

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

## **Report of the Scottish working group**

### **Summary**

This report on the self-certification of the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education institutions in Scotland (Scottish FQHE) against the framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland (QAA Scotland). QAA Scotland has authority to conduct the self-certification process from the devolved government of Scotland, the Scottish Executive.

The outcomes of the self-certification process are summarised in Table 1 below.

The Scottish FQHE was developed by QAA Scotland in consultation with the higher education institutions in Scotland. It is an outcomes based structure which acts as an integral part of a wider framework for assuring the standards of higher education provision. Higher education institutions' (HEIs) use of the Framework is assured through a combination of:

- a QAA published Code of Practice on the assurance of academic quality and standards
- HEIs internal subject level reviews
- QAA external reviews of an institution's quality assurance systems

The process of self-certification involved a wide range of stakeholders through:

- the QAA Scotland Committee
- the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA) – a joint committee with Universities Scotland which advises QAA Scotland Committee
- a self-certification working group
- a national seminar for, and consultation with, a range of wider stakeholders (see Appendix 1).

The process of self-certification and this resultant report was refined through input from all stakeholders between May and September 2006.

To aid full understanding of the Scottish FQHE and the process of self-certification, this report provides information about:

- the national system of higher education
- the role and responsibilities of the QAA
- the Scottish FQHE and its place within the wider Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
- the national quality assurance arrangements.

The report also provides links to websites for detailed information on the material covered in the report.

It is intended that this report will prove useful to ministries of education, higher education staff, students, employers and employees across the countries involved in the Bologna process in higher education.

**TABLE 1 Showing how the qualifications of the Scottish FQHE relate to the framework of the EHEA**

<b>EHEA qualification Cycles</b>	<b>Qualifications within the Scottish FQHE</b>
First cycle qualifications	Scottish Bachelors Degree with Honours Scottish Bachelors 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	Masters Degree Integrated Masters Degree MPhil Degree
Intermediate awards within the second cycle	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate
Third cycle qualifications	Doctoral Degrees including Doctorates by Research

(The Graduate Certificate and the Graduate Diploma are qualifications that are typically for graduates or equivalent but are not of postgraduate level or outcome. These qualifications have been designed explicitly to aid the promotion of flexibility and progression within the lifelong learning agenda in Scotland)



## **BACKGROUND**

### **The self-certification**

Ministers from countries signed up to the Bologna process recommended in the communiqué from their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 that for the functioning and reputation of the Framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a whole, it is important that there exist clear and demonstrable national processes for aligning national frameworks within the overarching European Framework.

It was therefore proposed that criteria should be put in place for the verification that national frameworks are compatible with the EHEA Framework, and that procedures of such compatibility will be 'self-certified' by each country.

Scotland has agreed with the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks to be one of two nations (the other being the Republic of Ireland) to pilot the self-certification process, and to report by September 2006 on the process and the issues raised during its conduct. The experience will serve to inform the process of self-certification against the EHEA in the remainder of the Bologna countries. Ministers recommend that all signatories to the Bologna process will complete the self-certification process by 2010.

### **The higher education system in Scotland**

Scotland's distinctive and diverse higher education system has 21 HEIs (See <http://www.hero.ac.uk>). The Scottish Executive funds higher education in Scotland on an 'arm's length' principle (see appendix 4) primarily through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The SFC was formed as a result of a merger of two NDPBs, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council, and the SFC now funds higher and further (College) education.

The higher education sector is composed of: 13 universities (including 4 ancient Universities); UHI Millennium Institute; the Open University in Scotland; one university college; 2 colleges of higher education; 2 independent art schools; and a conservatoire. All are part-funded for research, teaching and learning through SFC, except for the Scottish Agricultural College, which is funded separately by the Scottish Executive's Environment and Rural Affairs Department.

The HEIs are independent, self-governing bodies, active in teaching, research and scholarship. They determine:

- the degrees they offer
- the conditions on which they are awarded
- the admissions arrangements.

Degrees and other higher education qualifications are legally owned by the awarding institution, not by the state.

Within the context of this diverse environment, the HEIs regularly liaise and work in partnership through such national fora as SACCA - the body which has progressed the self-certification process.

## **Qualifications**

The HEIs offer qualifications at undergraduate (Bologna first cycle) and postgraduate (Bologna second and third cycle) levels in accordance with the Scottish FQHE. In Scotland, the law distinguishes the power to award degrees on the basis of completion of taught programmes from the power to award research degrees. Universities have powers to award taught and research degrees. Some other HEIs have powers to award degrees while others offer programmes leading to degrees awarded by HEIs with degree awarding powers.

Lists of institutions with powers to award degrees and institutions recognised by authorities in Scotland as being able to offer courses leading to a degree of another HEI may be found at [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk).

The types of qualifications awarded at undergraduate (first cycle) and postgraduate level (second and third cycles) in Scotland are described in the Scottish FQHE (published by QAA).

The Scottish FQHE is an integral part of a wider national lifelong learning framework - the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) - which covers all forms of qualifications from school to Doctorate (see Appendix 5).

## **Admission**

Requirements for particular programmes are set by the HEIs which offer a range of routes for entry and/or credit transfer into their programmes. The Open University is an open entry institution.

## **The national quality assurance system**

### *The QAA*

Key elements of the national system, including the Scottish FQHE, are developed and maintained by the QAA.

QAA was established in 1997 as an independent body to provide public confidence in the quality and standards of higher education, and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. Students are involved at all levels in the activities of QAA. In addition to the development and publication of the Scottish FQHE, a Code of Practice and subject benchmark statements, QAA also publishes reports on the outcomes of reviews and the confidence that can be placed in the HEIs' arrangements for assuring and enhancing standards and quality. QAA also reviews and publishes upon the commitment of HEIs to provide public information that is complete, accurate and fair (see [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).

QAA is governed by a Board, which has overall responsibility for the conduct and strategic direction of its business. The Board has delegated responsibility for its work in Scotland to its QAA Scotland Committee supported by the QAA Scotland Office – known as QAA Scotland - which develops and operates arrangements which reflect the distinctive needs and strong traditions of higher education in Scotland.

### *The HEIs*

Standards of qualification and the quality of the student learning experience are

maintained by the HEIs using a range of processes including extensive use of external examiners. In some subject areas, professional and statutory bodies (PSBs) have a role to ensure that programmes meet the needs and standards of the profession.

HEIs in Scotland demonstrate their public accountability for quality and standards through a national quality assurance framework that has a strong focus on enhancement as follows:

- In their assurance of the quality and standards of programmes, the HEIs take account of the following QAA publications:
  - a UK-wide code of practice for the assurance of the quality of teaching and learning and the standards of qualifications;
  - the Scottish FQHE;
  - and UK subject level 'benchmark statements' on standards (see [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk))
- HEIs conduct periodic subject level internal reviews of quality and standards in accordance with guidance issued by SFC (see [www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk)). These reviews require to take due account of the Scottish FQHE, the code of practice for the assurance of quality and standards, and subject benchmark statements
- External reviews of institutions are conducted by QAA Scotland. Amongst other areas, these reviews will report on the HEIs appropriate use of the Scottish FQHE
- A national development service supports students in their role as active participants in assuring and enhancing quality and standards (see [www.sparqs.org.uk](http://www.sparqs.org.uk)).

## THE FRAMEWORK FOR QUALIFICATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SCOTLAND (SCOTTISH FQHE)

The Scottish FQHE is shown here as table 2:

**Table 2 The Scottish FQHE**

Level	Typical HEI qualifications	Credit Definitions
SCQF 12	PhD/DPhil	<i>Not credit rated*</i>
	Other Doctorates	<i>Minimum of 540 with minimum 420 at SCQF 12</i>
SCQF 11	MPhil	<i>Either not credit rated* or minimum of 300 with minimum 270 at SCQF 11</i>
	Masters	<i>Minimum of 180 with minimum 150 at SCQF 11</i>
	Masters (following an integrated programme from undergraduate to Masters level study)	<i>Minimum of 600 with minimum 120 at SCQF 11</i>
	Postgraduate Diploma	<i>Minimum of 120 with minimum 90 at SCQF 11</i>
	Postgraduate Certificate	<i>Minimum of 60 with minimum 40 at SCQF 11</i>

SCQF 10	Scottish Bachelors degree with Honours**	<i>Minimum of 480 with minimum 180 at SCQF 9 and SCQF 10 of which a minimum of 90 at SCQF 10</i>
	Graduate Diploma	<i>Minimum of 120 at minimum of SCQF 9</i>
SCQF 9	Graduate Certificate Scottish Bachelors Degree**	<i>Minimum of 60 at minimum of SCQF 9 Minimum of 360 with minimum 60 at SCQF 9***</i>
	Graduate Diploma	<i>Minimum of 120 at minimum of SCQF 9</i>
SCQF 8	Graduate Certificate Diploma of Higher Education	<i>Minimum of 60 at minimum of SCQF 9 Minimum of 240 with minimum 90 at SCQF 8</i>
SCQF 7	Certificate of Higher Education	<i>Minimum of 120 with minimum 90 at SCQF 7</i>

\*Programmes of work that are assessed solely by a final thesis, or by published work, artefact or performance that is accompanied by a written commentary placing it within its academic context need not be credit rated.

