Evaluation of the Impact of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales

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Research

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Evaluation of the Impact of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales

Audience
Providers of education and training, awarding bodies, advice and guidance organisations, employers, learners and DCELLS policy, funding and planning departments.

Overview
The evaluation of the Community Learning Account pilot has involved individual evaluations of each pilot and a collective evaluation of the overall approach. This report presents the collective findings, distinguishing between the two pilots that ran in established organisations and the three pilots that were set up as new projects.

Action required
None.

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Additional copies
This report is available online at http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/research-and-evaluation/124540/?lang=en

Related documents
Evaluation of the ESF Capacity Building Project for the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales.

Contents

Summary

Miller Research was commissioned in October 2007 to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness, impact and value for money of the Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQFW) project to date. The evaluation has focused on feedback from consultations with stakeholders in order to provide a clearer view of the CQFW and indicate how best to sustain future growth and development.

The evaluation has involved:

- A literature review of relevant policy documentation and CQFW documentation

- Consultation with key stakeholders, particularly focusing on the members of the Credit Common Accord Forum (CCAF)

- A fact-finding visit to Scotland to understand the work of the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF).

There was large variation in the level of knowledge and understanding of the CQFW amongst those consulted. Some had a very good understanding of credit and the development of the framework whilst others felt they were not close enough to the policy and practices to be able to comment.

Across this awareness spectrum the different shades of understanding and opinion can be attributed to exposure to credit in the Open College Network (OCN), Higher Education, the Capacity Building project with Awarding Bodies (funded through ESF) and possibly other frameworks in the UK and Europe. The development work on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) has raised the profile of the concepts of credit and credit frameworks across the UK as a whole.

Awarding bodies were generally supportive of the CQFW although there was a feeling gathered during the evaluation period that the level of commitment and resources that awarding bodies are allocating to the CQFW has diminished since the ESF Capacity building project[1]. The level of awareness of the CQFW within awarding bodies varied considerably – from all relevant staff to just one individual.

There are generally low levels of awareness of the framework amongst learners and employers. There are some pockets of

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[1] The ESF Capacity Building project was a ESF funded project that aimed to develop the CQFW through building capacity within awarding bodies by enabling them to ascribe credit values to total qualifications and individual units. In addition, the funding was used by awarding bodies to amend their internal systems to include awarding credit values onto their student transcript and internal records. A separate evaluation of this project has been carried out.

awareness which has arisen from some of the ESF Capacity Building projects which worked with small numbers of employers and learners.

Consultees felt that employers are likely to support the CQFW as it closely links into their requests for greater flexibility in learning and more 'bite-sized' learning opportunities.

There remain a number of areas of confusion about the CQFW even amongst those who have been quite closely involved in the development of the Framework. Areas of uncertainty included:

- The relationship between the CQFW and the QCF

- The purpose of a credit framework

- How credits can be used to make up a recognised qualification

- The technical elements of the framework i.e. the process of assigning credit to a unit.

The policy review demonstrated that the CQFW is highlighted in many Welsh Assembly Government policy document as an important 'tool' for achieving the aim of Wales becoming the 'learning country'. However, the consultation process has revealed somewhat of a 'policy vacuum' between the importance placed on the CQFW in policy and other official documents and the level of support that the CQFW receives from the Welsh Assembly Government. Whilst credit is mentioned in these documents there is little evidence that credit concepts have visibly trickled down operational levels of Government practice. Some Welsh Assembly Government initiatives do not always align to the principles of the CQFW and the idea of 'bite-sized learning'. There is a view that credit should be running through all Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills activities.

There is a view that CQFW lacks strategic support from the Welsh Assembly Government, and that the CQFW team are rather left to their own devices. Few senior Welsh Assembly Government officials were willing to take part in this evaluation with many citing their lack of knowledge and understanding of the Framework as a key factor.

Strengths of the CQFW were highlighted as:

- Inclusivity - The consultation process revealed a strong level of support for the design of the Framework. Consultees liked the inclusive nature of the CQFW in that it looks to include all types of learning no matter when or where the learning took place.

- Partnership working and buy-in - CQFW have worked hard to ensure buy-in to the framework from awarding bodies and other key partners at an early stage. This has inevitably meant that the framework has developed slowly, but has resulted in some significant achievements. Currently thirteen awarding bodies are 'recognised bodies' for the CQFW; these thirteen provide about 90% of the qualifications delivered in Wales.

- CQFW Team - There was general consensus that the CQFW team is very flexible, approachable and informed and disseminates information amongst CCAF members well.

- Mutual Recognition - An in-principle agreement has been reached between awarding bodies on recognising each other's credit rating of units, modules and qualifications, although further work is needed to detail the specific aspects of level, credit, learning outcomes and alignment criteria.

- Higher Education - All HEI's have signed up to the credit reform and it is understood that through using credit they are now able to meet the demands of learners for flexible learning so that students who drop out can 'collect' credit for the part of the year that they have completed.

The evaluation also revealed some weaknesses or concerns that consultees had over the development of the framework

- Timescales - Consultees expressed some dissatisfaction with the speed of progress in terms of the development of the Framework. Whilst most respondents fully recognised that a key achievement of the CQFW was the level of buy-in achieved with awarding bodies and other key organisations, there is a feeling more could have been achieved given the length of time the Framework has been in development and the resources that it has had.

- Information Sharing – It was felt that there could be better information sharing with stakeholders and organisations that are *outside* of the direct development of the Framework (i.e. outside of the CCAF). It was felt that information sharing was limited to events and conferences and an email newsletter or informative website would be more effective mechanisms for disseminating information about the Framework and its developments.

- Research – There were some views that the research carried out for the CQFW may not have been the best use of public money. There were some reports that those who took part in the research were not encouraged to be critically evaluative as any critical analysis was seen as a criticism of

the CQFW team. There were also concerns over the longer term impact of the Capacity Building project. Few awarding bodies have assigned credit to their qualifications since funding ceased or built credit requirements into their day-to-day processes and the knowledge gained from the project is often held by only one or two individuals.

- Monitoring and Evaluation – some concerns were raised with respect to the on-going monitoring and evaluation of the CQFW project. There were some perceptions that the team were not always as open as they could be and that there was a need for more visible evidence of the strategy that is guiding the CQFW project and ongoing internal monitoring of progress against that strategy.

- CQFW Team – whilst the team were praised for their commitment to the development of the Framework, there was a feeling among consultees that the team is currently too small to effectively do all that is asked of it.

It was recognised that the CQFW development does face some barriers or hurdles due to the nature of the qualifications system in Wales. Within Wales general qualifications are provided by a number of awarding bodies who are operating across both England and Wales. As the Welsh market accounts for about 6% of awarding bodies total business, developments in England often take greater importance in the eyes of awarding bodies. The development of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) has meant that many awarding bodies are not investing resources in credit developments until the requirements of the QCF are known. This has resulted in the 'regulated' pillar of the CQFW effectively stalling whilst the QCF is in development.

The QCF has also bought about some confusion amongst awarding bodies with regard to how the QCF will interact with the CQFW. A number of awarding bodies are of the belief they could have to produce different versions of the same qualification to meet the needs of different qualifications frameworks.

The arrangements between credit and funding remain a significant barrier for CQFW. Currently there is no clear link between credit and funding in Wales which is causing some problems for the framework. As there is no link between funding and credit in Wales there is no incentive for awarding bodies to assign credit to their qualifications. In comparison, in order to get qualifications approved and funded in England awarding bodies have to use the QCF template

Other technical challenges for the Framework are regarding quality assurance systems and formalising arrangements for mutual recognition.

It is generally felt that the CQFW has had minimal impact on the learning environment. Although the ESF Capacity Building project resulted in over 700 units being assigned credit, since funding support ceased no awarding bodies have continued to assign credit to their qualifications. Only two awarding bodies are awarding credit to learners. Employers and learners have limited awareness of the CQFW and so the impact that it can have is also minimal.

At this stage there has been no noticeable impact on participation in learning as a result of the CQFW.

The evaluation has highlighted a number of recommendations for CQFW going forward which are summarised below:

Strategic Alignment

1. It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with HEFCW undertake a strategic review of CQFW to determine whether to continue supporting the framework.

2. A senior DCELLS member of staff should be given the role of ensuring all departments know about the Framework, support it and use it where appropriate.

3. The Assembly should be looking to credit rate its own staff training and professional development provision and share this experience with other employers to demonstrate the benefits of the Framework to other employers.

4. Any new learning initiatives developed by the Welsh Assembly should align to the principles of the CQFW and should look to use credit

Strategic Planning

5. The partner organisations behind CQFW should look to revise the Vision, objectives and actions for the CQFW in the light of this evaluation and developments of the QCF.

6. As part of the strategic forward planning outlined in Recommendation 5, consideration needs to be given to the future role of the CQFW team and adequate resources allocated appropriately.

7. During the strategic planning it is important to outline the research that will need to be carried out to support the vision and objectives. Key research findings and recommendations need to be widely disseminated and there

should be visible evidence of action arising from the research findings.

Management and Delivery Arrangements

8. There needs to be an increase in capacity and resource of the CQFW team to achieve the strategic positioning and volume of work if the framework is to succeed, and be sustainable over time.

9. Partner organisations need to explore different options for the future structure and organisation of CQFW. Consultees suggested that rather than being hidden within the Qualifications and Curriculum division, the CQFW should actually sit as the overarching framework.

10. There is a need to review the structure and function of the CCAF to incorporate a distinction between its operational and governance activities. From this review functions for each element will need to be strategically planned.

Awareness Raising

11. The CQFW team need to raise awareness of the Framework, its benefits and its impacts on the learning agenda in Wales amongst colleagues within the Welsh Assembly Government. Only when the profile of the Framework is raised internally can its principles be built into strategies and implementation plans and be used as a suitable mechanism to achieve some of the key aims of policies such as The Learning Country.

12. Mechanisms such as a regular e-mail bulletin or updates to the website would help to improve communication with external wider stakeholders and help improve the profile of the Framework.

13. CQFW should undertake regular workshops that go 'back to basics' to inform awarding bodies and other stakeholders of the key details of the CQFW. This would ensure that new organisations and individuals are fully and clearly briefed on the Framework.

14. CQFW should look to engage with employers (covering a range of sectors, sizes of organisations) and look to support them in submitting training courses to the CQFW. Their experiences can be developed into case-studies to be used to promote the Framework to other employers.

QCF

15. The CQFW team need to urgently clarify the relationship between the QCF and the CQFW for the benefit of awarding bodies and other organisations who may be submitting units and qualifications to both Frameworks.

16. Recommendations for CQFW point to activity and effort being focused on the other three pillars of the framework – particularly informal and non-formal learning and learning and training outside of the NQF whilst the QCF is in development.

17. There should be better joint working between the teams in England and Wales.

18. One recommendation suggested investing more time and effort in providing a solution for the UK, which incorporates the Welsh perspective. This would work for the inclusion of Wales within a collective approach, whilst valuing the prior experience and knowledge gained in Wales over the last 20 years.

19. CQFW staff need to continue to promote the CQFW in Europe and other UK countries and work with credit colleagues in order to develop the CQFW to complement other national and European Frameworks.

Monitoring and Evaluation

20. CQFW needs to be much more open and transparent about its development. Stakeholders need to be clear about what the project is trying to achieve, what activities have been undertaken, how this has been funded and what outputs and outcomes have been achieved.

21. Work needs to be undertaken within the Welsh Assembly Government to now establish the relationship of actual credit values and the current credit equivalence unit value.

Marketing and Promotion

22. An improved website will go a long way towards improving perceptions and awareness of the CQFW both within and outside Wales.

Mutual Recognition

23. CQFW should continue to work with awarding bodies to try and come to an agreed set of principles for recognising each

other's units and to follow up on the recommendations from the 2007 research on mutual recognition.

Quality Assurance

24. Further research needs to be carried out to look at mechanisms to ensure the quality of credit and levels and to demonstrate robustness in the Framework.

Introduction

Miller Research was commissioned in October 2007 to undertake an evaluation of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The stated aims for this research were to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness, impact and value for money of the CQFW project to date; and

- Evaluate the ESF Capacity Building Project with awarding bodies.

