1 knowledge and Mode 2 knowledge, or "Savoir theoretique" and 'Savoir faire' is noted in the Transfere National Report for Scotland. Mode1 knowledge is academic, and

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<sup>111</sup> Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

<sup>112</sup> Cleary,P, Whittaker.R,(2002) Social Inclusion through APEL: the Learners' Perspective. Comparative Report (Socrates/CRL)

based on research and scholarship ('knowing that'), while Mode 2 knowledge is produced through action ('knowing how'). Prior informal learning is based on Mode 2 knowledge and is being assessed into a Mode 1 system. (Thomson, TRANSFINE, 2003) This will remain an issue until some parity of esteem can be achieved between these two modes

The issue of parity of esteem between different modes of learning requires to be addressed in the curriculum design stage of programmes. Learning outcomes need to be defined in a way that enables a variety of different means of achieving them and greater flexibility in the mode of assessment, without detracting from the quality of the provision.

Design barriers to RPL for credit within college provision include the fact that programmes such as HNCs and HNDs are designed for conventional delivery. Communication barriers centre on difficulties in translating the prior experiential learning in terms of the unit requirements and difficulties in identifying the means of demonstrating the achievement of these requirements. RPL claims for credit most often take the form of assessment on demand, although there are institutional barriers to this in terms of timing if the assessment is being sought outwith the normal assessment schedule.

4.3.c) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the 'learning leads to learning' and 'training leads to training' track? Who constitutes the 'disadvantaged group' in your country?

In Scotland, there is a strong focus on those young people aged between 16-19 who are not currently in education, employment or training (NEET) group. The NEET strategy 'More Choice, More Chances' was published in June 2006. The strategy focuses on 5 key areas: pre-16, post-16, financial incentives, the right support; and joint commitment and action.

The CLD sector view RPL as key mechanism for enabling learners who have engaged in non-formal learning within CLD provision to gain entry to or credit within formal programmes at college or university on the basis of this learning. RPL can therefore support progression into more formal learning if that is the direction the learner wishes to take

There is anecdotal evidence that RPL will support disadvantaged groups with progression but the Scottish Executive does not have hard figures to support this information.

#### Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives

4.4.a) Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.) If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.

RPL can be useful as a means of gaining entry to a formal programme at college or university as an alternative to normal entry requirements if learners can demonstrate that they have achieved prerequisite knowledge and skills through their informal or non-formal learning. RPL is also used to accelerate the process of gaining a qualification through the award of credit for elements of programme through RPL. The gaining of qualifications can enhance an individual's job and career prospects. There are increasing developments within some sectors, such as Social Services to integrate RPL processes within employer recruitment, induction, training and career appraisal systems.

4.4.b) Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the

maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practised subject areas, etc.)

RPL for credit is used by HEIs to enable individuals to shorten their period of study. There are limits of the amount of credit within programmes that can be claimed through RPL.

**Credit limits for RPL claims in HEIs in Scotland :**

The following credit limits are in use in universities in Scotland :

- up to 50% of the total credit value of an award, or
- up to 50% of the stage at which a student enters a course ,or
- up to 50% of the exiting level of an award.

Some universities are exploring the possibility of awarding full awards through RPL, following this development in other European countries such as France and Ireland.

4.4.c) Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?

TBA

4.4.d) Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).

Not applicable.

4.4.e) Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?

The Scottish Executive, in the Lifelong Learning Strategy '*Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*' gave the commitment to develop and implement the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to aide greater understanding and recognition of achievement through a range of qualifications and experiences to make it easier for learners to understand the relative value of learning and credit already accumulated and how this can be used as a stepping stone for further participation in learning. This statement includes all the strands of the qualification framework development including the recognition of prior learning.

4.4.f) Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic word and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?

Some of the traditional universities in Scotland are opposed to the concept of RPL due to a view that credit should only be gained through study on their programmes and that RPL devalues the quality and nature of degree qualifications. The view is also held by some universities that Access provision and agreed articulation routes provide simpler routes in HE for non-traditional learners and provide a better preparation for HE study. Awareness-raising activities as part of supporting the implementation of the SCQF emphasise the point that credit gained through RPL is of the same value and status as credit gained through formal study.

4.4.g) Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?

Component 4.5. Others

4.5.a) Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)

The STUC represents some 630,000 workers in Scotland, the members of our 46 affiliated trade unions. As Scotland's trade union centre, the purpose is to co-ordinate, develop and articulate the views and policies of the trade union movement in Scotland and, through the creation of real social partnership, to promote trade unionism; equality and social justice; the creation and maintenance of high quality jobs and the public sector delivery of services. The 1999 Employment Relations Act was aimed to create a fairer system of individual and collective rights at work. The Scottish Executive has no evidence of any collective bargaining by Scottish trade unions on RPL issues.