\*\* A small number of universities have a tradition of awarding 'MA' – Master of Arts - as opposed to 'BA' – Bachelor of Arts - in this category

\*\*\* The recommendation for a minimum of 60 credits at level 9 reflects the need to

encompass both breadth and depth within the definition. Where there is a clear subject or professional focus to the degree, this minimum requirement may well be exceeded in line with particular professional body or other requirements.

The Scottish FQHE is an outcomes-based structure and was developed as a central pillar in the national arrangements for the assurance and enhancement of standards and quality in higher education. Learning outcomes are defined as statements of what learners will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity, and are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, or aptitudes.

Within the Scottish FQHE qualifications are described in terms of:

- a standard title
- its level within the framework (each level has a description setting out the typical level of outcomes associated with that level)
- a qualification descriptor (setting out the characteristic general outcomes associated with that particular qualification)
- a minimum credit volume. Like the SCQF, the Scottish FQHE defines credit as a means of quantifying the volume of outcomes. One credit represents the volume of outcomes that can be achieved through a notional 10 hours of learner effort. As described in the national description of the Scottish HE system (which is included in Diploma Supplements issued by Scottish higher education institutions) 2 SCQF credit points equate to 1 ECTS credit.

The purposes of the Scottish FQHE are:

- to enable employers, schools, parents, prospective students and others to understand the achievements and attributes represented by the main qualification titles, and how qualifications relate to each other
- to assist HEIs, learners and others to clarify potential routes for progression and credit transfer, particularly in the context of wider participation in lifelong learning
- to maintain international comparability of standards, especially in the European context, to ensure international competitiveness, and to facilitate student and graduate mobility
- to assist HEIs, their external examiners, and the reviewers of the QAA, by providing an important point of reference for setting and assessing standards

The publication at

(<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/default.asp>), detailing the characteristics of the Scottish FQHE, is the key document to which reference will be made in the verification report.

The implementation date for the Scottish FQHE was the start of session 2003-04. Expectations that the framework has been fully implemented are tested through the ongoing processes of 'Enhancement-led institutional review' and internal, subject review (see below and criteria 4 and 5).

## **The QAA Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.**

The Code of Practice has 10 sections which provide guidance on good practice for HEIs on the management of academic standards and quality. The precepts of the Code identify key matters that an institution should be able to demonstrate that it is addressing effectively through its quality assurance mechanisms, including use of the Scottish FQHE, particularly in programme approval and in external examining.

Section 7 of the Code of Practice, dealing with programme approval, monitoring and review

(<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section7/default.asp>)

states under precept 1 that:

“In evaluating the effectiveness of their policies and practices for programme design, approval and review against this precept institutions will need to consider whether due account is taken of: external reference points, including any relevant subject benchmark statements, **national qualifications frameworks for higher education** and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional and statutory bodies and employers.”

### **QAA External review at the institutional level**

Four-yearly peer-based external reviews at the institutional level are delivered through QAA Scotland, a process known as Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR). As part of ELIR an institution will be expected to demonstrate that its qualifications meet the expectations of the framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland such that the volume and nature of learning is adequate to achieve the outcomes indicated by the framework. The handbook for the ELIR process states that:

“In order to meet the agreed requirements of SHEFC (now the Scottish Funding Council), Universities Scotland and the student bodies, the design of the institutional review methodology has embraced a focus on....**the use of a range of reference points including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)**....”

In the case of newly constituted HEIs, peer-based external review at the subject level is required in addition to the review at institutional level.

### **Subject benchmark statements**

As a subject level elaboration of the generic outcomes of qualifications within the Scottish FQHE, the 50 or more subject benchmark statements set out expectations about the characteristic outcomes and standards of degrees in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its coherence and identity, and what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the knowledge, techniques and skills needed to develop understanding in the subject. Most of the benchmarks are UK wide and describe the outcomes associated with the Honours degree are UK wide. A small number relate to other qualifications with the national framework and a small number are specific to Scotland (see

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp> and

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/scottish/default.asp>)

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## **The self-certification of the framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland**

Responsibility for the self certification rests with the QAA Scotland Committee as advised by SACCA. To progress the self-certification, QAA established a working group which met twice in May and June 2006 to conduct the verification process. The working group consisted of experts from the Scottish higher education sector; international experts; a student; and officers of QAA Scotland and Universities Scotland. Members of the working group are listed at Appendix 1.

A seminar involving a wider range of stakeholders (amongst others the Scottish Funding Council, the Sector Skills Development Agency and representatives of the Irish self-certification process) took place on 22 August 2006, with the working group convening for a third and final time thereafter to address the issues arising from the seminar.

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### **Self-certification against the criteria of the Qualifications Framework for the EHEA**

#### **Criterion 1 – The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education**

QAA Scotland has been designated by the devolved government of Scotland (the Scottish Executive, which has wholly devolved responsibility from the UK government for education and lifelong learning) as the body responsible for safeguarding the standards and quality within the Scottish FQHE.

In its response in 1998 to the National Committee of Inquiry into higher education (the Dearing Committee), the UK government "...endorses the recommendation that there should be a national higher education qualifications framework, along with the recommendation of the Garrick report (the Scottish committee) that there should be a parallel framework for Scotland.... The Quality Assurance Agency, in consultation with interested bodies, will have a central role....the higher education representative bodies have agreed that the Quality Assurance Agency's remit will extend to quality assurance, the provision of public information to students, parents and employers, verifying standards and **maintaining the qualifications framework....**"

See the responses to recommendations 22 and 24 of the Dearing report at <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/dearing/dr4000.htm>

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#### **Criterion 2 – There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework**

It is considered that there are clear and demonstrable links between the Scottish FQHE and the framework for the EHEA.

a) *The methodology employed to establish links between the Scottish FQHE and the EHEA*

The methodology employed to confirm these links was a matching exercise between the Bologna cycle descriptors and the qualification descriptors of the Scottish FQHE.

In addition, a credit comparison between the Guidelines on credit volumes set out in the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA and the credit definitions of the Scottish FQHE (see table 3) provided additional evidence, as did an examination of where awards in the Scottish FQHE engage with and enter upon each of the Bologna cycles.

Appendix 2 details work correlating the cycle descriptors of the framework for the EHEA with the qualification descriptors of the Scottish FQHE. The qualification descriptors of the Scottish FQHE were published in January 2001 as part of the document '*the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*', and can be found at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/frameworkAnnex.asp>

The results of the process to establish links between the Scottish FQHE and the EHEA are summarised in section 'd' below.

b) *A descriptive overview of the main qualifications of the Scottish FQHE*

The main qualifications of the framework for HEIs in Scotland are typically achieved as follows:

- The **Scottish Bachelors Degree with Honours (at least 480 credits of which a minimum of 180 are at SCQF levels 9 and 10 including a minimum of 90 at SCQF level 10)** is the main undergraduate qualification in Scotland and leads directly to employment. It is typically offered through the equivalent of four years of full-time higher education. It is awarded mainly as either a Bachelor of Science (BSc Hons), or a Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons). All Honours degrees will exhibit a balance of breadth and depth as will be clear from particular programme specifications. (A programme specification is a concise description of the intended outcomes of learning from a higher education programme, and the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated. QAA has produced guidelines to offer help and guidance to those preparing programme specifications - see <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/programSpec/default.asp>.)

Many Honours degrees will have a specific vocational focus, and in some cases will carry recognition by an appropriate professional or statutory body. In a small number of universities this qualification is titled 'MA [Master of Arts] (Hons)'. The Honours degree is the recognised 'normal' entry requirement to postgraduate study and to many professions across the UK.