The key objectives of the research are:

- Assess the progress of the CQFW against the 3-year Implementation Plan (July 2003);

- Develop a baseline of evidence;

- Explore how effective the CQFW is in meeting the demands of employers and learners for flexible learning;

- Determine the effectiveness of the Framework in widening participation in non-formal and informal learning;

- Explore reasons for non-usage amongst awarding bodies, employers, learners and other key stakeholders; and

- Evaluate activity specific to ESF.

Following the project Inception Meeting held in October 2007 with members of the DCELLS team the project scope was changed. It was requested that the evaluation focus on feedback from consultations with stakeholders in order to provide a clearer view of the CQFW and indicate how best to sustain future growth and development. This had implications for the methodology adopted (discussed below), and the scope of the work.

The purpose of this report is to present findings of the baseline impact and awareness study element of the evaluation of the CQFW to DCELLS. A separate report presents the findings of the evaluation of the ESF funded activity for the CQFW.

Background to the CQFW

Aims[2]

The concept of credit has been in development in Wales for nearly 20 years. In this time there has been the CREDIS Project in Further Education along with development of credit in Higher Education and also credit development through the Open College Network (OCN).

In July 2001, the then Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills committed Wales to having a single credit-based qualification framework operational by April 2003.

The purpose of such a credit-based framework is to encourage more young people and adults in Wales to participate in learning. A credit framework enables small learning achievements (credits) to be formally recognised. The learner can accumulate credits in order to gain recognised qualifications.

All accredited learning for post 14 year olds in Wales is being gradually brought into a single structure – the CQFW. The CQFW embraces all post-14 learning and Higher Education in Wales and has been established jointly by:

- Welsh Assembly Government – Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. Specifically the Qualifications and Curriculum Division (formerly ACCAC – Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales) and Lifelong Learning and Skills (formerly ELWa); and

- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

The CQFW underpins five key goals:

- Enabling everyone to develop and maintain essential skills;

- Encouraging people to become lifelong learners;

- Exploiting the knowledge in businesses and educational institutions;

- Encouraging businesses and workers to gain new skills; and

- Helping people within their communities to develop new skills.

The CQFW allows learners to explain to others the relative value of their award and to transfer their knowledge and skills between career paths, providers and countries.

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[2] Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales Implementation Plan July 2006

Employers gain a means of comparing the value of applicants' and employees' achievements and a clear way of expressing the skills and qualifications applicants need.

The Framework[3]

The CQFW was launched in 2003 and brings all recognised learning into a single unifying structure. The framework merges the concepts of learning achievements (credit) and the demands made by that learning on the learner (level) to create a system that is able to embrace all types and styles of learning and all qualifications.

Credit is

- a currency for learning achievement that provides a measure of learning outcomes achievable in learning time at a given level; and

- an award made to learners in recognition of the verified achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level

One credit equates to learning outcomes achievable in 10 hours of learning time, which is in line with the approach taken in other credit frameworks across the UK.

Levels are used to indicate the level of demand, complexity and depth of study. The descriptors are accepted across Wales, Northern Ireland and England and ensure that any unit can be located at the correct level[4].

The CQFW is designed to be an inclusive model in that it looks to incorporate all kinds of learning, whether formal, regulated learning (such as qualifications included in the NQF), work-based learning or informal and non-formal learning.

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[3] Credit and Learning in Wales – An Introduction (2007)

[4] CQFW uses the NICATS level descriptors (see Appendix 1)

Figure 1: The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales

The Four Pillars of Learning in the CQFW

Framework for Higher Education	National Qualifications Framework	Learning and training outside of the NQF	Informal and non-formal learning
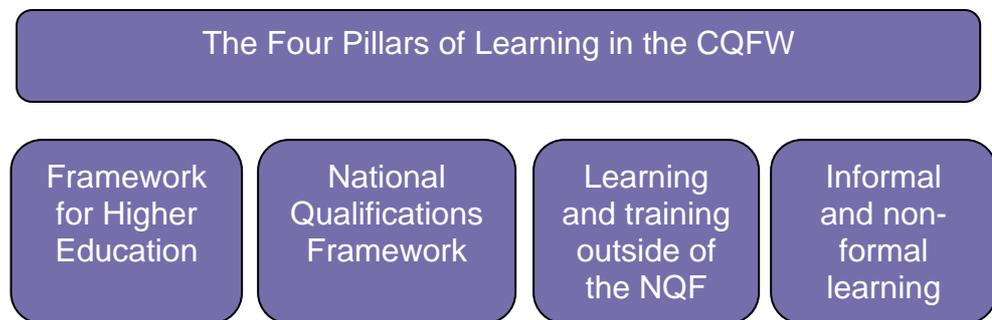
Benefits of the CQFW

The CQFW encourages lifelong learning for all and will:

- support the development of an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential;
- assist in removing barriers to progression;
- promote recognition of the skills required to support economic growth in Wales and elsewhere;
- offer parity in the recognition of achievement for learners of all ages, whether they are learning in the workplace, community, at school, college or university;
- recognise learning wherever, whenever and however it is achieved;
- accumulate credits towards a qualification or achieved for their own value; and
- accumulate credits to meet the specific needs of individuals.

This will assist learners to:

- explain to others the relative value of their award;
- provide an employer with a much clearer picture of what they know and can do; and
- transfer their knowledge and skills between career paths, providers and potentially throughout Europe.

The framework provides a flexible structure that allows key players to:

- respond to change;
- promote transfer and progression; and
- create relevant and tailor-made learning opportunities.

Employers will benefit from:

- the greater number of people in Wales developing the skills needed to meet employers' requirements and to overcome skill shortages;

- the opportunities for their staff to develop those skills needed for their work without necessarily needing to take full qualifications or having time off work; and

- being able to see easily the amount and level of learning already achieved by potential employees especially those without standard full qualifications.

The CQFW provides the essential means of measuring and recording *all learning* wherever and however it is achieved.

Although some of these benefits could be derived from unitising qualifications, it is only by assigning credit to both qualifications and learning achievements *outside* the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that the full benefits can be achieved. The CQFW provides the essential means of measuring and recording *all learning* wherever and however it is achieved. More broadly, Wales will benefit as the culture of being the learning country develops through the adoption of the credit and qualifications framework.

The Development and Implementation of the CQFW

ACCAC, ELWa and HEFCW worked with the major awarding bodies – City and Guilds, Edexcel, NOCN, OCR, WJEC and the Wales OCNs; as well as learndirect, Higher Education and Further Education in Wales to develop the principles of the credit Framework. In April 2002, the Credit Common Accord Working Group was formed in order to develop the Credit Common Accord (CCA) to agreed terminology, principles and quality assurance procedures to ensure public confidence in credit as an award for assessed learning achievement. To ensure transferability, key players from across the UK were also involved in the development of the Credit Common Accord.

In October 2002 the Policy Reference Group[5] was formed to represent the interests of key organisations involved in training, education and workforce development throughout Wales. The group had a strategic remit to provide support and guidance for the development and continuing maintenance of the CQFW.

In July 2003 the CCA was launched. The CCA looked to provide assurance that credit will be recognised and valued by learners, providers, employers, awarding bodies and others. The Accord establishes principles for assigning and awarding credit in order to

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[5] See Appendix 2 for the bodies represented on the Policy Reference Group

facilitate the transfer of learning achievements between all bodies. Bodies assigning and awarding credit need to be recognised by the CQFW Senior Officers Group (SOG) and their operation monitored and quality assured.

The CCA documents:

- terminology used throughout the CCA;

- design specifications to enable credit to be assigned;

- principles to be met by recognised bodies wishing to assign credit values to units;

- principles to be met by recognised bodies wishing to award credit to learners;

- quality assurance procedures to ensure adherence to the principles and promote public confidence in credit as an award for assessed learning; and

- proposals for the operation of the CCA.

In July 2003 the Credit Common Accord Working Group was re-constituted to form the Credit Common Accord Forum (CCAF)[6]. All signatories of the CCA are members of the CCAF. The CCAF also includes representatives of the regulatory authorities and any other bodies overseeing credit activities in those areas where the CCA is active. In addition a number of task and finish groups were established, these included:

- Senior Officers Group

- ESF Implementation Group

- Informal and Non-formal Learning group

At the same time as the development of the CCA, the first CQFW implementation plan was produced by ELWa, ACCAC, HEFCW, awarding bodies, OCN, Ufi, training providers, Further and Higher Education Institutions, CCEA, QCA, Sector Skills Councils, Dysg, LSDA and other interested parties.

The three-year Implementation Plan, produced in July 2003, sets out key actions and activities that need to be completed in order to drive forward the CQFW. The plan sets out nine Key Actions, with each Key Action having a number of activities set out to achieve it[7]. The Key Actions are:

1. Develop and Launch the CQFW Implementation Plan

2. Credit Common Accord

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[6] See Appendix 3 for membership of the CCAF

[7] See Appendix 4 for a copy of the Implementation Plan

3. Higher Education in Wales (incorporating the HEI credit related system into the CQFW and development of credit transfer and progression routes)

4. Development of a Marketing Plan

5. ELWa National Planning and Funding System

6. Curriculum Development (encouraging and supporting the development of more responsive and flexible learning systems e.g. Welsh Baccalaureate, 14 – 19 Learning Pathways

7. Quality (ensure appropriate quality assurance systems are in place)

8. Accessing European Social Fund Support

9. Lifelong Learning Pathway and Qualification Database

This implementation plan directed CQFW activity between 2003 and 2006 and it is this activity that is evaluated in this report. In 2006 a revised implementation plan was issued which set out further actions and activities to take the CQFW forward.

In 2004, CQFW (through ELWa) was successful in obtaining ESF funds which supported a number of projects that were designed to build capacity within awarding bodies so that they could develop the skills and experience in assigning and awarding credit to their qualifications.

Formal processes for credit recognition and award were launched in January 2006 and endorsed in February 2006 by the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills.

In order for an organisation (awarding body, HEI, informal/non formal learning organisation) to assign and award credit, they must first be recognised by the CQFW. To be recognised, organisations must explain their quality assurance procedures and alignment to the requirements of the CCA.

Once an organisation has been recognised by CQFW it is then able to assign and award credit. The CCA provides the principles for credit in the CQFW, but it does not prescribe or offer specific guidance on the processes or methods of assigning credits to units. The principle is this allows awarding bodies to develop processes based on their existing systems and processes for developing qualifications.

Common elements for assigning and awarding credit have been identified:

- Initial training;

- Use of key documents e.g. CCA, credit assigning checklist (in the CQFW handbook), unit template;

- A combination of individual and collective judgements to reach decisions on credit and level;

- Professional judgements drawing on a wide range of expertise and experience being key to reaching decisions;

- An auditable record of decisions and their rationale.

Recognised bodies will have established policies and practice in relation to assessment and standards but these may need to be amended in a credit system. Bodies may also have to amend their quality assurance systems.

Recognised bodies then have to award credit to learners which will have the following issues that need to be addressed:

- Using and managing credit information;

- Recording, notifying and certificating credit and unit achievements;

- Implications of rules of combination for qualification achievement;

- Standards and protocols for inter-operability with national information systems;

- Standards and protocols for inter-operability with provider/centre information systems;

- Preparing for potential shift in demand towards credit certificates and system consequences of this shift.

Over the last seven years the CQFW Team, in partnership with awarding bodies and other organisations, has tested the principles of credit in a wide range of projects covering Higher Education, regulated qualifications, informal and non-formal learning. These various projects have raised the profile of CQFW which has resulted in the team experiencing increased demand for advice, support and services from a wide range of organisations who wish to assign and/or award credit to their learning and training.

Management and Delivery Structure

When the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills first announced that Wales would be developing a single credit and qualifications framework, the work was carried out by ELWa, ACCAC and HEFCW working in partnership, with the CQFW team sitting within ELWa.

As discussed above, in 2002 a Policy Reference Group and Credit Common Accord Group were formed. Figure 2 below indicates the relationships of the key bodies and groups.