4.5.b) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

### ***Component 5. Case studies on benefits and barriers***

6. A number of OECD activities (OECD 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) and existing work outside OECD (European Commission; ILO; ECOTEC; UNESCO Institute of Education; ASEM) all point to the importance of recognising non-formal and informal learning and facilitating credit accumulation and transfer. However, currently, the existing work provides the evidence of benefits in fragments. This section aims to collect data in a systemic way by case studies. The Secretariat has identified benefits from existing work and framed them into categories, being aware that some overlap in categories: i.e. economic, educational, social and personal. Please provide some evidence with case studies if such benefits are identified in your country. On the contrary, if tension or resistance exists as barriers to such benefits, please also describe such cases.

#### **Component 5.1. Economic benefits**

5.1.a) Shortening the formal education process and thus reducing direct costs of learning and opportunity costs for individuals.

A recent project within the Scottish Social Services Sector to recognise learning in that workforce which had not previously been assessed in order to enable learners to gain either SVQ2 or SVQ3 in Health and Social Care without duplicating effort. The economic benefits to employers and employees will develop from the avoidance of duplication of time and effort by streamlining the process of learners obtaining SVQ 2 and 3 (SCQF levels 5 and 6).

The use of RPL will enable workers to draw from their experience. It is hoped that this will benefit older workers who have no qualification (the majority of whom are women) and who now need to be registered with SSSC. There is now a substantial group of workers from Poland employed or seeking employment in the care sector. RPL offers them a means to draw from their experiential learning to build up evidence towards the necessary qualifications.

5.1.b) Increasing the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and thus enhancing potential benefits for future economic gains.

The use of RPL will formalise and give structure to non-formal and informal learning. At present employers and employees in the sector are looking for guidance and methods to demonstrate learning from experience. This will enable the recognition and credit from this learning.

5.1.c) Improving the allocation of human capital within organisations by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies.

RPL will help to maximise skills and competence recognition through its contribution to overall employee development. It will help support career pathways and support the gaining of qualifications.

5.1.d) Reducing skills shortages or skills mismatch by allowing more mobility within the labour market (occupational mobility).

RPL will aid career pathways by supporting learners to recognise their strengths and areas for development; it will enable careers guidance; it will support and/or give credit towards qualifications; it will open up opportunities and pathways not only within sectors but across sectors.

5.1.e) Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by the active use of the potential labour population (older workers, women, immigrants, unemployed youth, etc.).

See 5.1 above

5.1.f) Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by improving productivity of the current labour force.

RPL can contribute towards productivity by promoting the development of skills gained through experience. It can help the workforce grow in confidence. It can open up career pathways and support lifelong learning.

### Component 5.2. Educational benefits

5.2.a) Reshaping the established concept of education from ‘terminal education’ to ‘lifelong learning’.

The work undertaken in Scotland’s Community Education and Development Sector (Community Learning and Development).

5.2.b) Providing flexible personalised learning pathways.

Learning pathways it is recognised that learning pathways will be made more flexible through systems of RPL as well as through arrangements for credit transfer. RPL offers employees the opportunity to bridge from one qualification to another. It also supports movement across the sector and from related sectors. Non-traditional learners are a key target group of the pilot project. The guidelines have been designed to support workers who lack confidence and may be reluctant to undertake qualifications.

### **Curriculum Framework for Adult Literacy and Numeracy**

The Scottish strategy for adult literacy, in 2001, established a systematic plan for the development of high quality adult literacy for Scotland. The strategy was built on the funding and development of geographic partnerships for local delivery of literacies programmes against a set of targets and priority groupings.

Priorities for the strategy included the establishment of a national adult literacy support and development agency charged with providing tools and structures for the development of a professional adult literacy service through support for the delivery partnerships across the country. Tools and structures central to the strategy include the Curriculum Framework for Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland and the development of accredited professional training for practitioners.

One of the key principles of the Scottish approach to adult literacy work is a commitment to a social practice model of learning in which goals and learning content come from each individual learner’s life needs and aspirations. Achievement in this system is measured by learning “distance travelled” in relation to individuals’ progress in relation to their own goals rather than against external, context free measures of progress such as level of qualifications attained. This needs focused approach to literacies has the benefit of high learner motivation and actual change in the learner’s life through achievement in a practical context.

5.2.c) Raising educational attainments levels by increasing the completion rates of secondary education qualifications.

5.2.d) Increasing the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners.

RPL can form part of various activities associated with personal /career development; educational/career guidance; and confidence-building, as well as assessment and credit-rating. RPL is valuable in terms of its planning/diagnostic function, as well as its retrospective focus.