- The **Scottish Bachelors Degree (at least 360 credits of which a minimum of 60 are at SCQF level 9)** is typically achieved after the equivalent of three years of full-time higher education. In the main, and depending on the subjects or professional area(s) studied, it is awarded either a Bachelor of Science (BSc), or a Bachelor of Arts (BA). Although

all degrees will exhibit a balance of breadth and depth, some degrees will be highly focused while others will develop greater breadth of outcomes. The particular characteristics of each degree will be articulated in the programme specification. The degree leads directly to employment and many have a specific vocational focus and carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body. In a small number of universities this qualification is titled 'MA [Master of Arts]'. The Scottish Bachelors degree is a recognised 'normal' entry requirement to a number of professions across the UK.

- The **Scottish Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) (at least 240 credits of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF level 8 or higher)**, is typically offered after the equivalent of the first two years of full-time higher education in Scotland. Some DipHEs are awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas while others focus on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.
- The **Scottish Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) (at least 120 credits of which a minimum of 90 are offered at SCQF level 7 or higher)**, is available in a number of Scottish HEIs typically after the equivalent of one year of full-time study. Some CertHEs are awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas while others focus on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.
- The **Scottish Masters Degree (at least 180 credits of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF level 11. For integrated Masters, at least 600 credits of which a minimum of 120 are at SCQF level 11)** is available through several different routes:
  - The Scottish Masters Degree is offered as a programme for graduates or equivalent, through at least one year of full-time postgraduate study or an equivalent period of part-time study. This first route typically leads to the award of Master of Science or Master of Arts, depending on the subject taken, but other titles are also used.
  - The Scottish Integrated Masters is offered as a programme of typically the equivalent of five years' full-time study that integrates a period of undergraduate study with the Masters degree. Integrated programmes typically lead to a subject-specific qualification title (eg MEng) and are often linked to professional/statutory body recognition. In such cases, students may leave the programme and enter employment with the award of a Bachelors Degree, or proceed to the Masters degree.

In the majority of cases, the Masters degree reflects a specialised knowledge and understanding of particular areas, applications or levels of expertise in particular subject or professional areas. In some professional areas, Masters degrees are linked to structures of continuing professional development.

- **Scottish Doctoral Degrees (at least 540 credits of which a minimum of 420 are at SCQF level 12)** are available through several different

routes. The PhD is normally awarded following successful completion of a thesis which requires the equivalent of a minimum of three years' full-time research and study to complete. Professional doctorates also require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study to complete and will frequently involve work-based as well as HEI-based research and study. Doctoral degrees reflect specialised, advanced knowledge, understanding and practice at the frontiers of the subject or professional area.

*c) Arrangements for students entering programmes leading to the awards in the framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland*

The typical arrangements for students entering programmes leading to the award of qualifications in the framework for HEIs in Scotland are listed below. Two points should be emphasised:

- although these requirements are typical, the vehicle of the SCQF allows credit awarded for previous achievement – certificated or approved prior informal learning - to be recognised for entry at the appropriate level
- achievement of a first cycle award does not guarantee entry to the second cycle, but it gives the right to apply for access to the second cycle, in accordance with the Lisbon convention.
  - Entry to the **first cycle** is by various routes (e.g. school leavers; holders of vocational qualifications such as the Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma; mature and non-standard entrants). The first cycle begins at SCQF level 7. The SCQF level descriptors can be found in Appendix 3 at:  
<http://www.scqf.org.uk/downloads/IntrotoSCQF2ndEdition.pdf>
  - Entry to the **second cycle** (SCQF level 11) is generally for holders of a Bachelors Degrees with Honours, often with a high honours classification. However, entry to Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma can be effected by holders of Bachelors Degrees, and entry to some Masters Degree programmes can be permitted to those who hold a Bachelors Degree allied to relevant experience.
  - Entry to the **third cycle** (SCQF level 12) is generally for holders of Masters Degrees, and, in some instances, holders of Bachelors Degrees, usually with a high honours classification.

*d) A summary of the links between the Scottish FQHE and the EHEA*

Based on the methodology outlined in section (a) of the response to criterion 2, the results of the work demonstrating the links between the awards in the Scottish FQHE and the Bologna cycle descriptors can be summarised thus:

The following qualifications are **first cycle** qualifications:

Scottish Bachelors Degree with Honours  
Scottish Bachelors Degree

The following qualification is a **short cycle qualifications** within or linked to the first

cycle:

Diploma of Higher Education

The following qualifications are **intermediate awards within the first cycle**:

Certificate of Higher Education  
Graduate Certificate  
Graduate Diploma

The following qualifications are **second cycle** qualifications:

Masters Degrees  
Integrated Masters Degree  
MPhil Degree

The following qualifications are **intermediate awards within the second cycle**

Postgraduate Diploma  
Postgraduate Certificate

The following qualifications are **third cycle qualifications**:

Doctoral Degrees including Doctorates by Research

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**Criterion 3 – The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits**

*a) Learning Outcomes*

As described above, the Scottish FQHE is a learning outcomes-based structure centred on a consistent qualifications nomenclature; defined levels of qualifications; qualification descriptors; and credits. Each component is used as a measure of learning outcome, whether that be in terms of description, level or volume.

Guidance on the precepts of: awarding qualifications; positioning qualifications at the appropriate level within the Scottish FQHE; and naming qualifications appears in Section 2 of

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/default.asp>

The qualification descriptors are generic statements of the characteristic learning outcomes of study. They make explicit the general expectations of the purpose and outcomes of the main qualifications at each level, and make clear how these differ from other qualifications, both at that level and at other levels.

Levels, level descriptors (see link to the SCQF level descriptors in criterion 2 above) and qualification descriptors provide reference points for locating the level of any group of outcomes. Credit points provide the associated measure for describing the volume of outcomes. One credit point represents the learning outcomes expected to be achieved by the average learner at the relevant level in 10 hours of total learner

effort. It should be stressed that credit is a measure of the volume of outcome, not of actual study time.

The establishment of the Scottish FQHE, based as it is on learning outcomes, should be viewed in the context of wider developments also based on learning outcomes, both in the UK (programme specifications, subject benchmarks) and in Europe (the Diploma Supplement, the general move across Europe to systems based on learning outcomes).

#### b) ECTS

ECTS is accepted and used generally in Scottish HEIs. All Diploma Supplements of Scottish HEIs include reference to ECTS alongside reference to SCQF credits. The description of the Scottish HE system which is included in Diploma Supplements also indicates that 2 SCQF credits are equivalent to 1 ECTS credit. HEIs use SCQF credit for accumulation and transfer within Scotland and ECTS for transfers within the European area.

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### **Criterion 4 – The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent**

**a) National level.** The Scottish FQHE describes the range of the main types of qualifications (e.g. Masters Degree, Honours Degree etc.) offered by HEIs and sets out the characteristic outcomes and the credit definitions of those qualifications. Decisions on whether not to include any new main qualifications within the Scottish FQHE are the responsibility of the QAA Scotland committee as advised by SACCA. Decisions will be based on the demonstrated need for new types of qualification and clear distinctions being drawn between the proposed new types and existing qualifications. To date, there have been no additions to the range of qualifications or changes to the title of qualifications since the Scottish FQHE was first developed.

**b) Institutional level.** The document, *The framework for qualifications of HEIs in Scotland* makes clear the quality assurance expectations placed upon HEIs in terms of defining their qualifications in terms of nomenclature, level and volume. See table 3 above and section 2 at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/default.asp>.

Similarly, Section 7 of the Code of Practice, dealing with programme approval, monitoring and review:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section7/default.asp>

offers a set of precepts to ensure that procedures governing the activities outlined are transparent. Under precept 1 it states that:

“In evaluating the effectiveness of their policies and practices for programme design, approval and review against this precept institutions will need to consider whether due account is taken of: external reference points, including any relevant subject benchmark statements, **national qualifications frameworks for higher education** and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional and statutory bodies and employers.”

As part of the QAA Scotland process of ELIR (see criterion 5) an institution will be expected to demonstrate that its qualifications meet the expectations of the Scottish FQHE such that the volume and nature of learning is adequate to achieve the

outcomes indicated by the framework. Likewise, internal, subject level review is carried out to ensure that a programme of learning meets similar expectations to those outlined above. This process of assurance will ensure that any institutional initiatives regarding the development of qualifications are compatible with the Scottish FQHE.

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**Criterion 5 – The national quality assurance systems for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna process**

The national quality assurance systems refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin and Bergen communiqués.