Figure 2 : Relationship between organisations involved in the development of the CQFW prior to the merger of ASPBs into the Welsh Assembly Government
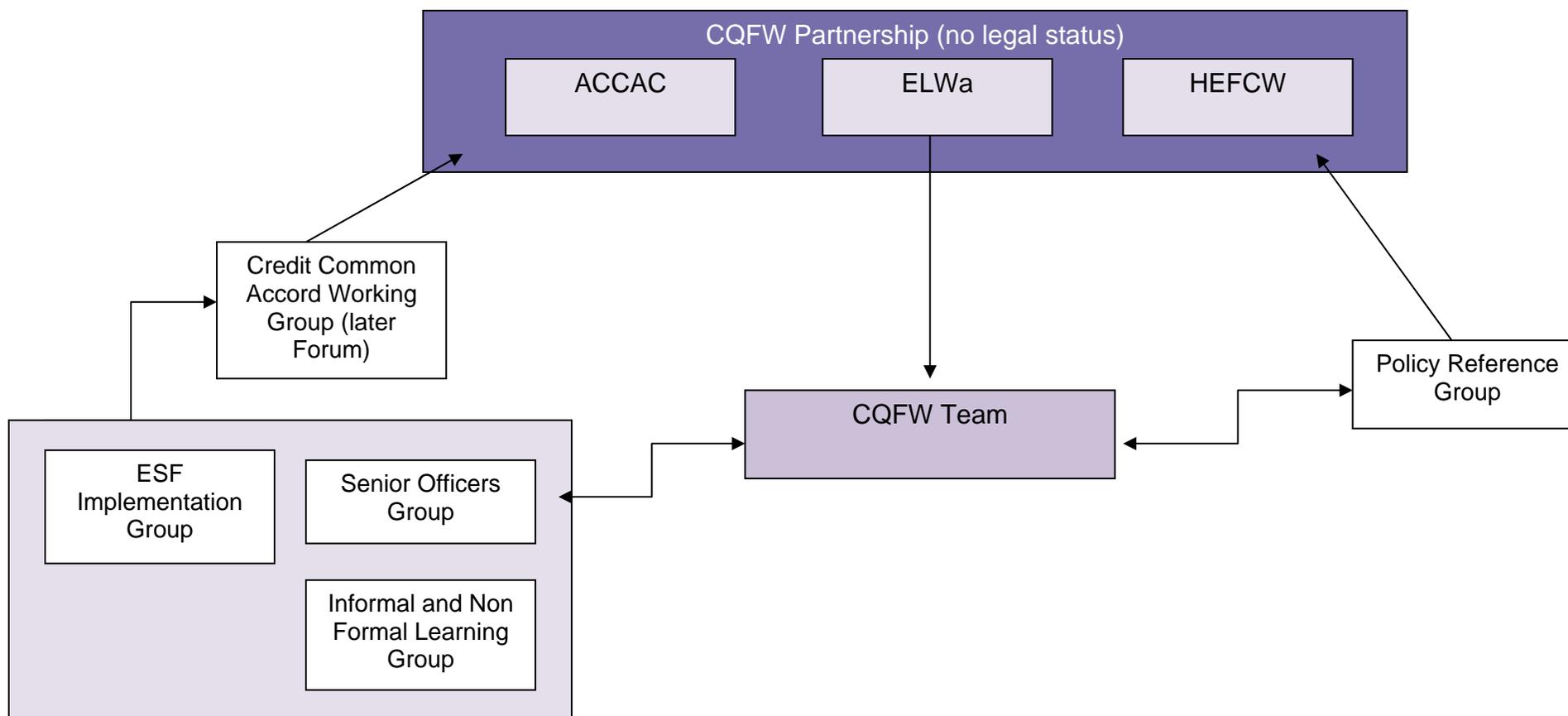
The **Credit Common Accord Working Group** was formed in April 2002 to develop the Credit Common Accord. In July 2003 the Working Group was re-constituted to form the Credit Common Accord Forum. The membership was extended to broaden the CCAF outside the more regulated activities of learning

The **Policy Reference Group** was formed in October 2002 to represent the interests of key organisations involved in training, education and workforce development throughout Wales. The group has a strategic role to provide support and guidance for the development and continuing maintenance of the CQFW. The group was disbanded in 2006 following the merger of ELWa into the Welsh Assembly Government

In 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government transferred the functions of ELWa and ACCAC into the Welsh Assembly. This then meant that the CQFW development was a partnership between the Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW, with the CQFW team sitting within the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, within the Qualifications and Curriculum Division (which was formally ACCAC). Figure 3 illustrates the relationship of the key organisations and groups after the merger.

Since the merger of ELWa and ACCAC into the Assembly Government the Policy Reference Group has not met. However, in 2007 the Credit Common Accord Forum membership was expanded to include many of the organisations formally on the Policy Reference Group.

Figure 3 : Relationship between organisations involved in the development of the CQFW after the merger of ASPBs into the Welsh Assembly Government
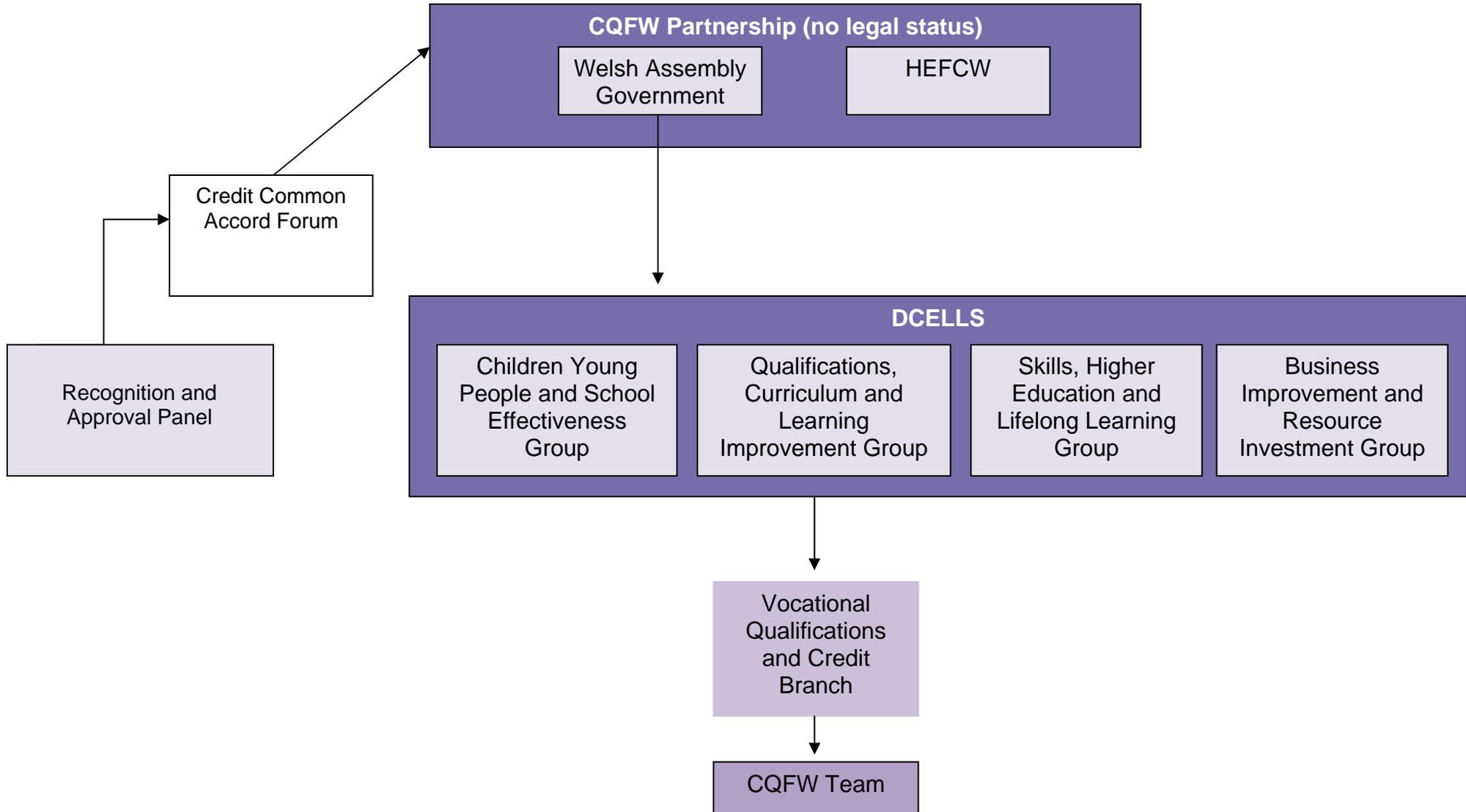
Since 2001 there has been a small, but dedicated team working on the CQFW development. At its largest at the beginning of 2008 the core team was five strong (four managers and one team support), supplemented by two secondees. The team currently (2008) has three core staff (two managers and one team support) and one secondee.

Methodology

The initial approach proposed for this work was to involve:

- Literature review of relevant policy documentation;
- Desk review of management information systems and other internal monitoring documents produced by the CQFW team;
- Consultations with stakeholders and the CQFW team;
- Online survey of employers, providers, learners and end-users.

This approach looked to research:

- The progress of the CQFW against the three year implementation plan;
- The perceptions of the CQFW in Wales and across the UK;
- The extent to which credit used in the provider network;
- Volumes of learning using CQFW;
- Achievement of making learning more flexible;
- Effectiveness of marketing;
- Effectiveness of Quality Assurance procedures;
- Compatibility with UK Credit Systems;
- What have been the expected and unexpected effects;
- Benefits, challenges and improvements;
- Beneficiaries perceptions of the framework.

To reflect the change in scope agreed at the Inception Meeting, the methodology for the evaluation was revised and is recorded in the project Inception Report (see Appendix 5). The revised methodology focused on gathering information from a wide range of stakeholder interviews and attendance at a number of conferences rather than detailed consultations and surveys of providers, learners and employers.

It was agreed at the Inception Meeting to evidence and analyse relevant policy material, project documentation and consultation responses to prepare a baseline of the CQFW as it stands amid other, similar development work in other UK countries. Specifically, the evaluation has involved:

- A literature review of relevant policy documentation and CQFW documentation;

- Consultation with key stakeholders, particularly focusing on the members of the Credit Common Accord Forum (CCAF);

- A fact-finding visit to Scotland to understand the work of the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF).

This approach aimed to evaluate the CQFW in its strategic context so that an assessment could be made regarding where Government policy has affected the implementation of the Framework and how it may affect the future planning and development of the CQFW.

An evaluation framework was developed to guide the evaluation. Key actions from the implementation plan were mapped against the stated objectives for the evaluation. These were then used to develop topic guides for use in the consultations and to assess the baseline impact and awareness of the CQFW.

Table 1: Evaluation Framework

	Key Action - Implementation Plan	**Evaluation Objective**	**Measure**
Input			Awarding Body and CQFW time and expertise
			Available funding
			Other stakeholders' expertise & funding
Process	Marketing Plan (KA4)	Explore effectiveness in meeting market demands	Awareness Raising
	Higher Education (KA3), NPFS (KA5)	Evaluate issues reported by Awarding Bodies to better align their own Quality Assurance processes with CQFW	Promoting Integration

	Quality Assurance (KA7)	Evaluate issues reported by Awarding Bodies to better align their own Quality Assurance processes with CQFW	Developing Support mechanisms
	Quality Assurance (KA7)	Identify any current problems experienced in credit assigning	Monitoring and Management
	Quality Assurance (KA7)	Evaluate effectiveness of current Quality Assurance systems used by CQFW	Intrinsic Audit and Assessment factors
	National Funding System (KA5) Curriculum development (KA6) ESF Support (KA8)	Identify additional processes needed or issues associated with credit recognition	Research and Evaluation
Output	ESF (KA 8) Curriculum Development (KA 6) National Funding System (KA5)	Examples of best practice.	Increased awareness, understanding of and buy-in to CQFW
		Data on volumes and levels	
	Quality Assurance (KA7)	Examination of other credit systems in UK	Improved information to enable better management
		Effectiveness in meeting demands of learners and	

		employers	
	ESF (KA8) Curriculum development (KA6)	Potential inherent in the emerging consultancy arm of CQFW	Skilled and qualified support staff to advise on credit and curriculum development
Outcome	Higher Education (KA3)	Analysis of political issues and challenges	CQFW developed and aligned with other credit frameworks
	Curriculum Development (KA6)	Use of credit in provider network	Credit based systems better embedded into mainstream provision
	ESF activity (KA8)	Changes undertaken by Awarding Bodies in Quality Assurance infrastructure	Improvement in learning provider and AB performance
		Evaluate ESF work and agreements reached to date	See separate Report
Impact	Develop and launch Implementation plan (KA1) CCAF (KA2)	Determining effectiveness of CQFW in widening participation in non formal and informal learning	Key Actions of Implementation plan delivered, in line with activities set.
	ESF (KA 8)	Evaluate current awareness, effectiveness, impact and value for money	

Abbreviations: KA = Key Action; CCAF = Credit Common Accord Forum

It should be noted that of the 57 individuals within Wales that we were asked to consult, we were only able to secure consultations with 19. There was particular difficulty in securing interviews with stakeholders (rather than CCAF members), which may be reflective of the level of importance placed on the development of the CQFW by these individuals.