The broader range of activity linked to further learning and development which the term 'RPL' ( as opposed to term 'APEL') embraces can enable greater numbers of non-traditional learners to use RPL as a gateway to tertiary participation.

For some learners, the process of formative recognition, or RPL for personal/career development may be a preparatory stage to summative recognition, or RPL for entry to, or credit within, programmes. Some learners may not feel sufficiently confident or prepared to undertake a process of RPL for credit directly. For others, the decision to undertake RPL for credit may only emerge after they have engaged in the process of formative recognition and identified a learning pathway. This two stage process of recognition can either take place within a college or university or through a collaborative partnership between a CLD provider and a college or university.

5.2.e) Improving the teacher work force through more flexible entrance to teaching occupation.

### Component 5.3. Social benefits

5.3.a) Building social institutions to arrange smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education; increasing socio-cultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included.

### ***Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Research Findings No.30/2005: Transitions to Employment: Advising Disadvantaged Groups.***

#### Background

During the 1980s and 1990s, the proportion of people unable to consume and participate in the type of activities that others took for granted in the UK grew substantially. It was this legacy of poverty and inequality that the Welfare to Work agenda was created to address. Increasing the chances of sustained employment for disadvantaged groups - in order to lift them permanently out of poverty - is essential if poverty is to be addressed.

Reform of the tax and benefits system has been one element that is key to the welfare to work strategy, but ensuring that the most vulnerable can benefit from these changes depends on their ability to make sense of the changes and to use advice and support services that can help them move between benefits and earnings. A report '*Transitions to Employment: Advising Disadvantaged Groups*' was undertaken to examine the nature of government and non-government sources of advice, the issues that affect marginalized groups as they make transitions from welfare to work and their experience of using advice services. It is the second stage of a research project.

#### **Research Aims**

The central aims of the research were:

- To map the nature of advice and the advice environment available to disadvantaged groups moving towards employment;
- To investigate the pattern of use and experience of such advice;

- To inform training provision and service development amongst advice services wanting to improve provision to disadvantaged groups;
- To consider the implications of the research for policy and service delivery in Scotland.

## **Research findings**

### *Transitions and barriers to work*

Although less than a third of respondents were in paid employment at the time of the survey, two thirds of the remainder (47 people) said that they had been in paid work before and only one in five of survey participants overall had no experience of paid employment. Occupations were broader for past employment compared with current employment that was in a narrow range of sectors characterised by low wages. Moving out of employment was related most often to health or disability issues, including employer's behaviour and/or their inability to redeploy, and childbirth or care responsibilities. The participants in this research study reflect evidence elsewhere that suggests that the onset of disability or ill health is likely to have a negative impact on income and economic status.

In this research, the vast majority identified multiple barriers and, overall, the barriers mentioned most often were 'your financial situation generally' which was identified by half the respondents, across groups, particularly prisoners, those with a current or past mental health problem and lone parents. Lack of confidence was an issue for a third of participants (33.6 per cent) across all groups, but particularly people with mental health problems, prisoners and those with long-term illnesses or health problems and more of a barrier for women than men.

The research identified that there remain considerable problems with the benefits system in relation to making the transition to work, particularly for people with learning disabilities and in relation to DLA. Benefits were seen as complex and uncertain, particularly where work is part-time and low paid.

## **Recommendations**

Three areas of change are recommended by the researchers to improve access to advice for disadvantaged groups in transition:

- There is a need for a strategic approach to advice service development at national and local levels to address issues such as unrecognised needs of disadvantaged groups, gaps in provision, referral systems, resources, training and links between advice and employability services, to ensure welfare to work and benefits issues more generally are addressed. Partnerships should recognise the importance of non-government advice services as full partners, both in terms of funding that reflects the work involved and in approaches that do not compromise the independence and impartiality of non-government services.
- Conflicts of interest can arise between advice and other services delivered by the same organisation. Clarity of roles and independence from decision makers are key factors in advising disadvantaged groups with limited knowledge of their rights.
- The recommendations have resource implications for services, some of which are already struggling to access resources and training or spare the time to meet with others. These pressures seem to be greatest in voluntary sector advice services. Such services are likely to remain

important for disadvantaged groups despite developments in government advice provision. Resources are needed where holistic and proactive approaches to advice can be provided.

In a recent study undertaken by the Scottish Executive on RPL provision in Scotland a number of key target areas were identified – the unemployed, low-paid workers, adult returners and refugee and migrant workers. Further investigation will be required to consider how RPL can narrow the obstacles found by many as they transition to work. However it is clear that RPL will enable transition into work and re-entry to work.

5.3.b) Leading to the better societal values (e.g. promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health, lower criminal rates, etc).