The handbook for the ELIR process states that:

“In order to meet the agreed requirements of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Universities Scotland (US) and the student bodies, the design of the institutional review methodology has embraced a focus on the strategic management of enhancement; a focus on the effectiveness of student learning; **the use of a range of reference points including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)**; the Agency's *Code of practice* and subject benchmark information; appropriate reference to employer and international perspectives; the inclusion of a student (or representative of students) within the audit team; and a published report which includes commentary on:

- the ability of the institution's internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards at the level of the programme or award. This commentary leads to a judgement on the level of confidence which may be placed in the institution's management of quality and standards;
- the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair”

Full information on the ELIR process can be found at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/ELIR/default.asp>

**Supplementary information to criterion 5:**

The Berlin Communiqué states that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved
- Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results
- A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures
- International participation, co-operation and networking)

In Scotland the **Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)** has been created. QAA

Scotland works closely with SFC, Universities Scotland and the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland in developing this approach to quality in the Scottish higher education sector. The strategy adopted has five main elements:

- A comprehensive programme of subject reviews that are run by institutions themselves.
- Institution-level review, known as Enhancement-led institutional review, which involves all Scottish higher education institutions over a four-year cycle.
- Improved forms of public information about quality, based on addressing the different needs of a range of stakeholders including students and employers.
- A greater voice for student representatives in institutional quality systems, supported by a new national development service. (student participation in quality assurance, or *sparqs*)
- A national programme of enhancement themes, aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in higher education

The work of QAA Scotland feeds into all these elements. This collaborative approach to quality is unique in many respects - in its balance between quality assurance and enhancement; in the emphasis which it places on the student experience; in its focus on learning and not solely on teaching; and (perhaps most importantly) in the spirit of cooperation and partnership which has underpinned all these developments.

Full details on the Quality Enhancement Framework can be found at:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/qualityframework/default.asp>

Finally, QAA's systems are compatible with the *Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA* and, as part of the Bologna process, QAA is currently considering arrangements for peer review of the organisation as the national body responsible for quality assurance and standards.

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#### **Criterion 6 – The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma supplements**

Both the Scottish FQHE and the SCQF are already referred to in Scottish Diploma Supplements. The national description of higher education in Scotland can be found at:

[http://www.uknec.org.uk/docs/ds\\_scotland\\_description.doc](http://www.uknec.org.uk/docs/ds_scotland_description.doc)

The existing Diploma Supplement will be modified to note that the verification process confirming compatibility of the Scottish FQHE with the EHEA has been completed.

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#### **Criterion 7 – The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published**

As described above, QAA Scotland developed the Scottish FQHE and is responsible

for its ongoing maintenance and assurance. The responsibilities of HEIs in using the framework are set out in the Code of Practice, the ELIR handbook and SFC guidance (see <http://www.sfc.ac.uk>). QAA Scotland ensures institutions maintain standards within the Scottish FQHE through its assurance role. See both

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/SCQF/2001/default.asp>

and <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/ELIR/default.asp> for detail.

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## 2. Procedures

Each of the procedures is set out below and addressed in turn.

### **Procedure 1 – The competent national body/bodies shall certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework**

QAA Scotland Committee is the competent national body, as designated by the Scottish Executive, responsible for the maintenance and preservation of standards within the Scottish FQHE. QAA Scotland Committee has asked SACCA to undertake the verification process and to report back and make recommendations to QAA Scotland Committee.

SACCA is a committee constituted jointly by QAA Scotland and Universities Scotland. The latter is the autonomous voice of higher education institutions in Scotland, and, with QAA Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Association of Scotland's Colleges and the Scottish Executive, forms the development and implementation partnership for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

SACCA therefore convened the working group to take the verification process forward. The working group was chaired by the current chair of SACCA (Professor John Harper, Vice-Principal, Robert Gordon University), and was composed of senior representatives from a wide range of Scottish Higher education institutions (see appendix 1 for membership of the group), a student and two international experts.

In August 2006 a consultation seminar took place involving a wider group of stakeholders (see appendix 1). At the seminar these organisations had the chance to comment on the report and the verification process.

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### **Procedure 2 – The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognised through the Bologna process**

As described above, QAA Scotland is responsible for the running of the national quality assurance systems; the maintenance and assurance of the Scottish FQHE; and for the self-certification process.

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### **Procedure 3 – The self-certification process shall involve international experts**

Ms Eva Gonczi, Ministerial Counsellor at the Hungarian Ministry of Education, and Dr Aune Valk, Head of the Open University Centre, University of Tartu, Estonia, were involved in the Scottish process of alignment with the EHEA.

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**Procedure 4 – The self-certification and the evidence supporting it shall be published and shall address separately each of the criteria set out**

The final version of the verification report will be published on the Quality Assurance Agency website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk>) and on the SCQF website (<http://www.scqf.org.uk>). An information leaflet on the self-certification process will also be produced and distributed to higher education institutions and a variety of stakeholders in the SCQF, such as employers.

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**Procedure 5 – The ENIC and NARIC networks shall maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process**

QAA Scotland will inform the UK NARIC when the self-certification process is complete, with the intention that it will publish the fact that Scotland has completed the process.

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**Procedure 6 – The completion of the self-certification process shall be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the European framework**

The existing Diploma Supplement will be modified to note that the self-certification process confirming the compatibility of the Scottish FQHE with the EHEA has been completed.

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**Appendix 1**

***Membership of the QAA Scotland committee***

Chair: Professor Charles Munn, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland

QAA Scotland is currently constituted by 2 members nominated by Universities Scotland; 2 members nominated by the Scottish Funding Council; 1 QAA Board member not from Scotland; 1 member nominated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority; 1 member from an appropriate Professional Body; 1 member from Further Education nominated by the Association of Scotland's Colleges; 1 member

nominated from the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA) from within its higher education members; 1 member from the student body of higher education institutions in Scotland; up to 2 co-opted members at any one time; and the Chair of the QAA Board – ex officio.

***Membership of the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA)***

Chair: Professor John Harper, Vice Principal, Robert Gordon University

SACCA is currently constituted by 11 members from higher education institutions across Scotland, and all HEIs are invited to nominate members on a rota basis. SACCA also has two members nominated from Scotland's College sector, and one each from QAA Scotland, Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and the Scottish Wider Access Programme. Finally, it has 3 co-opted members: the National Access co-ordinator; a member from the Interactive University; and the Principal of Bell College.

***Composition of the SACCA working group responsible for the conduct of the Scottish verification process:***

Professor John Harper, Vice-Principal, Robert Gordon University (Chair)

Ms Eva Gonczi, Ministerial Counsellor, Ministry of Education, Hungary

Ms Rachel Heaney, National Union of Students Scotland

Ms Rowena Kochanowska, Head of Academic Office, University of Strathclyde

Professor Brent MacGregor, Vice Principal, Edinburgh College of Art

Ms Lea McKay, Assistant Director, Centre for Lifelong Learning, University of Paisley

Professor Andrew Nash, Clerk of Senate, University of Glasgow

Dr Aune Valk, Head of the Open University Centre, University of Tartu, Estonia.

**Officers**

Dr Alan Runcie, Assistant Director, QAA Scotland/Universities Scotland

Dr David Bottomley, Assistant Head, QAA Scotland

Mr Gerard Madill, Policy Adviser, Universities Scotland

***Organisations represented at seminar on self-certification 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2006***

Scottish Funding Council

Scottish Social Services Council  
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework  
Federation of Small Businesses in Scotland  
Sector Skills Development Agency  
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

## Appendix 2

### Qualification descriptors of the Scottish FQHE linked to the Bologna cycle descriptors

Each qualification descriptor of the Scottish FQHE is compared to its proposed 'partner' cycle descriptor. Each segment of the cycle descriptor is matched with the pertinent component(s) of the relevant qualification descriptor to demonstrate where there is considered to be a strong correlation between the cycle descriptors and the relevant characteristic outcomes and skills expected of students who undertake qualifications within the framework for HEIs in Scotland. The correlations are shown in tabular form.

Each matching exercise is preceded by the full qualification descriptor from the Scottish FQHE and the full Bologna cycle descriptor for context.

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#### The Scottish Bachelors degree with Honours

|                          |                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SCQF level</b>        | 10                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Credit definition</b> | At least <b>480 credits</b> of which a minimum of 180 are at SCQF levels 9 and 10 including a minimum of 90 at SCQF level 10 |

#### General

The Scottish Bachelors degree with Honours is typically offered through the equivalent of four years of full-time higher education. It is awarded mainly as either a Bachelor of Science (BSc Hons), or a Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons). All Honours degrees will exhibit a balance of breadth and depth as will be clear from particular programme specifications. Many Honours degrees will have a specific vocational focus, and in some cases will carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body. In a small number of universities this qualification is titled 'MA – Master of Arts - (Hons)'. The Honours degree is the recognised 'normal' entry requirement to postgraduate study and to many professions across the UK.