This is in stark contrast to the situation in Scotland where we were requested to consult with nine individuals/organisations and secured interviews with five people during our two-day trip to Glasgow.

Table 2: Summary of Interviews Conducted

	Consultees contacted with request for interview	Number of consultations conducted	Success Rate
Stakeholders (Welsh Assembly Government, HEFCW, QAA, Estyn, SSC)	28	2	7%
CCAF Members	29	17	59%
Scottish Stakeholders	9	5	44%

Policy Context

Below is a brief literature review of key Welsh Assembly documents which have impacted on the development of the CQFW.

Learning Country

The Paving Document consults on a number of key policy directions and also on legislative proposals to give effect to them.

The goal is for Wales to have one of the best education and lifelong learning systems in the world. In all, the promotion of lifelong learning is a cardinal priority for the Assembly, and for Wales.

The document clearly states the Welsh Assembly Government intention to:

> *"…introduce progressive measures to promote greater access to lifelong learning post-16, notably through further education including a **credit based qualification and transfer framework** and new measures of financial support to students, apprentices, and trainees"[8] (emphasis added)*

The document states that the Welsh Assembly Government intends to work with ACCAC and ELWa and other partners to introduce a fully credit-based qualification and transfer framework. The document recognises that Wales has led the way in terms of credit framework development and outlines the benefits of the Framework:

> *"Those who hesitate to embark on learning for fear of failure at the end of a long investment of time and effort will get the assurance they need by banking credits as they go along. Those who want choice and flexibility will find that credits are more closely allied to modern lifestyles and more learner focused."[9]*

The Document also sets out that the CQFW should be used in schools,[10] and outlines the work that has been done to make the qualification framework more flexible for learners[11]. Accreditation

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[8] Welsh Assembly Government (2001) The Learning Country – A Paving Document. A Comprehensive Education and Lifelong Learning Programme to 2010 in Wales. Pg 13

[9] Ibid Pg 53

[10] Ibid page 32

[11] Ibid page 33

of informal learning and voluntary sector activity is also mentioned.[12]

The document sets a number of targets, which include widening participation – increasing the number of participants in post-16 education and training to 12,000 annually from 2004 – 2010.

Learning Country - Learning Pathways 14 – 19

This consultation document issued in 2002 looked to consult on the Welsh Assembly Government proposals for the future shape of 14 – 19 learning provision in Wales. The proposals aspire to widen choice and opportunity through local networks. They identify four distinctive routes providing access for all young people to appropriate learning past the age of 16 and incorporate the Welsh Baccalaureate as an overarching award. They put forward the concept of a continuum of learning for all young people from 14-19 and look to create a framework for individual Learning Pathways which will ensure exciting and extended experiences and opportunities for all young people whilst allowing a tailored, flexible curriculum for each of them.

The document sets the target that by 2015, 95% of young people will be ready for high skill employment or qualified for higher education

The consultation documents sets out four pathways. 'Springboard' represents either foundation (level 1 - equivalent to GCSE D-G) or intermediate (level 2 - equivalent to GCSE A*-C) qualifications by the time learners are 16 (though some will achieve these qualifications earlier). Once learners achieve the Springboard level they are expected to proceed to one of the three advanced learning routes. Learners are expected to continue into the advanced routes because the springboard qualifications are unlikely to contain a strong work-based element at NVQ level 2 and so will not be an adequate preparation for high skill employment. Neither will the intermediate qualification gained by age of 16 qualify them for higher education.

The three advanced learning routes are:

- **Combined Apprenticeship** - a new route providing the opportunity for study at level 3 in a school or a college with accredited extended work placement

- **Modern Apprenticeship** leading to work-based level 3 qualification

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[12] Welsh Assembly Government (2001) The Learning Country – A Paving Document. A Comprehensive Education and Lifelong Learning Programme to 2010 in Wales. page 53

- **General Apprenticeship** leading to school or college based level 3 qualification

The Welsh Baccalaureate is proposed to be an appropriate overarching award to recognise these routes.

The Assembly propose to encourage greater use of existing accreditation schemes for all young people, recognising their achievement in all aspects of their learning including work experience and community and voluntary activity. The Welsh Assembly proposes to use the CQFW for young people to accumulate credits from a wide range of learning opportunities. The document states that they would expect young people to be accumulating credits from the age of 14 onwards.

Learning Pathways 14 -19 Guidance (2004)

Following the Consultation on Learning Pathways 14 – 19, a guidance document was issued to provide details about how Learning Pathways 14-19 will work in practice to benefit young people, the economy and communities in Wales.

Learning Pathways consist of a blend of six key elements which, in combination, will ensure that, over time, all learners receive the appropriate balance of learning experiences that best meet their needs. The key elements also enable learners to receive the support and guidance they need to realise their potential. The six key elements are:

- individual Learning Pathways to meet the needs of each learner;
- wider choice and flexibility of programmes and ways of learning;
- a Learning Core which runs from 14 through to 19 wherever young people are learning;
- Learning Coach support;
- access to personal support; and
- impartial careers advice and guidance.

The document sets out the actions to put in place the key elements of learning pathways. It highlights the need to learn from the lessons of CQFW along with other learning projects (e.g. Welsh Baccalaureate, review of Key Stage 4 etc)

Throughout the document the achievement of approved qualifications and credits are mentioned for both formal and non-formal learning.

Learning Country - Vision into Action

The Learning Country – Vision into Action, is a successor document to The Learning Country. Whilst the vision remains, the Vision into Action document reaffirms and updates it. This document sets out, in a new way, the future plans so that they are transparent and show a clear sense of purpose. The overall aim is to ensure the best possible environment to encourage learning at all stages in people's lives.

14-19 Learning Pathways and Beyond

"The Learning Country vision: We want to transform provision for 14 to 19 year olds, so that within an overall curriculum entitlement, artificial barriers are broken down to meet the demands of learning in a new century."[13]

In meeting this vision, the Welsh Assembly are already introducing new opportunities for 14-19 year olds through the Learning Pathways programme, which provides them with enhanced choice and flexibility, including vocational offers for all abilities and participation in a wide variety of experiences, with accreditation of learning wherever possible

The objective for meeting this vision is to *"provide engaging, stimulating, and flexible learning programmes and pathways"*[14] and the document states that they will:

"Use the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales as a tool to ensure that learning achievement is recognised in 'bite sized' chunks where appropriate"[15]

Beyond Compulsory Education: Skills, Further Education and Lifelong Learning

The vision stated in the Learning Country for Lifelong Learning was to:

"Strengthen the contribution of education and training to economic development. We want learning to be an every day part of working, and non-working life, in which the interests of learners come first."[16]

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[13] Welsh Assembly Government (2006) The Learning Country – Vision into Action. Page 13

[14] Ibid Page 15

[15] ibid Page 15

[16] Ibid Page 20

The implementation of the CQFW is stated as an action that is already in progress.[17]

An objective of the vision for lifelong learning is to *"improve skills and add value to the Welsh economy"*[18] and the document states that in order to achieve this they will

- *"Enable learning at all levels to be acquired in 'bite-sized' episodes and accredited towards whole qualifications by continuing to implement the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW) and*

- *Work with partners to establish effective mechanisms for the accreditation of prior learning"*[19]

A second objective for meeting the lifelong learning vision is to *"Improve the quality of post -16 learning"*[20]. In order to meet this objective the Welsh Assembly Government has committed to fully implementing the National Planning and Funding System for post-16 provision, using information from Future Skills Wales surveys and demand intelligence from the Sector Skills Councils and others to steer future funding decisions. The National Planning and Funding System will work alongside the CQFW - credit will become the basis for funding across all sectors of post-16 provision

The Future of Higher Education

The Welsh Assembly wants to *"modernise the collaborative efforts of higher education in Wales, to widen access significantly; improve income generation; lift research activity; and exploit knowledge transfer to the benefit of the economy in Wales."*[21] The CQFW is already contributing to this objective through higher education institutions in Wales taking account of credit developments and looking to ensure that learners on full-time programmes, part-time and access provision can achieve credits at the appropriate level.

An objective to meeting this vision is to promote reconfiguration and collaboration within the Higher Education sector to improve quality and strengthen research. The CQFW is named as an action to achieve this objective.[22]

Quality Education Services and Equal Opportunity for Children, Young People and Adults

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[17] Welsh Assembly Government (2006) The Learning Country – Vision into Action. Page 22

[18] Ibid Page 22

[19] Ibid Page 23

[20] Ibid Page 23

[21] Ibid Page 25

[22] Ibid page 26

The vision is for Wales to be a learning country, where high quality, lifelong learning provides the skills people need to prosper in the new economy, liberates talent, extends opportunities and empowers communities. In order to promote the equality of opportunity for all learners the Welsh Assembly is looking to

> *"Implement the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales to enable all learners to climb the learning ladder and to support the development of an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential"[23]*

Learning Pathways 14 – 19 Guidance 2 (2006)

The second edition of the Learning Pathways guidance was published in 2006 and it enhances and extends the foundation based on the experience and expertise of all sectors in Wales set out in the first edition (July 2004).

The document states

> *"CFQW can underpin Learning Pathways to recognise and value a wide range of learning that young people can achieve through formal, non-formal and informal activity, including work-related learning, participation in voluntary and community activity, cultural, sporting and personal developments."[24]*

Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills (Leitch Review)

In 2004, Lord Leitch was asked by the Government to consider what the UK's long-term ambition should be for developing skills in order to maximise economic prosperity, productivity and to improve social justice. The Review was published in 2006.

The Review recommends that the UK commit to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020, benchmarked against the upper quartile of the OECD. This means doubling attainment at most levels. Objectives for 2020 include:

- 95% of adults to achieve the basic skills of functional literacy and numeracy, an increase from levels of 85% literacy and 79% numeracy in 2005;

- exceeding 90% of adults qualified to at least Level 2, an increase from 69% in 2005. A commitment to go further and achieve 95% as soon as possible;

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[23] Welsh Assembly Government (2006) The Learning Country – Vision into Action Ibid Page 31

[24] Welsh Assembly Government (2006) Learning Pathways 14 – 19 Guidance 2 Annex K

- shifting the balance of intermediate skills from Level 2 to Level 3. Improving the esteem, quantity and quality of intermediate skills. This means 1.9 million additional Level 3 attainments over the period and boosting the number of Apprentices to 500,000 a year;

- exceeding 40% of adults qualified to Level 4 and above, up from 29% in 2005, with a commitment to continue progression.

The following principles underpin the delivery of the targets set:

- shared responsibility. Employers, individuals and the Government must increase action and investment. Employers and individuals should contribute most where they derive the greatest private returns. Government investment must focus on market failures, ensuring a basic platform of skills for all, targeting help where it is needed most;

- focus on economically valuable skills. Skill developments must provide real returns for individuals, employers and society. Wherever possible, skills should be portable to deliver mobility in the labour market for individuals and employers;

- demand-led skills. The skills system must meet the needs of individuals and employers. Vocational skills must be demand-led rather than centrally planned;

- adapt and respond. No one can accurately predict future demand for particular skill types. The framework must adapt and respond to future market needs; and

- build on existing structures. Don't always chop and change. Instead, improve performance of current structures through simplification and rationalisation, stronger performance management and clearer remits. Continuity is important.

