

Appendix - note on the conduct of the Scottish verification process

Scotland and the Republic of Ireland volunteered to pilot the first verification processes in 2006, with the aim that the experience in these two countries will inform the self-certification procedures in the remainder of countries committed to the goals of the Bologna process.

A working group established by SACCA, and consisting of experts from the Scottish higher education sector, a student and two international contributors from Hungary and Estonia, met three times between May and August 2006.

The group examined:

- the links between the qualification descriptors of the Scottish framework and the EHEA qualification cycle descriptors
- the links between the entry points at various stages in the Scottish framework and the entry points to the EHEA cycles
- the links between Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework credit points and the European credit transfer system
- the consistency of national quality assurance arrangements with the communiqués issued by ministers as part of the Bologna process.

The broader connotations of the Scottish verification exercise were reflected in a workshop held in August for a varied group of stakeholders with an interest in the outcomes of the process. Attendees included the Scottish Funding Council and, given the strong employability focus of qualifications such as bachelor's degrees, employer representative organisations were also present in the shape of the Sector Skills Development Agency and the Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland.

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The Bologna process in higher education

**Compatibility of the framework for
qualifications of higher education
institutions in Scotland with the
European Higher Education Area**

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In October 2006, Scotland became one of two out of a total of 45 countries who have committed to the Bologna process, to verify that its national higher education framework is compatible with that of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This verification represents an important landmark in the journey to implement the goals of the Bologna process both in Scotland and in the broader European context.

Background

The Bologna process proposes that the EHEA is developed as a means of promoting mutual recognition of qualifications, demonstrating transparency of systems and easing the mobility of staff and students across higher education in Europe.

One of the key features of the Bologna process involves the development of a national qualifications framework in each country, and the development of criteria and procedures to be used by each country to verify that its national framework is compatible with an overarching Qualifications Framework for the EHEA (details at www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf).

The framework for the EHEA consists of three main cycles. Each cycle has a generic descriptor of the typical abilities and achievements associated with completion of that cycle.

Addressing the criteria and procedures for verification allows each country engaged with the Bologna process to illustrate both the robustness of their quality assurance systems and the links between the qualifications which comprise their national framework and the three EHEA qualification cycles. The process is one of self-certification by each country.

The target is that verification of compatibility with the EHEA will be completed by all Bologna countries by 2010. Completion of the national self-certification will be noted in the European Diploma Supplement (in the national description of the higher education system available at www.uknec.org.uk/index.asp?page=106) and at the European National Information Centres - National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC-NARIC) website at www.enic-naric.net/index.asp?display=qf

The Scottish verification process

The self-certification of *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland* (www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/) was taken forward by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Scotland through the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA).

The results of the Scottish verification process are summarised in the following table.

EHEA qualification cycles	Qualifications within <i>The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland</i>
First cycle qualifications	Scottish bachelor's degree with honours Scottish bachelor's degree
Short cycle qualifications within or linked to the first cycle	Diploma of Higher Education
Intermediate awards within the first cycle	Certificate of Higher Education Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma
Second cycle qualifications	Master's degree Integrated master's degree MPhil degree
Intermediate awards within the second cycle	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate
Third cycle qualifications	Doctoral degrees including doctorates by research

The full report on the Scottish verification process can be viewed on the ENIC-NARIC website at www.enic-naric.net/documents/QF-Scotland_en.pdf

Implications of the Scottish verification process

On one level the verification process was a technical exercise; yet on another it was much more than that, implying as it did a major social and political step towards improving the clarity of European systems of higher education, and enhancing the associated ability for staff and students alike to move across these systems.

The successful completion of the Scottish verification process is a significant milestone, and signals an ongoing national commitment to engagement with the needs and demands of students, staff, employees and employers in the wider European perspective.

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