#### Characteristic outcomes of the degree with Honours

- i. A systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge and understanding of the subject(s) as a whole and its links to related subject(s). A detailed knowledge of a few specialisms and developments, some of which are at, or informed by, the forefront of the subject.
- ii. A critical understanding of the established theories, principles and concepts, and of a number of advanced and emerging issues at the forefront of the subject(s).
- iii. A critical understanding of the uncertainty and limits of knowledge and how it is developed and an ability to deploy established techniques of analysis and enquiry within the subject.
- iv. A comprehensive knowledge and familiarity with essential and advanced materials, techniques and skills including some at the forefront of the subject.
- v. Skills in identifying information needs, and in the systematic gathering, analysis and interpretation of ideas, concepts and qualitative and quantitative data and information from a range of evaluated sources including current research, scholarly, and/or professional literature.

Typically, holders of the degree with Honours will be able to:

- a. use their knowledge, understanding and skills in the systematic and critical assessment of a wide range of concepts, ideas, and data (that may be incomplete), and in both identifying and analysing complex problems and issues; demonstrating some originality and creativity in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments;
- b. communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably using the full repertoire of the principal concepts and constructs of the subject(s);
- c. systematically identify and address their own learning needs both in current and in new areas, making use of research, development and professional materials as appropriate, including those related to the forefront of developments;
- d. apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts of a professional or equivalent nature where there is a requirement for:
  - o the exercise of personal responsibility and initiative;
  - o decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts;
  - o the ability to undertake further developments of a professional or equivalent nature.

*Qualifications that signify completion of **the first cycle** are awarded to students who:*

- **have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;**
- **can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;**
- **have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;**
- **can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;**
- **have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue**

to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

typically include 180- 240 ECTS credits

***N.B. there is a correlation between the credits in that 1 ECTS credit point = 2 SCQF credit points***

| Characteristic outcomes of the Scottish Bachelors Degree with Honours                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Bologna first cycle descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>A systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge and understanding of the subject(s) as a whole and its links to related subject(s).<br/>A detailed knowledge of a few specialisms and developments, some of which are at, or informed by, the forefront of the subject.</p> | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</b></p> |
| <p>A critical understanding of the established theories, principles and concepts, and of a number of advanced and emerging issues at the forefront of the subject(s).</p>                                                                                                        | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study</b></p>                                   |
| <p>A critical understanding of the uncertainty and limits of knowledge and how it is developed and an ability to deploy established techniques of analysis and enquiry within the subject.</p>                                                                                   | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study</b></p>                                   |
| <p>A comprehensive knowledge and familiarity with essential and advanced materials, techniques and skills including some at the forefront of the subject.</p>                                                                                                                    | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</b></p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Skills in identifying information needs, and in the systematic gathering, analysis and interpretation of ideas, concepts and qualitative and quantitative data and information from a range of evaluated sources including current research, scholarly, and/or professional literature.</p> | <p><b>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</b></p> <p><b>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</b></p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Typically, holders of the Scottish Bachelors Degree with honours will be able to:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>Bologna first cycle descriptor</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p>use their knowledge, understanding and skills in the systematic and critical assessment of a wide range of concepts, ideas, and data (that may be incomplete), and in both identifying and analysing complex problems and issues; demonstrating some originality and creativity in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments;</p> | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</b></p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably using the full repertoire of the principal concepts and constructs of the subject(s);</p>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;</b></p> |
| <p>systematically identify and address their own learning needs both in current and in new areas, making use of research, development and professional materials as appropriate, including those related to the forefront of developments;</p>                                                                                                                   | <p><b>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</b></p> <p><b>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy</b></p>                                            |
| <p>apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts of a professional or equivalent nature where there is a requirement for:<br/>the exercise of personal responsibility and initiative;<br/>decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts;<br/>the ability to undertake further developments of a professional or equivalent nature.</p> | <p><b>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

Although some Honours Degree outcomes are reflective of the second cycle, on balance it is considered a first cycle qualification.

The Scottish Bachelors degree

**SCQF level** 9

**Credit definition** At least **360 credits** of which a minimum of 60 are at SCQF level 9

## General

The Scottish Bachelors (non-Honours) degree is typically achieved after the equivalent of three years of full-time higher education. In the main, and depending on the subjects or professional area(s) studied, it is awarded either a Bachelor of Science (BSc), or a Bachelor of Arts (BA). Although all degrees will exhibit a balance of breadth and depth, some degrees will be highly focused while others will develop greater breadth of outcomes. The particular characteristics of each degree will be articulated in the programme specification. Many degrees which have a specific vocational focus carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body. In a small number of universities this qualification is titled 'MA' - Master of Arts. The Scottish Bachelors degree is a recognised 'normal' entry requirement to a number of professions across the UK.

## Characteristic outcomes of the degree

- i. A broad and comparative knowledge of the general scope of the subject, its different areas and applications, and its interactions with related subjects. A detailed knowledge of a defined subject or a more limited coverage of a specialist area balanced by a wider range of study. In each case, specialised study will be informed by current developments in the subject.
- ii. A critical understanding of the essential theories, principles and concepts of the subject(s) and of the ways in which these are developed through the main methods of enquiry in the subject. An awareness of the provisional nature of knowledge.
- iii. Familiarity and competence in the use of routine materials, practices and skills and of a few that are more specialised, advanced and complex.
- iv. Well developed skills for the gathering, evaluation, analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and quantitative and/or qualitative data, drawing on a wide range of current sources. This will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s).

Typically, holders of the degree will be able to:

- a. use their knowledge, understanding and skills, in both identifying and analysing problems and issues and in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments;
- b. communicate the results of their studies and other work accurately and reliably in a range of different contexts using the main specialist concepts, constructs and techniques of the subject(s);
- c. identify and address their own learning needs including being able to draw on a range of current research, development and professional materials;
- d. apply their subject and transferable skills to contexts where criteria for decisions and the scope of the task may be well defined but where personal responsibility, initiative and decision-making is also required.

*Qualifications that signify completion of **the first cycle** are awarded to students who:*

- **have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced**

textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;

- can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;
- have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
- can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

typically include 180- 240 ECTS credits

***N.B. there is a correlation between the credits in that 1 ECTS credit point = 2 SCQF credit points***

| Characteristic outcomes of the Scottish Bachelors Degree                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Bologna first cycle descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A broad and comparative knowledge of the general scope of the subject, its different areas and applications, and its interactions with related subjects. A detailed knowledge of a defined subject or a more limited coverage of a specialist area balanced by a wider range of study. In each case, specialised study will be informed by current developments in the subject. | <b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study</b> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>A critical understanding of the essential theories, principles and concepts of the subject(s) and of the ways in which these are developed through the main methods of enquiry in the subject. An awareness of the provisional nature of knowledge.</p>                     | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study</b></p>                                  |
| <p>Familiarity and competence in the use of routine materials, practices and skills and of a few that are more specialised, advanced and complex.</p>                                                                                                                          | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study</b></p> |
| <p>Well developed skills for the gathering, evaluation, analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and quantitative and/or qualitative data, drawing on a wide range of current sources. This will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s).</p> | <p><b>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</b></p>                                                                                                       |

| Typically, holders of the Scottish Bachelors Degree will be able to:                                                                                                                                     | Bologna first cycle descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>use their knowledge, understanding and skills, in both identifying and analysing problems and issues and in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments;</p>          | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</b></p> |
| <p>communicate the results of their studies and other work accurately and reliably in a range of different contexts using the main specialist concepts, constructs and techniques of the subject(s);</p> | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>identify and address their own learning needs including being able to draw on a range of current research, development and professional materials;</p>                                                                    | <p><b>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</b></p> <p><b>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy</b></p> |
| <p>apply their subject and transferable skills to contexts where criteria for decisions and the scope of the task may be well defined but where personal responsibility, initiative and decision-making is also required</p> | <p><b>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

### 1. The Certificate of Higher Education

**SCQF level** 7

**Credit definition** At least 120 credits of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF level 7

#### **General**

The Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) is available in a number of Scottish higher education institutions after the equivalent of one year of full-time study. Some CertHEs are awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas while others focus on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

#### **Characteristic outcomes of Certificates of Higher Education**

- i. An outline knowledge of the scope and main areas of the subject(s) and its links with related subjects and a more extensive knowledge of some of the key areas.
- ii. An understanding of the major theories, principles and concepts.
- iii. Familiarity with some of the routine materials, techniques and practices of the subject.
- iv. Skills for the gathering, basic analysis, and presentation of routine information, ideas, concepts and quantitative and qualitative data within a clearly defined context. This will include the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as appropriate to the subject.