Of the most relevance to the CQFW are the demand-led vocational qualifications. The Review recommends that that all publicly funded learning post-19 should be towards qualifications approved by employer-led SSCs, so that qualifications better reflect economically valuable skills.

The Review highlights the work that is being carried out in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to establish a rationalised, unit and credit based set of arrangements, based on employer and labour market needs.

Promise and Performance (Webb Review)

Promise and Performance is the Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales[25] in the context of the *Learning Country: Vision into Action*. The Review was carried out by Sir Adrian Webb, Sheila Drury and Gary Griffiths. Gary Griffiths sits on the SEMTA advisory group for the CQFW.

The need for a thorough policy review of the mission and purpose of the further education sector in Wales was identified in *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*. The review covers all education and learning post -14.

The CQFW is identified in the report as a *"distinctive policy [that] has been driven forward[26]"*.

The goal for Wales set out in the Review is to achieve five outcomes. One of these is for all learners to leave compulsory education with *meaningful* qualifications or accredited skills[27]

The Review identifies the need for the expansion of vocational provision and experiential learning so that students can gain real-life work skills. The Review believes that Wales is well placed to develop a learning system that includes academic and vocational elements. The report identifies the Welsh Baccalaureate as a suitable 'vehicle' for such a system and the CQFW as a "*suitably flexible mechanism*"[28]

Vocational Qualifications suffer for cultural reasons as individuals assume that a vocational education is for the less academically able. The Review suggests that along with ensuring that vocational routes lead to higher level qualifications and publicising the range of existing opportunities for progression, the Welsh Assembly should offer the full range of learning within a single qualifications framework. They state that

> *"In Wales we are uniquely placed to develop this: the Welsh Baccalaureate, suitably enhanced, is an ideal vehicle (supported by the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales)"[29]*

Issues were also highlighted with respect to learning in a post-19 environment. The Leitch Review recommended that all publicly

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[25] Webb Review (2007) Promise and Performance: Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action

[26] Ibid page 4

[27] Ibid page 6

[28] Ibid page 11

[29] Ibid page 27

funded learning post-19 should be towards qualifications approved by employer-led SSCs. This principle was endorsed by the Webb Review. In Wales this will be delivered through a combination of SSCs and the Wales Employment and Skills Board.

Employers reported to the Review their concerns relating to qualifications. Employers running apprenticeship programmes, and NVQs in particular, expressed concern that frameworks were unwieldy and generic, giving little opportunity for customisation for specialised work. They also expressed great frustration with the time taken to develop or modify awards so as to address changing business needs. The Review recommended that employers should be enabled to customise a proportion (say up to 20%) of a National Vocational Qualification.

The Review highlights that the issue of accrediting employers and Further Education Institutions is out to consultation in England. They believed that any process of consultation in Wales should lead to the development of highly flexible, meaningful qualifications attainable through the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL) and employer based learning. They also recommend that institutions should be encouraged to meet demand for such qualifications by being fully funded for the transitional costs of APEL.

The Webb Review welcomed the continuing development of the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales (CQFW), but also raised the following issues

> *"… recognise that credit frameworks often seem to offer more than they deliver. They are not widely used as a means of enabling learner mobility and there are tensions between the need for flexibility and the need to concentrate public funds on meaningful learning and qualifications. However, the CQFW could be used to promote bite sized learning for employers and validation of employer-led learning, while enabling employees to accumulate credit towards recognised qualifications. This would be especially valuable to learners who are forced or choose to be mobile throughout their adult lives, such as the armed forces, construction workers, travellers and the prison population."[30]*

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[30] Webb Review (2007) Promise and Performance page 53

Skills That Work for Wales

Skills That Work for Wales[31] is a consultation document for the Skills and Employment strategy. The document consults on a strategy to raise skills levels and increase the economic activity rate in Wales. The strategy will supersede the Skills and Employment Action Plan 2005 and provides both a response to the Leitch Review of Skills in the UK and a preliminary response to the Webb Review.

This strategy describes Wales' ambition for a highly-educated, highly-skilled and high-employment Wales. It builds on *The Learning Country: Vision into Action*; *Wales: A Vibrant Economy*, the *Skills and Employment Action Plan* of 2005, and *Words Talk – Numbers Count*, the Basic Skills Strategy (2005).

The document highlights that unless Wales improves it workforce, leadership and management skills, Welsh businesses will gradually find it more difficult to compete. Wales' economic growth will diminish. The low skilled will be progressively marginalised in the labour market and our communities will become increasingly unequal. Wales, and the UK as a whole, cannot afford to be satisfied with the *status quo.*

The Assembly Government then go on to committing to achieve full employment in Wales through radical improvements in the national skills base.

The document includes a specific section on qualification reform and credit where it documents the Welsh Assembly Government involvement in the UK Vocational Qualification Reform Programme, and it states that

> *"All future vocational qualifications used across England, Wales and Northern Ireland will have credit as an integral element, forming a part of the wider Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)."[32]*

The report goes on to say

> *"When the CQFW is fully implemented, the opportunity will exist for learners in Wales to have a unified online record of all their learning and qualifications. They would be able to use this*

[31] Welsh Assembly Government (2008) Skills that Work for Wales – A Skills and Employment Strategy – Consultation Document

[32] Welsh Assembly Government (2008) Skills that Work for Wales – A Skills and Employment Strategy – Consultation Document Page 13

record to track their progress and share their achievements with employers and learning providers."[33]

Summary

The CQFW is clearly high on the strategic agenda within Wales with it appearing as a key policy development or mechanism in many of the main documents driving forward change within the learning arena in Wales.

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[33] Ibid page 14

Understanding and Awareness of the CQFW

There was a large range of understanding and awareness of the CQFW amongst consultees

As part of this evaluation a wide range of organisations and agencies were interviewed, which included senior Welsh Assembly Government officials, Sector Skills Councils managers, Employers, Awarding Bodies and voluntary organisations[34]. There was a big difference in the levels of understanding of the CQFW amongst those interviewed. Whilst many of the stakeholders consulted were senior in their sectors, divisions and organisations, their fundamental understanding of credit differed greatly. Some had a very good understanding of credit and the development of the framework whilst others felt they were not close enough to the policy and practices to be able to comment.

Across this awareness spectrum the different shades of understanding and opinion can be attributed to exposure to credit in the Open College Network (OCN), Higher Education, the ESF Capacity Building project and possibly other frameworks in the UK and Europe. The development work on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) has raised the profile of the concepts of credit and credit frameworks across the UK as a whole.

The development of the CQFW has increased in pace over the last eight years and in this period has raised its profile somewhat within the learning sector within Wales. Some of this can be attributed to the expansion of the CCAF to include more stakeholders at strategic levels, and also from capacity building projects supported by ESF funding. Direct awareness raising and marketing events and conferences have raised the profile somewhat. However, awareness of the CQFW tends to be limited to within Wales; outside Wales there is little knowledge and a low awareness of the CQFW.

Stakeholders

It should be noted that only two stakeholders were consulted from the Welsh Assembly Government for this evaluation despite repeated requests for consultation to the other 26 individuals named by the CQFW team. Consequently the comments made below may not be fully reflective of the stakeholder group.

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[34] See Appendix 6 for the range of Stakeholders interviewed

There is a perception that the CQFW is a separate piece of work to activities in the UK wide qualifications forum, with a belief that work in Wales is not necessarily seen as valid by those in the wider (UK) learning and qualifications sector.

Stakeholders recognise the strengths of the CQFW and its alignment with key policy and employer requirements for work-based learning and lifelong learning. The Framework is seen as:

> *'Good for flexibility and accumulation of credit over time and then transfer across providers and learning agencies. It seems a very practical and desirable model' (Welsh Assembly Government)*

Awareness of the CQFW was perceived to be quite low in the Welsh Assembly Government. There was a recognition that it should be better known about, but in reality, unless the individual is directly involved in the Framework the CQFW is low on priorities. An awarding body also observed that outside of the CQFW team the CQFW '*is not very prominent, it is not well known' (Awarding Body).*

There was also the view that outside of Wales there is little knowledge and low awareness of the CQFW. Credit in general is getting a higher profile because of the work on the QCF, but this is very 'English centric'. One consultee commented:

> *'England sees CQFW as a 'local Welsh issue' and they don't rate it as highly important' (Awarding Body)*

Awarding Bodies

CQFW looked to engage with awarding bodies early on in the development of the Framework so that they would be able to input to and influence the structure and processes of the Framework. ESF funds were secured in 2004 for awarding bodies to undertake capacity building projects so that they could build credit knowledge and experience within their organisations.

All the awarding bodies consulted responded very positively about the CQFW with some describing it as a *"very exciting work in progress"*. The level of engagement with the CQFW varies somewhat between awarding bodies, with some more heavily engaged than others. This may be a reflection of the importance of the Welsh market to their overall business.

Awarding Bodies were generally supportive of the CQFW and liked the Framework as it is seen to be more inclusive than other models as it included learning outside of regulated qualifications.

The level of awareness of the CQFW was reported to vary considerably within awarding bodies. Some organisations had taken steps to disseminate information and knowledge to all

relevant staff within the organisation, whilst in other organisations knowledge of the CQFW was limited to the individuals who were directly involved in the ESF Capacity Building project or who attend CQFW events. In some organisations this is only one individual.

Through the evaluation there was a perception gained by the evaluators that the level of commitment and resources to the CQFW has diminished in awarding bodies since the end of the capacity building projects. It became clear that the main focus of attention for awarding bodies is the development of the QCF and how this will impact on their business.

The main area of concern for awarding bodies was the way the CQFW will interact with the QCF. There is a great deal of confusion over the two frameworks with many people not understanding that the NQF/QCF will sit within the CQFW. Some awarding bodies have the perception (and concern) that they will have to alter their qualifications to meet the requirements of the differing frameworks and therefore have to create slightly different versions of the same qualification for each Framework. Consultees felt that this would inevitably cause confusion for learners, providers and employers, and thus problems for transfer across borders, but would also cause concern for the larger awarding bodies who would have hundreds of qualifications to manipulate.

Some awarding bodies reported difficulties with respect to some of the technical aspects of credit frameworks functionality, particularly in terms of terminology that is used for sizing and levelling of units and also the clarity of the quality assurance processes.

Awarding bodies commented that they find it difficult to put units together in order to adhere to the CQFW. With one commenting that *'the essence of assigning a value to learning is difficult' (Awarding Body).* An awarding body also raised the question over what happens when the length of a unit is less than 10 learning hours? As a credit cannot be divided down (into half a credit for example) they feel the system then breaks down.

One awarding body expressed concern over not really knowing *'what qualifications and units have to look like in order to be accepted on to the CQFW'.* They commented

> *'If I, as an informed awarding body, find the CQFW confusing, how will people who have had no involvement find it?' (Awarding Body)*

There was a view that the time factor has encouraged some confusion on the simplicity of credit as a currency and allowed the problems of technical aspects to cloud wider debates of raising awareness and marketing credit. Much of this technicality needs to

be worked on, but perhaps not in a wider forum. It is for awarding bodies and other frameworks to arrive at agreements.

For other awarding bodies there is some concern that they are not clear on what credit is meant to do. One awarding body consultee stated:

> *'the longer I have been involved in CQFW the less clear I am about its purpose' (Awarding Body)*

There are some views that credit will solve all the problems within the learning sector – i.e. it will encourage the engagement of disengaged/disadvantaged learners; it will reduce the divide between academic and vocational qualifications; it will provide value to informal and non-formal learning, and that it will quality assure learning. One consultee commented:

> '*This seems to load a lot on to a qualification framework. Can the framework bear all this weight and expectation?'(Awarding Body)*

There is also confusion amongst awarding bodies over how credits will fit together to make up qualifications

> *'A learner has 50 credits – but the question is 50 credits towards what? There is a need to make the link between credit and qualifications' (Awarding Body)*

Another area of concern was that by assigning a credit to a unit, an amount of time needed to complete the unit is implied. There is a concern that learners may not have enough time set aside or not enough time physically available to complete the unit.