This has not been specifically measured. However, there is anecdotal evidence that RPL can raise individual confidence which can have increased benefits in other social circumstances.

5.3.c) Enhancing flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g. between VET and HE and from FE to HE, etc).

The awarding of credit to learning undertaken in non-formal and informal settings within the SCQF demonstrates to future education providers, institutions and businesses to understand the level of learning undertaken.

There are also specific agreements between further and higher education institutions aimed to allow access to students who have completed a Higher National Diploma programme straight into second year of a requisite degree programme.

Including RPL within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is to broaden the framework to meet the ultimate aims of the framework to *'help people of all ages and circumstances access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential'*.

5.4.d) Building a stepping stone for prisoners to be re-integrated into a society.

In Scotland, at present, no work has been undertaken on how RPL can benefit prisoners as they are re-integrated into society.

#### Component 5.4. Personal benefits

5.4.a) Empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn.

RPL supports learning to suit the individual both in terms of time and place. It can allow entry and re-entry when demands, for example, of family permit. The recognising of experience and learning in a workplace setting can boost confidence and allow learners to recognise their SCQF level and with the allocation of credits can then promote progression.

5.4.b) Developing the aspirations of those who have ‘dropped out’ to resume learning and to complete a qualification.

#### **Community Learning and Development**

Community learning and development through Communities Scotland is an active participant in developments around recognition of prior learning in the context of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The priorities for community learning and development set out in Scottish Executive Guidance, *Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities* (2004,) are achievement through learning for adults, achievement through learning for young people and achievement through building community capacity.

#### **Formative recognition**

A pilot RPL project working with experienced youth workers is currently underway. The RPL tool uses National Occupational Standards for Youth Work. The RPL process is used both as a learning tool for reflection and to identify significant informal and non formal learning which form the basis for Scottish Vocational Qualifications Level 3. An online RPL tool, mentor and learner pack allows registered participants to map existing evidence of their learning and determine future action to meet standards.

#### **Recognition for credit (Summative Recognition)**

Credit rating of non formal learning programmes developed and delivered with community learning and development for example Youth Achievement awards provide both formative and summative recognition.

5.4.c) Reducing the stigma of qualifications associated with non-formal and informal learning.

In Scotland we do not believe there is a stigma attached to non-formal and informal learning . The SCQF not only promotes parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications, but between non-formal/informal learning and formal learning.

#### Component 5.5. Others

5.5.a) Describe any cases where you identify other benefits or barriers to such benefits.

### **Component 6. Conclusion**

6.a) Which national goals, if any, in your country, are ‘the recognition of non-formal and informal learning’ most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning directly related to the development and implementation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) which is a key Lifelong Learning Strategy and Scottish Ministerial commitment.

6.b) What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalise the ‘recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning’ in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?

Scotland already has an established mechanism to recognise learning outcomes in the mainstream education and training sectors through the development of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The development of RPL guidelines will make it easier for practitioners to use the guidelines in order to be used as a toolkit for accreditation. Further development of RPL strategy will be developed in the long-term within sectors.

The recognition of prior learning can have a very important impact in creating a lifelong learning society in Scotland. It is recognised that RPL can have lasting benefits especially for those not currently in education and training. In order to embed RPL as a recognised tool in lifelong learning policies the challenge will be to promote the benefits more widely in business especially to small and medium sized enterprises and to manage resource concerns in terms of finance and time required.

6.c) Address important policy issues for your country which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.

6.d) Please describe how much the ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?

The Scottish Lifelong Learning Strategy ‘*Learning Through Life: Life Through Learning*’ is a five year strategy and was published in February 2003. The strategy outlined 5 people-centred goals for all Scotland’s post-compulsory education and training stakeholders. The strategy outlined the vision to create ‘*The best possible match between learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which will strengthen Scotland’s economy and people*’.

There have been a number of key developments to support the vision including:

- ◆ The re-launch of Scotland’s Individual Learning Accounts targeted at those with a financial disadvantage to participate in their learning;
- ◆ The launch of the Business Learning Accounts scheme to encourage small businesses to train and develop staff;
- ◆ Developing the Determined to Succeed agenda to prepare young people for the world of work and equipping them with a ‘can do, will do’ attitude;
- ◆ A review of the links between school and college is about increasing and enhancing school/college partnerships so that pupils will have high quality experiences and gain suitable recognition for their work in further education colleges; and

- ◆ The merger of Scotland's Further and Higher Education Funding Councils to simplify the funding processes.

The Scottish Executive works in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that the needs of learners are met first and to meet Ministerial priorities.

6.e) Please list some 'factors' which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realise the 'Open Learning Society' scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.