**Typically, holders of the Certificate of Higher Education will be able to:**

- a. use their knowledge of the subject and its techniques in a routine manner to

- evaluate and formulate a range of arguments and solutions to problems and issues of a routine nature;
- b. communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably and within structured and coherent arguments;
- c. undertake further learning within a structured and managed environment;
- d. apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts where individuals may have some limited personal responsibility, but the criteria for decisions and the scope of the task are well defined.

**The Certificate of Higher Education is an intermediate qualification within the first cycle.**

The Diploma of Higher Education

**SCQF level** 8

**Credit definition** At least **240 credits** of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF level 8

**General**

The Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) is typically offered after the equivalent of the first two years of full-time higher education in Scotland.

Some DipHEs are awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas while others focus on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

**Characteristic outcomes of the Diploma of Higher Education**

- i. A knowledge and understanding of the scope and main areas of the subject(s) and its interactions with related subjects. Detailed knowledge of some key areas which may include some knowledge of current issues in limited specialised areas.
- ii. Familiarity and understanding of a range of the essential theories, principles and concepts and an awareness of major issues at the forefront of the subject(s).
- iii. Familiarity and effective deployment of essential/routine materials, techniques and practices of the subject(s).
- iv. Skills for the gathering, critical analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and/or quantitative and qualitative data that is core to the subject(s). This will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s).

**Typically, holders of the Diploma of Higher Education will be able to:**

- a. use their knowledge, understanding and skills to critically evaluate and formulate evidence-based arguments and identify solutions to clearly defined problems of a generally routine nature;
- b. communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably using a range of specialist techniques;
- c. identify and address their own major learning needs within defined contexts and to undertake guided further learning in new areas;
- d. apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts where the scope of the task and the criteria for decisions are generally well defined but where some personal responsibility and initiative is required.

*Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education short cycle (within or*

*linked to the first cycle) are awarded to students who:*

- **have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle;**
- **can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts;**
- **have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;**
- **can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients;**
- **have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.**

approximately 120 ECTS credits

***N.B. there is a correlation between the credits in that 1 ECTS credit point = 2 SCQF credit points***

| Characteristic outcomes of the Scottish Diploma of Higher Education                                                                                                                                                                           | Bologna short cycle descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A knowledge and understanding of the scope and main areas of the subject(s) and its interactions with related subjects. Detailed knowledge of some key areas which may include some knowledge of current issues in limited specialised areas. | <b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle;</b> |
| Familiarity and understanding of a range of the essential theories, principles and concepts and an awareness of major issues at the forefront of the subject(s).                                                                              | <b>have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Familiarity and effective deployment of essential/routine materials, techniques and practices of the subject(s).                                                                                                                         | <b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts;</b>                                  |
| Skills for the gathering, critical analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and/or quantitative and qualitative data that is core to the subject(s). This will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s). | <b>can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients;</b> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Typically, holders of the Scottish Diploma of Higher Education will be able to:                                                                                                              | <b>Bologna short cycle descriptor</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| use their knowledge, understanding and skills to critically evaluate and formulate evidence-based arguments and identify solutions to clearly defined problems of a generally routine nature | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle;</b></p> <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts;</b></p> <p><b>have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;</b></p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably using a range of specialist techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p><b>have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;</b></p> <p><b>can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients</b></p> |
| <p>identify and address their own major learning needs within defined contexts and to undertake guided further learning in new areas</p> <p>apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts where the scope of the task and the criteria for decisions are generally well defined but where some personal responsibility and initiative is required.</p> | <p><b>have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                            |

#### Masters degrees

**SCQF level** 11

**Credit definition** At least 180 credits of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF level 11. For integrated Masters, at least 600 credits of which a minimum of 120 are at SCQF level 11.

(Credit definitions do not normally apply to the MPhil - see Table 2.)

#### **General**

The Masters degree is available through several different routes: as a programme for graduates or equivalent, through at least one year of full-time postgraduate study or an equivalent period of part-time study; as a programme of typically the equivalent of five years' full-time study that integrates a period of undergraduate study with the Masters degree.

The first of these typically leads to award of Master of Science or Master of Arts, depending on the subject taken, but other titles are also used. Integrated programmes, frequently offered over the equivalent of five years' full-time study, typically lead to a subject-specific qualification title (eg MEng) and are often linked to professional/statutory body recognition.

In the majority of cases, the Masters degree reflects a specialised knowledge and understanding of particular areas, applications or levels of expertise in particular subject or professional areas. In some professional areas, Masters degrees are linked to structures of continuing professional development.

### Characteristic outcomes of Masters degrees

- i. A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice.
- ii. A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.
- iii. Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.
- iv. Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - o to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and
  - o to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

### Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a. deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b. demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- c. continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and develop new skills to a high level;  
and will have:
- d. the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - o the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
  - o decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
  - o the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

### *Qualifications that signify completion of **the second cycle** are awarded to students who:*

- **have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;**
- **can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;**
- **have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate**

**judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;**

- **can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;**
- **have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.**

normally carry **90-120 ECTS credits** – the minimum requirements should amount to **60 ECTS credits** at the second cycle level

| Characteristic outcomes of Scottish Masters Degrees                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Bologna second cycle descriptor</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice. | <b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</b> |
| A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.                                                                                                                                         | <b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</b> |
| Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.                                      | <b>can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</b>                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Conceptual understanding that enables the student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and</li><li>○ to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.</li></ul> | <p><b>have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;</b></p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p>Typically, holders of Scottish Masters Degrees will be able to:</p>                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>Bologna second cycle descriptor</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;</p> | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</b></p> <p><b>have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;</b></p> <p><b>can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;</b></p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;</p> | <p><b>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</b></p> <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous</b></p> |
| <p>continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and develop new skills to a high level;</p>                                                                              | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>and will have:<br/> the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;<br/> decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and<br/> the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.</p> | <p><b>can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</b></p> <p><b>have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</b></p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**N.B.** There is also a correlation in terms of credit in that the second cycle typically includes **90-120 ECTS credits**, with the minimum requirements amounting to **60 ECTS credits** at the second cycle level. This correlation holds good for the Scottish Masters Degree (a minimum of 180 SCQF credit points with a minimum of 150 at second cycle level); for the Integrated Masters, following an integrated programme of study from undergraduate to Masters level study (a minimum of 600 SCQF credit points with a minimum of 120 at second cycle level); and for the MPhil (either not credit rated or a minimum of 300 SCQF credit points with a minimum of 270 at second cycle level).

**Integrated masters allow the possibility of graduating with a first cycle qualification, embedded as the latter are within the integrated masters.**

The Scottish Postgraduate Certificate (a minimum of 60 SCQF credit points with a minimum of 40 at second cycle level) is considered an intermediate qualification within the second cycle, as is the Postgraduate Diploma (a minimum of 120 SCQF credit points with a minimum of 90 at the second cycle level).

### Doctoral degrees

|                          |                                                                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SCQF level</b>        | 12                                                                  |
| <b>Credit definition</b> | At least 540 credits of which a minimum of 420 are at SCQF level 12 |

Credit definitions do not apply to research-based Doctorates

### General

The Doctoral degrees are available through several different routes. The PhD is normally awarded following successful completion of a thesis which requires the equivalent of a minimum of three years' full-time research and study to complete. Professional doctorates also require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study to complete and will frequently involve work-based as well as HEI-based research and study. Doctoral degrees reflect specialised, advanced knowledge, understanding and practice at the frontiers of the subject or professional area.

### Characteristic outcomes of Doctoral degrees

- i. The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.
- ii. A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.
- iii. The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
- iv. A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- a. make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b. continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;  
and will have:
- c. the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.