A number of awarding bodies expressed apprehension over the development of credit frameworks in both England and Wales. They feel that whilst there is clearly a demand for recognised 'bite-sized learning' they are not clear that learners are demanding credit. They argue that if learners wanted a credit system there would be pressure placed on awarding bodies to implement such a system:

> *'I am anxious about the credit system. If you look at it in a supply and demand context – if there was a demand for credit systems from learners then it would kick on the whole project. Awarding bodies would be forced to develop a credit system' (Awarding Body)*

There was also a view from awarding bodies that credit is not necessary to achieve the aims of The Learning Country, Learning Pathways etc. They believe that a Framework which allows a wider selection of assessment methods would be more beneficial in achieving the aims and aspirations of these policies.

'Credit is not the magic bullet… [but] it clearly has a benefit for unitisation and bite-sized learning. It is one technique amongst many for achieving the aims and objectives of these kinds of policies. Units need to be recognised and funded. Credit doesn't interfere with things but it doesn't really move things forward either'. (Awarding Body)

Awarding bodies feel that if the CQFW can create a system that captures and recognises all forms of learning and has robust quality assurance processes then it the investment in it (both financial and in terms of their time) has been worth it. However, they do identify issues around non-formal learning and the effort that will be required to assign outcomes. They question whether employers will see the benefit of evaluating their training and assigning credit to it.

Further and Higher Education

The concept of credit and 'bite sized learning' has its origin in Further Education. In 1992 the Further Education Unit (FEU), published '*A basis for credit?'* which proposed that the NQF should be fully unitised and credit based. FEU had worked with colleges and other key providers to develop an agreed specification that became known in Further Education as the credit framework.

The approach was subsequently developed in a series of publications including '*A framework for credit'* (FEU/FEDA1995). This refined and extended the proposal, and provided a toolkit for credit-based developments in institutions and other organisations.

Over the last decade the credit and unitisation framework has been widely adopted and implemented, and has led to significant developments including the unitised credit-based approach of Open College Networks across the UK and within most Higher Education provision.

The Higher Education system allocates credit points to attendance and achievement cycles (e.g. year one undergraduate 120 credits). There is no obligation for HEIs to use credit although all HEIs are already committed to a credit-based unit system.[35]

It is perceived by consultees that generally there is a high awareness of the concept of credit amongst both Higher Education and Further Education Institutions particularly as a result of the Higher Education Credit Initiative Wales and the use of credit in NVQ and OCN qualifications. However, there is a feeling that there

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[35] Credit Works (2005) Perspectives on Current EU Initiatives Affecting Credit and their implications for UK Awarding Bodies.

may be more variation in the awareness or understanding of the CQFW as a framework and its requirements.

Higher Education highlights some issues with the concept of 'flexibility to enabling' through complexities in terms of alignment between institutions (e.g. the transition from Further Education to Higher Education in 2+2 degrees) and in situations of some professional courses where National Occupational Standards are accredited alongside modular academic units.

Further Education is fairly aware of the CQFW, although there are pockets of misunderstanding at certain levels within organisations. Commentators from awarding bodies suggested that schools are very poorly informed about credit, which may have consequences for the 14-19 Learning Pathway work; similarly, youth services, related agencies and the Voluntary sector appear to have limited awareness.

Those organisations that are involved with the Welsh Baccalaureate are more comfortable with the concept and application of credit.

Employers

Employers have very limited (if any) knowledge or understanding of the CQFW

There was a perception amongst consultees that employers have very limited (if any) knowledge or understanding of the CQFW. Although some consultees felt that employers are likely to support the concept of CQFW as it closely links into employers requests for greater flexibility in learning and bite-sized learning. One consultee highlighted the need to refrain from any large scale efforts of promoting the CQFW to employers until the Framework is complete:

> *'We need to hold off employers until the Framework is complete. They are tired of the changing education policy; they just want a period of stability. Credit Frameworks have limited interest for them - they just want to see the results.' (Awarding Body)*

There are some pockets of awareness and understanding of the CQFW within some sectors, for example the Health sector and also the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing sector; this awareness is predominantly due the involvement of sector organisations[36] in the ESF capacity building project and internal dissemination that has occurred within these sectors. However, awareness is reported to be limited to the more 'forward thinking' companies.

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[36] SEMTA – Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies and the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH) were both involved in capacity building work for the CQFW

One SSC reported that the employers that were involved in the CQFW ESF Capacity Building project were very interested in the concept of credit, but that it does take quite a commitment to see through the involvement in credit. However, they also highlight a lost opportunity for raising awareness and engaging with employers:

'The [ESF Work] generated a lot of interest amongst employers which did not really get picked up. Nothing was really progressed. We did initiate some projects with employers ourselves by weaving credit into projects as part of their SSA' (Sector Skills Council)

Stakeholders representing employers in Wales suggested that marketing CQFW to employers and learners will be a challenge. Whilst most people understand what a qualification is, the concept of credit is new and not widely understood. Learners and employers will need to be shown how units can be aggregated to form recognized qualifications that they understand. The Health and Care sector has shown the concept to work on a small scale where National Occupational Standards (NOS) are attached to qualifications in the NQF. These qualifications represent the 'minimum standards' for practice in the sector.

NLIAH[37] report that their involvement in the CQFW has directly impacted on reforming Welsh Assembly and NHS Wales's policy for education and training.

Learners

Consultees were generally of the view that there is very low awareness of the CQFW by learners in Wales.

'Learners don't know what credit is or what it can do for them' (Awarding Body)

Many consultee's highlighted that there are currently a lot of operational issues for the CQFW to get through before they can start promoting the framework to learners.

There are some pockets of awareness which have primarily come about through the ESF capacity building project and its spin-offs, for example SEMTA has been working with Cardiff University and Coleg Sir Gar and Edexcel worked with St Justin's College in Newport to develop the BTEC First Diploma in Vocational Studies/BTEC First Certificate in Vocational Studies.

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[37] National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare

Conclusions

Credit and the development of a credit framework is a complex area. Generally amongst those involved in the learning sector there is a good understanding of the CQFW but even amongst these 'informed groups' there are pockets of mis-understanding and confusion.

Management and Delivery Arrangements

In the earlier section, Background to the CQFW, an outline of the management and delivery structures was given. The following section reports on the opinions of the various individuals consulted with respect to these delivery arrangements and also draws on the findings of the literature review where appropriate.

CQFW Team

As reported above, the current CQFW team comprises of three core individuals and one secondee. The team is made up of two managers and a team support and a secondment for the Education Sector in Wales.

Most of those who were able to comment found the CQFW team to be very effective and good at sharing information and developments. One consultee gave an example where:

'… we brought colleagues from England to meet the CQFW team. Where these people were confused about credit and how it works in England they found the CQFW team informative and helpful' (Sector Skills Council)

The team were also praised for the level of buy-in that they have achieved from awarding bodies and other key stakeholders. The team were noted to be flexible, informative and supportive to enquiries and follow through on business leads well.

There was a general feeling however that the CQFW team perhaps lacks capacity for the workload that is expected of it. Currently some awarding bodies were expressing slight frustration that there is nobody below the Head of the CQFW who is available to answer their 'day-to-day' questions about the framework and assigning credit.

Explorations are currently underway to investigate the possibility of establishing a Credit Consultancy Service (CCS) which would help to address this frustration.

If the CQFW team are expected to verify credit values assigned to units and qualifications and hence ensure the quality of the Framework, there is a high level of concern amongst consultees that the team currently lack the capacity to effectively manage this process.

There was an underlying view that the CQFW team has done as much as it could, given the resources that the Welsh Assembly has allocated it. Whilst the CQFW has been allocated funding from the Welsh Assembly and ESF there has not been sufficient central core resources (personnel) and support allocated to enable better outputs.

There was respondent agreement that for this task the team was and remains too small.

Relationship with the Welsh Assembly Government

As documented in the policy review section, the CQFW is specifically mentioned in many of the Welsh Assembly Government key documents, with the Webb Review (2007) citing the CQFW as *"a distinctive policy that has been driven forward"* however, there is a view that there is a 'policy vacuum' on the issue of credit – it appears in the key strategic documents but there is little evidence that credit concepts have visibly trickled down to the more operational levels of Government practice. This is highlighted through comments such as:

> *'Credit isn't mainstream. Despite all the talk about skills, vocational skills, vocational curriculum etc. all of the high politics is still linked to GCSEs and A' Levels', and until credit is seen as core it [CQFW] will always be the Cinderella'. (Awarding Body)*

Another consultee highlighted the inconsistencies between the aspirations of the Welsh Assembly Government for flexible learning, and the actual delivery of learning programmes:

> *'With Work Based Learning everything is built around frameworks – you have to pass everything on the Framework or you fail. There is no recognition that you have passed four of the five elements. This completely goes against the concept of CQFW and bite-sized learning. The Assembly needs to be more consistent in the types of learning that it supports' (CCAF Member)*

This evidence, combined with the observations of the size of the CQFW team, has resulted in some consultees feeling that the CQFW lacks support within the Assembly.

> *'I am sure that the team could do with more resources (as with most teams in the Assembly) but I think most importantly the team needs more senior support – either from a minister or from senior management within WAG, There is no clear direction from the top that is driving CQFW forward. I think that CQFW must have faced difficulties engaging with other teams within DCELLS because there is no senior figure telling the other teams that they must work with CQFW.' (CCAF Member)*

Another consultee commented:

'There is no strategic lead at the moment. No-one in CQFW is in a senior position, or senior enough position to push it forward. It needs a junior minister with full support from the head of department to really push for it and campaign hard' (CCAF Member)

Some stakeholders hold the opinion that this may be indicative of the Welsh Assembly Government not proactively supporting CQFW:

'I think that CQFW possibly lacks support within the Assembly, I see the CQFW being marginalised and almost left to their own devices. It is not a mainstream concept that is running through all of DCELLS activities.' (CCAF Member)

Some consultees believe that the Welsh Assembly Government sees CQFW as a side arm of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Learning Improvement (QCLI) group; one consultee commented that in reality the CQFW should be the overarching structure that sits over the QCLI Group.

One consultee expressed the opinion that *'unless credit is central everything that DCELLS wants to do, it will not get further than it has done' (Awarding Body).*

In contrast, within Scotland stakeholders felt that part of the strength of the framework is the political support that they have from their Cabinet Minister who has taken on the role of promoting the SCQF across all government departments within the Scottish Government and ensuring that SCQF is the 'golden thread' that runs through all learning.

'It allows stakeholders to work together and think about the common good. SCQF is the common denominator, it also acts as the tool which allows organisations to meet their own strategies and gets organisations working together' (SCQF Staff)

There were also some comments made with respect to the location of the CQFW team within the Welsh Assembly Government. As reported previously, the CQFW team initially sat within ELWa before being moved into the Qualifications, Curriculum and Learning Improvement group of DCELLS in the Welsh Assembly Government.

In 2005 a Stocktake Report was published for the CQFW; it highlighted that:

"There is a breadth of perception that CQFW resides within the wrong organisation in the shape of ELWa – against the backdrop of a general belief that it should be independent"[38]

This view came from the belief that ELWa was not designed to carry out curriculum reform. Rather, it was felt that CQFW should sit within ACCAC or within an awarding body, although it was also highlighted that:

"CQFW needs to be seen to be independent of all three [ELWa, HEFCW and ACCAC] partner bodies so it can service all three without any real or imagined bias"[39]

Whilst the CQFW team now sits within the Qualifications, Curriculum and Learning Improvement group (formally ACCAC) within DCELLS, comments were made with respect to the team's position within the Assembly Government.

'The CQFW sits within Government. It therefore (by implication) feels like it is being imposed on them by Government. People will have the perception that it is a government agenda' (SCQF Staff)

In contrast, the SCQF has been set up as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. This gives it a perceived (and real) independence from the five partner organisations that are developing the framework.