*Qualifications that signify completion of **the third cycle** are awarded to students who:*

- **have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;**
- **have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;**
- **have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;**
- **are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;**
- **can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with**

**society in general about their areas of expertise;**

- **can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.**

ECTS credits not specified

| Characteristic outcomes of Scottish Doctoral Degrees                                                                                                                                                                                              | Bologna third cycle descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.                                   | <b>have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</b> |
| A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice.                                                                               | <b>have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</b>                                                           |
| The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems. | <b>have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</b>                                                                       |
| A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.                                                                                                                                                     | <b>are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;</b>                                                                                                                     |

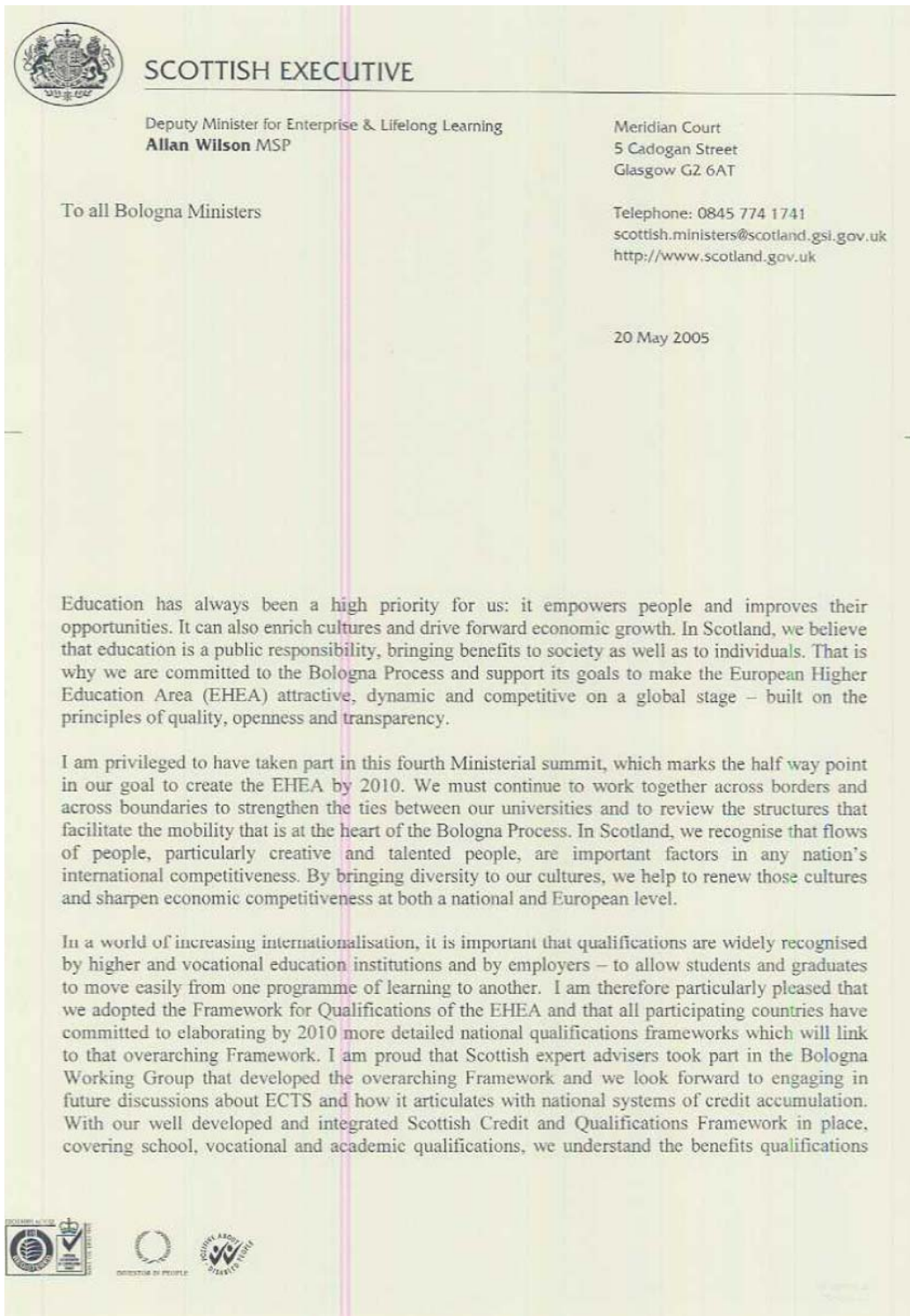
|                                                                  |                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Typically, holders of Scottish Doctoral Degrees will be able to: | <b>Bologna third cycle descriptor</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;</p> | <p><b>have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</b></p> <p><b>have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</b></p> <p><b>have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</b></p> <p><b>are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</b></p> <p><b>can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.</b></p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches;</p>                                                                            | <p><b>have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</b></p> <p><b>have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</b></p> <p><b>have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</b></p> <p><b>can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society</b></p> |
| <p>and will have:<br/>the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.</p> | <p><b>are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;</b></p> <p><b>can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</b></p> <p><b>can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

### Appendix 3

In his letter to all Bologna ministers of 20 May 2005, Allan Wilson MSP, Scotland's Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, outlined the "need to ensure that the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework meets the criteria for self-certification of alignment with the framework for the qualifications of the EHEA."



frameworks bring for learners, for employers, for institutions and for lifelong learning. We stand ready to share our experience, as other countries work towards this.

This conference has reinforced my view that the strength of the Bologna Process is that it is not driven by any one partner, but that all stakeholders – Ministers, the higher education sector, the European Commission and student and staff representative bodies work collaboratively towards common goals. The need for everyone to work together is even more critical as we move into the implementation stage, embedding at institutional level agreed principles and actions.

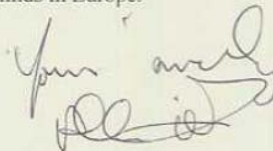
The stocktaking report shows that substantial progress has been made in the three priority areas we agreed at the Ministerial conference in Berlin in 2003: quality assurance; the two cycle degree system; and recognition of degrees and periods of study.

In Scotland, we have the advantage of having in place already the fundamental principles set out in the Bologna Declaration. We have a widely recognised system of Bachelors and Masters Degrees – valued by students and employers alike. This is demonstrated by the high percentage of Bachelor graduates who go straight into employment (65%) after completion of the first cycle. We also have a robust quality assurance mechanism in place, comprising internal reviews and our innovative Enhancement-led Institutional Review, with its emphasis on quality enhancement and student participation. Indeed, with our diverse approaches to higher education, Scotland and the other parts of the UK operate as a microcosm of the EHEA, with students and staff moving easily from one part of the UK to another.

Against this background, I support the view expressed at this conference that countries with Bologna reforms largely in place have a duty to support and advise those who do not. Scotland looks forward to sharing its good practice as well as learning from the experiences of others, as we too have challenges to overcome.

We need to widen and deepen the engagement of staff and students in individual higher education institutions with Bologna and the issues it raises. We need to make sure the arrangements put in place to produce Diploma Supplements work effectively across all Scottish higher education institutions and that they are recognised and understood by employers. We need to engage constructively in debates about how best to maintain diversity and flexibility in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle (doctoral level qualifications). While our quality enhancement framework is more ambitious, we nonetheless need to ensure that in the relevant areas it is aligned with the ENQA standards and guidelines we adopted at this conference. We need to ensure that the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework meets the criteria for self certification of alignment with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. And, we also need to work to improve capacity in areas such as the accreditation of prior learning.

We look forward to engaging with our Bologna partners on these issues over the next two years and beyond. We relish the opportunity to maintain and develop links with other European universities, with their rich heritage and cultural diversity. It is by continuing to nurture and respect that diverse heritage within a coherent framework that we will develop greater opportunities for students and researchers to study and work with the best minds in Europe.



ALLAN WILSON



## **Appendix 4: The relationship between public bodies in Scottish Higher Education**

### ***The United Kingdom government***

The United Kingdom government devolves powers to the Scottish Executive including responsibility for higher education.

‘Through the process of devolution certain powers formally vested in the U.K. Parliament have been transferred to new legislative bodies located in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. These legislative bodies are responsible for promulgating primary and/or delegated legislation in a wide variety of areas.

Devolution refers to the ‘transfer and subsequent sharing of powers between institutions of government within a limited framework set out in legislation.’

See <http://www.llrx.com/features/devolution.htm>

### ***The Scottish Executive***

The Scottish Executive is the devolved government for Scotland.

It is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Scotland, including health, education, justice, rural affairs, and transport.

It manages an annual budget of more than £27 billion in the financial year 2005-2006 which is due to rise to over £30 billion in 2007-2008.

The Executive was established in 1999, following the first elections to the Scottish Parliament. It is currently a coalition between the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Liberal Democrat Party.

The Executive is led by a First Minister who is nominated by the Parliament and in turn appoints the other Scottish Ministers who make up the Cabinet.

Executive civil servants are accountable to Scottish Ministers, who are themselves accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Intro>

For the structure of Scottish Executive departments or ‘ministries’ see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0034519.pdf>

The structure of education in Scotland is outlined at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Factsheets/Education-Factsheet>

### ***Higher Education in Scotland***

Higher Education in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department, which is effectively the

Scottish national ministry of Higher Education.

Government funding of Scottish Higher Education is administered on an 'arm's length principle'.

The arm's length principle (ALP) is often invoked to avoid undue government influence over other bodies, such as the legal system, the press, or the arts. For example, in the United Kingdom Arts Councils operate 'at arms length' in allocating the funds they receive from the government.

The Scottish Executive funds Higher Education in Scotland on such a principle through the Scottish Funding Council which is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB)

### ***Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs)***

Executive NDPBs:

- are normally established by statute such as an Act of Parliament or Royal Charter
- carry out administrative, commercial, executive or regulatory functions on behalf of Government
- provide specialist advice to Ministers and others
- have a national remit
- have a board whose members are appointed by Ministers or by the Queen on behalf of Ministers, and which meets at least quarterly
- employ their own staff, who are not civil servants
- manage their own budgets.

See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/public-bodies/executive-ndpbs>

### ***The Scottish Funding Council (SFC)***

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is an Executive NDPB

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
- being flexible and responsive in allowing access to lifelong learning for all.

See <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/>

### ***The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)***

The mission of the QAA is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.

QAA does this by working with higher education institutions to define academic standards and quality, and QAA carries out and publishes reviews against these standards.

QAA was established in 1997 and is an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies.

An overview of QAA work can be found at: [QAA: an introduction](#).

See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/>

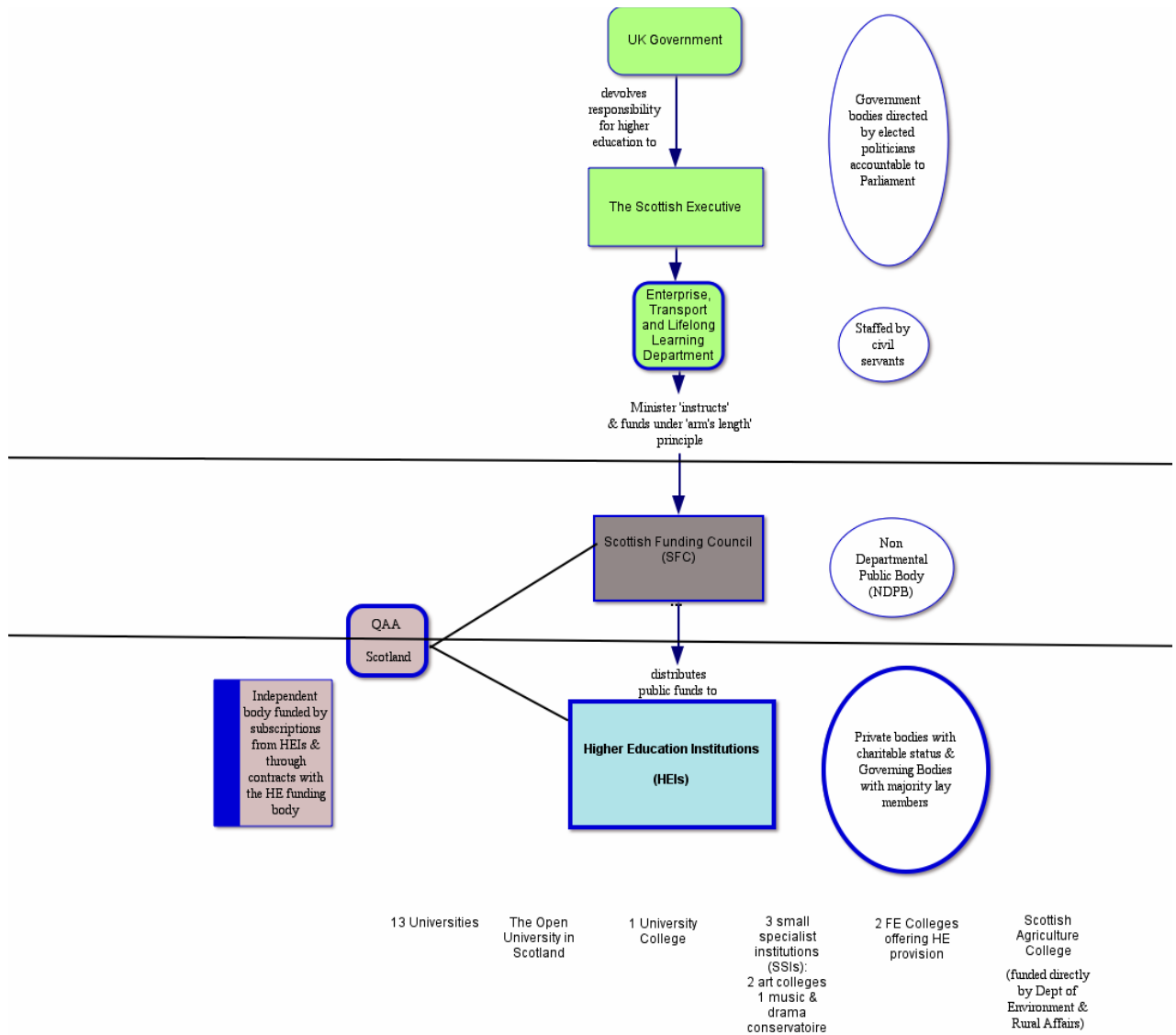
QAA's work in Scotland

[The QAA Scotland Committee](#) has delegated responsibilities from the QAA Board for the management of QAA's work in Scotland. There is a separate Scottish office, known as QAA Scotland.

QAA Scotland works closely with the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Funding Council, as well as organisations such as Universities Scotland and the National Union of Students in Scotland, to develop and operate arrangements that reflect the distinctive needs of higher education in Scotland.

See <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/default.asp>

**Appendix 4 Figure 1: Diagram showing the relationship between public bodies in Scotland**



Scotland's universities developed in three stages, each with a different legal basis.

The ancient universities (St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh) date from the 15th and 16th centuries.

Four other institutions (Dundee, Strathclyde, Heriot-Watt and Stirling) achieved university title in the 1960s.

The newest group (Glasgow Caledonian, Napier, Paisley, Robert Gordon and Abertay) became universities in the early 1990s.

Other HEIs in Scotland are Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh College of Art, Glasgow School of Art, The Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama, Bell College and UHI Millennium Institute. The Scottish Agriculture College is funded directly by the Scottish Executive's Department of Environment and Rural Affairs.

All Scottish HEIs are private bodies with charitable status.

Each is overseen by its own Governing Body which has a majority of lay members.

## Appendix 5

### The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The SCQF table is shown here:

| <b>SCQF Levels</b> | <b>SQA National Units Courses and Group Awards</b> | <b>Higher Education</b>                                              | <b>SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications)</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 12                 |                                                    | Doctorate                                                            |                                                  |
| 11                 |                                                    | Masters                                                              | SVQ5                                             |
| 10                 |                                                    | Honours Degree<br>Graduate Diploma / Certificate                     |                                                  |
| 9                  |                                                    | Ordinary Degree<br>Graduate Diploma / Certificate                    |                                                  |
| 8                  |                                                    | Higher National Diploma (HND)<br>Diploma of Higher Education         | SVQ4                                             |
| 7                  | Advanced Higher                                    | Higher National Certificate (HNC)<br>Certificate of Higher Education |                                                  |
| 6                  | Higher                                             |                                                                      | SVQ3                                             |
| 5                  | Intermediate 2<br>Credit Standard Grade            |                                                                      | SVQ2                                             |
| 4                  | Intermediate 1<br>General Standard Grade           |                                                                      | SVQ1                                             |

|          |                                                     |  |  |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>3</b> | <b>Access 3</b><br><b>Foundation Standard Grade</b> |  |  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Access 2</b>                                     |  |  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>Access 1</b>                                     |  |  |

As can be seen, higher education begins at level 7 in the SCQF. Institutions use SCQF credit points for students entering or transferring between programmes or institutions, and use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for transfers within the European area. 2 SCQF credits are equivalent to 1 ECTS credit.

## **Appendix 6**

### **Glossary of Terms**

*ASC*: Association of Scotland's Colleges

*DFES*: the Department for Education and Skills

*ECTS*: the European Credit Transfer System

*EDS*: European Diploma Supplement

*EHEA*: the European Higher Education Area

*ELIR*: Enhancement-Led Institutional Review

*ENIC*: European Network of Information Centres

*ENQA*: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

*HEIs*: Higher Education Institutions

*HNC*: Higher National Certificate

*HND*: Higher National Diploma

*NARIC*: National Academic Recognition Information Centres

*NDPB*: Non-departmental public body

*NUS*: National Union of Students

*QAA (Scotland)*: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (Scotland)

*SACCA*: the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access

*Scottish FQHE*: the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland

*SCQF*: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

*SFC*: the Scottish Funding Council

*sparqs*: student participation in quality assurance

*SQA*: Scottish Qualifications Authority

*SVQ*: Scottish Vocational Qualification