'It is good that [SCQF] is separate from the SQA it needs to have distinction…. If CQFW is hidden within a qualifications authority then something needs to be done to get it out in the open' (SCQF Partner)

Policy Reference Group

There were originally two groups established to support the development of the CQFW. These were the Policy Reference Group (PRG) and the Credit Common Accord Working Group (which later became the CCAF).

The PRG was originally set up to represent the interests of key organisations involved in training, education and workforce development throughout Wales. The group was to have a strategic role to provide support and guidance for the development and continuing maintenance of the CQFW.

However, since ELWa and ACCAC were merged into the Welsh Assembly Government (2006) the PRG has not met. It is

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[38] ELWa CQFW Stocktake Research (2005) Beaufort Research and Golley Slater

[39] ELWa CQFW Stocktake Research (2005) Beaufort Research and Golley Slater

understood that under the ELWa regime the CEO of ELWA, ACCAC and HEFCW were requested to meet biannually and report to the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. The collapse of this group since the move into the Welsh Assembly Government could be reflective of the lack of high level strategic involvement from the Welsh Assembly.

Instead, much of the membership of the CCAF now appears to be made up of organisations formally on the PRG. This has resulted in a perception that the CCAF, which is viewed more as a working group, becoming self-governing. There was a view that:

'Governance should be the realm of regulation/regulatory side of CQFW not sectors and employers' (CCAF Member)

There is a need to clarify the distinction between the governance of the CQFW and the operational side.

Credit Common Accord Forum

Following the production and agreement of the Credit Common Accord, the CCA working group was re-constituted to form the Credit Common Accord Forum. The Forum, in its revised Terms of Reference, describes itself as:

"…the principle "outward-facing" cross-sectoral committee of the CQFW. It is the policy forum through which to engage in dialogue and move forward the implementation of the CQFW through consensus and mutual understanding"[40]

The membership of the CCAF has recently been expanded from 10 members to 29. The original CCAF members were:

- ACCAC (2)
- ELWa (1)
- Awarding Bodies (6)
- Sector Skills Councils (1)

Dysg, LSDA, QCA, SQA, CCEA, LSC and Wales TUC were observers.

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[40] Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales Credit Common Accord Forum Draft Revised Terms of Reference – to be considered at the CCAF Meeting 06 December 2007

Membership now represents the following sectors:

	Number of Seats
Chair (and representative of chair's organisation)	2
Higher Education	3
Awarding Bodies	5
SSDA, Sector Skills Councils and Standard Setting Bodies	5
CQFW	6
Further Education and Work Based Learning	2
Learning Pathways 14 -19 and youth services	3
Careers, advice and guidance	1
Adult and community learning	1
Estyn (observers)	1

Currently it is felt that the CCAF has an appropriate and wide ranging membership. However there was a suggestion that representatives from Basic Skills Cymru ought to be included.

Given the role of the Wales TUC in work-based learning there would clearly be benefits in re-engaging this organisation with the CQFW in order to raise awareness of the Framework with employers.

Consultees expressed some dissatisfaction with the original CCAF and did not view it as an effective vehicle for taking the CQFW forward; however, following changes to the mandate of the Forum and expansion of the group membership, consultees have changed their opinion:

'Initially I was not tremendously impressed with the CCAF, but it has improved more recently. Things have improved because it is now larger in size and they have changed the mandate of the CCAF which has made a big improvement' (Sector Skills Council)

Some consultees did express a slight concern with respect to the role of the CCAF

'I think that the CCAF is a reasonably effective forum, but I am not entirely sure what happens as a result of the Forum and the decisions made there. I am not clear what power the individuals have in influencing activities in their own organisation or what

power the group has. I see it more of an operational group rather than a high-level strategic group.' (CCAF Member)

Another commented

'I am not sure what the CCAF is and what its role should be' (Welsh Assembly Government)

Strengths of the CQFW

During the consultation process individuals were asked to identify the key strengths or achievements of the CQFW. These are outlined below

Inclusivity

A number of consultees liked the inclusive nature of the CQFW when compared to other Frameworks. The CQFW is the only framework that looks to encompass all learning – no matter where it takes place. The SCQF and QCF have currently limited their Framework to regulated qualifications but both have expressed the intention of widening the Framework to incorporate non-formal and informal learning at some stage.

> *'The Welsh Framework is an inclusive Framework and it is a good idea. The English Framework is not inclusive, I would prefer it if England adopted the Welsh Framework' (Awarding Body)*

Partnership Working and Buy-In

Due to the education system in Wales there is no one national awarding body (such as the SQA in Scotland), consequently a variety of awarding bodies provide qualifications in Wales.

CQFW have worked hard to ensure buy-in to the framework from awarding bodies and other key partners at an early stage. This has inevitably meant that the framework has developed slowly, but has resulted in some significant achievements. Currently thirteen awarding bodies are 'recognised bodies' for the CQFW; these thirteen provide about 90% of the qualifications delivered in Wales.

A key success of CQFW has been getting awarding bodies, who traditionally view themselves as competitors, to work together on the Framework and learn from each other's experience.

One awarding body highlighted that the work they have been doing in the health and care sector for the CQFW has encouraged better working relationships with other awarding bodies and commented

> *'CQFW should be congratulated for getting awarding bodies together and working together.' (Awarding Body)*

Another commented

> *'The team must have been quite effective given the level of buy-in that they have achieved' (Awarding Body)*

Consultees in Scotland also commented on the level of buy-in to the Framework that CQFW has achieved

'A strength of the CQFW is that they have worked with awarding bodies and got them on board. They have a good working relationship with the awarding bodies as they have been included in the development of the framework and have opportunities to take part' (SCQF Partner)

CQFW Team

The CQFW team were highlighted by some consultees as a key strength of the Framework. In particular they were highlighted for keeping awarding bodies informed of the developments and requirements of the framework and how informative and helpful they are in explaining the CQFW and the concept of credit.

'I think the team are very effective and open' (Awarding Body)

Mutual Recognition

An in-principle agreement has been reached between awarding bodies on recognising each other's credit rating of units, modules and qualifications. Although further work is needed to detail the specific aspects of level, credit, learning outcomes and alignment criteria, it was impressed upon the evaluation team that arriving at such an agreement was in itself an achievement.

Higher Education

A great deal of work has been carried out with higher education institutions for credit. All HEI's have signed up to the credit reform, although one individual commented

'how [credit] gets manipulated and worked with at department, individual and admissions tutor level is another matter' (CCAF Member)

Within Higher Education it is believed that through using credit they are now able to meet the demands of learners for flexible learning so that students who drop out can 'collect' credit for the part of the year that they have completed.

Consultees in Scotland also highlighted the fact that Wales has done a:

'huge amount of work on credit for Higher Education, whilst in England there is disjunction over Higher Education and it is not included in their framework' (SCQF Partner)

Implementation of the CQFW

Introduction

As detailed above, following the Inception Meeting the scope of this evaluation changed to focus on feedback from consultations with stakeholders in order to provide a clearer view of the CQFW and indicate how best to sustain future growth and development. Consequently detailed questioning about the progress against the Implementation Plan was not carried out. However, some observations can be made regarding the progress of the implementation of the CQFW to date.

Timescales

As discussed above, development work on credit has been carried out in Wales for a number of years and work on the CQFW has been carried out since 2002. In general, consultees expressed some dissatisfaction with the speed of progress in terms of the development of the Framework. Whilst most respondents fully recognised that a key achievement of the CQFW was the level of buy-in that it has achieved from awarding bodies and other key organisations which has consequences for the speed of development, there is a feeling more could have been achieved given the length of time the Framework has been in development and the resources that it has had:

'They can justify the length of time it's been going given the level of buy-in they have achieved. However, the area they have been least successful in is in the amount of credit-rated stuff that there is given the time they have been doing this. At the last meeting they were talking about credit values for A levels and Key skills – quite basic stuff – I would have expected this to be done much earlier.' (Awarding Body)

It is interesting to note that concerns over the speed of progress were highlighted in the CQFW Stocktake report which was written in 2005. The report commented

"Conversely, the main weakness, which was identified by a sizeable number of stakeholders, lay in its perceived speed of progress. Whilst progress was felt by some to be slow and steady, more stakeholders voiced impatience at the slowness of the process and felt that it had become 'becalmed' over the past few years. The latter stressed the urgent need to put another

surge of development together and called for tangible activity within the next 6 months if CQFW's credibility with stakeholders were to be maintained."[41]

Information Sharing

CQFW disseminates information through the CCAF meetings, which are held three times a year, and the annual CQFW conference. There were mixed reviews from consultees on the information sharing that is currently carried out by the CQFW team.

Whilst there is praise for the standard of information sharing and collaboration amongst those closely involved in the development of the CQFW, there needs to be improvements to the information that is available for individuals outside the immediate implementation partners. One consultee commented:

'Not much sharing goes on outside of events, or is at least visible outside of conferences and CQFW events. There are more cost effective ways of sharing info i.e. the Dysg Bulletin that gets sent out weekly. Something like this could be invested in. No-one is discouraged from sharing, but there is little pro-activity around encouraging sharing.' (Awarding Body)

Another consultee echoed this feeling as they felt that the CQFW has failed somewhat in terms of making sure *everyone* is aware of what is going on. They believe that there is a risk that CQFW faces a backlash when it is implemented as there is a perception that it has been developed 'behind closed doors' and people may not fully understand the rationale, objectives and the way the framework has been developed. Currently, it is only those who are 'in the loop' that know what the recent developments on the Framework are.

It should be noted that comments regarding the level of external communication were noted in the Stocktake report undertaken in (2005)

"There's an issue of communication outside of the very immediate implementation partners and because it need to be taken forward by the wider sector, I don't think you can achieve that by the odd conference. It needs something more to keep that knowledge base moving."[42]

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[41] CQFW Stocktake Report December 2004 – January 2005 (May 2005) Beaufort Research and Golley Slater

[42] Ibid page 55

"I think the important thing is not so much the profile as communication. Keep people informed and up to speed as to where we are and how we are developing[43]"

European Social Fund

One of the actions highlighted in the Implementation Plan (2003) was to access European Social Funds in order to further develop the CQFW. In 2003 the CQFW team submitted two applications to the European Commission - one under Objective 1, Priority 4 Measure 3 and one under Objective 3, Priority 3 Measure 1. The aim of the ESF project was to support the capacity building of a credit framework with the main awarding bodies.

The ESF funding was used to develop the CQFW through building capacity with awarding bodies by enabling them to ascribe credit values to total qualifications and individual units.   In addition, the funding was used by awarding bodies to amend their internal systems to include credit values onto their student transcript and internal records.

A separate evaluation has been carried out on the ESF Capacity Building Project which goes into some detail on the work that has been carried out with the ESF monies. In general the evaluation found that there was mixed progress against objectives within the ESF Capacity Building Project. CQFW made good progress towards producing most of the outputs stated in the application form, although it must be noted that only one objective was scored as 'fully achieved'. Evidence was not seen to be able to confirm progress made with respect to credit transcripts for post-16 learning or the development of a single credit-unit database.

Research

A great deal of research has been carried out to support the development of the CQFW; these have been funded through the ESF monies and also CQFW's core funding.

Many of the consultees interviewed had carried out research for the CQFW, there were mixed views.

Those involved in the ESF Capacity building projects generally reported that the studies were:

'… well managed and that CQFW took the right approach to build capacity within the larger awarding bodies' (Awarding Body)

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[43] CQFW Stocktake Report December 2004 – January 2005 (May 2005) Beaufort Research and Golley Slater page 55

However, there were some concerns raised about use of public money

'A lot of money has gone into the capacity building projects, but it may not have been the best use of public money. They have spent a lot of money teaching people to do what we could have taught them from years of experience' (Awarding Body)

One consultee identified some barriers in terms of reporting

'Much was invested in terms of funding via CQFW and input from individual organisations carrying out the capacity building projects. However, awarding bodies and other groups were not encouraged to be critically evaluative. Any critical analysis was seen as a criticism of the CQFW team' (Awarding Body)

There was also some feeling that there had been limited impact or sustainability from the Capacity building work. Only a few awarding bodies are routinely assigning credit to qualifications and only two awards credit on learner certificates. Most awarding bodies are waiting for clarity over the credit position in England.

'… much of the ESF work has not been fruitful – most other awarding bodies are awaiting moves from the QCF' (Awarding Body)

This consultee also highlighted the 'sustainability' element of research

'The challenge remains of the 'projects' being sustainable in their implementation of credit based systems after CQFW funding has ceased' (Awarding Body)

Another consultee was involved in some wider research for the CQFW

'…we would be hesitant about being involved in future projects. They are time consuming for very little return at the moment' (Awarding Body)

Monitoring and Evaluation

Although objectives for the overall ESF Project were clearly stated in the ESF Application Form, these did not always translate onto the objectives for the individual projects with awarding bodies. The evaluation of the ESF Capacity Building Project observed that there was some quite significant variation in terms of the level of detail included in the requirements for each awarding body. Some of the contracts included quite specific requirements which listed actions and outputs (e.g. City and Guilds) whilst others appear rather more 'high level', giving overall aims with less prescription about the required activities and outputs from the project (Edexcel).

It is understood that objectives were deliberately flexible to give the awarding bodies room to develop capacity in credit around their existing practices and policies. However, the lack of clear requirements from CQFW resulted in many of the awarding bodies

- adding in new objectives;
- removing objectives/actions for work; or
- rewriting objectives.

This has made it somewhat difficult to evaluate many of the Capacity Building projects as it has not always been clear whether the amendments to the objectives have been made with the agreement of the CQFW team and whether the awarding body has achieved what it set out to do. It is understood through our consultations with the CQFW team that any variations to the original specification had to be documented and agreed with WEFO, however, it would be beneficial to have these variations also documented in the final report.

Some comments were received on monitoring and management by those consulted with for the evaluation. There was a perception that the team are perhaps not as open and transparent as they could be with the results of research and evaluation/monitoring reports. One stakeholder commented:

> *'There appears to be little internal evaluation happening, and there's an element of question around whether it is going to plan, within a planned strategy - if there is a clearly laid out one.' (Welsh Assembly Government)*

This comment, is to some extent linked to previous discussion regarding information sharing - although the CQFW has succeeded in getting good buy-in and partnership working with key stakeholders there is a perception amongst individuals outside of this group that the development of the CQFW is going on 'behind closed doors' with wider audiences not really knowing much about the framework and how it is being developed. Discussions with the CQFW team have illustrated that the ESF projects were subject to monthly monitoring reports and an ESF audit which revealed that the projects were being run in accordance with WEFO and EU funding requirements.

Improvements in the way in which information is shared across external partners should help improve the perception of the CQFW.

Use of Credit

Although thirteen awarding bodies have signed up to be recognised bodies on the CQFW, it is understood that only WAMITAB and WJEC are issuing credit values achieved on learner certificates. Other awarding bodies, whilst committed to the CQFW, were reticent to invest resources into using the CQFW whilst arrangements for the QCF are still in development.

The use of credit in the 'regulated pillar' of CQFW has effectively stalled as a result of the QCF development. While some awarding bodies have been submitting units to the CQFW, most have not, due to the development of the QCF

> *'Since the ESF project we have assigned credit to more qualifications, but this has been for the QCF not the CQFW. The QCF requires you to develop and submit qualifications in a certain format. They are more prescriptive. In order to get your qualifications approved and funded you need to have followed the QCF template. This is hugely expensive for awarding bodies. (Awarding Body)*

As there is no link between credit and funding in Wales there is no incentive for awarding bodies to assign and use credit in the CQFW.

> *'There is no incentive to use credit. As awarding bodies we don't get any more funding for doing credit. There is no real advantage to do it' (Awarding Body)*

Other awarding bodies highlight the lack of processes on how to submit units to the CQFW as a barrier to their use of credit:

> *'The practicalities are sometimes quite difficult to work with and it does appear somewhat haphazard and woolly to get units added into [CQFW], having said that [we] are totally committed to CQFW. We would love to badge and use [credit], but this is quite hard because of the lack of processes that seem to be apparent. It needs the following:*
>
> - *A structure of the process on how to submit units*
> - *Evidence the forward planning i.e. date setting for units to be submitted*
> - *Clear and visible management of the planning' (Awarding Body)*

Awarding bodies admitted that whilst they have not submitted more units to the CQFW, they have used their experience on the CQFW to support their work on the QCF.

Credit Frameworks Outside of Wales

The four UK countries, England, Scotland Ireland and Wales each have credit developments at different stages. Appendix 6 shows a visual representation of the comparisons across all countries. Below is a brief synopsis of each framework.

Qualifications and Credit Framework

In November 2005, ministers agreed the establishment of a Programme Board to oversee the reform of vocational qualifications which would bring together key strands of work across the UK.

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) development forms a key strand within the Vocational Qualification Reform Programme. The overall aim of this strand is to develop a jointly regulated credit and qualifications framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Over the last two years there has been agreement across the three regulators (QCA, DCELLS, CCEA) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively, to test and trial the mechanisms and processes needed to revise the current National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and provide advice and recommendations to ministers with a view to establishing and enabling a regulated credit and qualifications framework.

The QCF has similar aims to the CQFW in that it looks to provide a means by which credit can be gained by learners for their achievement. The QCF aims to provide learners and employers with flexibility and choice over their qualifications, provide flexible routes to gaining full qualifications, and enable qualifications to be achieved gradually.

The QCF has the following aims:

- ensure that a wider range of achievements can be recognised within a more inclusive qualifications framework
- establish a qualifications system that is more responsive to individual and employer needs
- establish a simpler qualifications framework that is easier for all users to understand

- reduce the burden of bureaucracy in the accreditation and assessment of qualifications[44].

QCF use five main principals to detail how credit should become an integral part of the design of qualifications and units, as well as ensuring the scope includes awarding credit for achievement across all fields (vocational/specialist, general/academic); at all levels of achievement from entry to higher levels and within and outside of the current scope of the NQF.

The following principles for the QCF provide a basis for assigning credit to qualifications and units within the NQF:

1. The credit framework for England will be based on the assignment of credit value and level to units.

2. The credit framework will provide a valid and reliable measure of achievement based on a shared approach to credit.

3. The credit framework for England will align with other frameworks.

4. Credit value and level will be assigned consistently and reliably to units across all NQF levels and key features will be applied consistently.

5. Credit will be awarded consistently and reliably as the basis for the mutual recognition of achievement to support progression.[45]

The QCF completed the testing and trialing processes in July 2008. The regulatory authorities invited organizations to submit proposals for projects to be part of the tests and trials. A working specification and prospectus was published to help organizations submitting proposals understand the process. Fifty projects are involved across the two phases of the project. The objectives of the tests and trials are:

- to develop and test an operational model of the framework with stakeholders;

- to evaluate whether a unit-based system underpinned by credit can support a range of qualifications and learning programmes across sectors, learning and training contexts and awarding bodies;

- to evaluate whether a fully functioning credit system can support and improve learner progression and achievement;

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[44] Evaluating the Qualifications and Credit Framework – Year 1 Report (September 2007) Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

[45] Principles for a credit framework for England (2004) QCA

- to evaluate whether potential benefits (including flexibility, inclusiveness, simplicity and reduced bureaucracy) can be delivered through the framework;

- to evaluate through the trials in England whether the development of the framework can contribute to the LSC's strategic priorities and targets for publicly funded qualifications e.g. contributing to adult Public Service Agreement targets such as offender learning provision and level 2 provision.

As the work on the QCF is part of the Vocational Qualification Reform programme, development is focusing on vocational qualifications that are included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). GCSEs, GCEs and the International Baccalaureate along with work-based learning, and informal and non-formal learning are currently considered 'out of scope' within the QCF, although discussions are ongoing to explore the potential about bringing these qualifications into the Framework.

Scotland – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was developed to meet the needs of Scotland's learners and was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. It was developed in partnership by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Universities Scotland, Quality Assurance Agency Scotland, Association of Scotland's Colleges and the Scottish Government and was launched in December 2001. Analogous with other UK credit frameworks it measures qualifications and learning programmes by level and credit. However, unlike other frameworks there are 12 levels within the Framework which indicate the complexity of learning, and credit points for volume of learning undertaken (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SQCF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of HEI	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12			Professional Development Awards ↑↓	Doctorates	
11				Masters / Post Graduate Diploma / Post Graduate Certificate	SVQ5
10				Honours Degrees / Graduate Diploma	
9				Ordinary Degree / Graduate Degree	SVQ4
8		Higher National Diploma (240)		Diploma of Higher Education	
7	Advanced Higher (32)	Higher National Certificate (96)		Certificate of Higher Education	SVQ 3
6	Higher (24)	National Certificates	National Progression Awards ↑↓		
5	Intermediate 2 (24) / Credit Standard Grade (24)	National Certificates (72)			SVQ2
4	Intermediate 1 (24) / General Standard Grade (24)	National Certificates (72)			SVQ1
3	Access 3 (18) / Foundation Standard Grade (24)	National Certificates (54)			
2	Access 2 (18)	National Certificates (54)			
1	Access 1				

Numbers in brackets indicate agreed credit values

Source: Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

The fundamental aims of the framework are to promote lifelong learning in Scotland by:

- *"helping people of all ages and circumstances to get access to appropriate education and training so they can meet their full potential;*

- *helping employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how qualifications relate to each other and to other forms of learning, and how different types of qualification can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce."[46]*

All of the main qualifications of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and higher education institutions are now in the Framework – this is approximately 5,500 full qualifications and nearly 9,000 individual units of learning. Work to include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) has just been completed where credit values have been assigned to 130 SVQs and over 2,000 units. From Summer 2007 credit values were recorded on learner certificates.

Development of the SCQF has, in some respects, been easier in Scotland due to the less complex nature of its qualifications system. Within Scotland, they have one statutory awarding body – the Scottish Qualifications Authority - which is responsible for developing and quality assuring all general qualifications in Scotland except for University qualifications. This has enabled the SCQF to start awarding credit to learners completing general qualifications.

In contrast, Wales has no national awarding body, and instead a number of awarding bodies deliver qualifications across both England and Wales. This has required more work on the part of CQFW to engage with the awarding bodies and get their support for the framework.

The SCQF is also looking to bring into the Framework a much wider range of informal and non-formal learning.

As part of the evaluation of CQFW, a comparative fact-finding visit to Scotland was undertaken to understand the SCQF and to determine whether there are any lessons that Wales can learn from it.

Following an evaluation of the SCQF there was recognition that although SCQF had achieved a lot, progress had been very slow and there was a feeling that it had not met its full potential. Therefore in 2006 the board decided to set up the SCQF as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and this gave

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[46] SCQF Website www.scqf.org,uk

the SCQF a perceived independence (see Figure 5) from any of the partner organisations.

The SCQF recently published a Strategic Plan and an Operational Plan for the period 2007 – 2011 which details how the SCQF will develop. They are also working with stakeholders on the SCQF Forum to develop a collaborative action plan where each stakeholder organisation commits to undertaking actions in order to move the framework forward. For example, learndirect Scotland and SCQF have agreed a set of five actions they have committed to do together. At the time of the visit learndirect were leading on creating a central database of courses and provision in Scotland which holds details of credit values. They already have a database of courses so they are looking to expand this to include the credit ratings for all courses.

However, co-operation from stakeholders was not always forthcoming. Previously the SCQF Managing Information Across Partners group had very slow progress:

'…there was a lot of talking about ideas but no one was prepared to step forward and start to take things forward. Organisations were unwilling to commit their own resources and say 'we'll do this'.' (SCQF Forum Member)

Within Scotland there is a feeling amongst those interviewed that part of the strength of the framework is the political support that they have from their Cabinet Minister who has taken on the role of promoting the SCQF across all government departments within the Scottish Government and ensuring that SCQF is the 'golden thread' that runs through all learning activities.

Consultees also commented on the new SCQF Chief Executive:

'[SCQF] was meandering a lot until [the Chief Executive] came along. She has only been in post for about 6 months but she is finally steering and driving the framework forward. There has been an increase in working with partners, understanding who is best placed to sort each bit out. There has been a realisation that we don't need to do everything ourselves, we should use the expertise of our partners to help us.' (SQCF Forum Member)

Figure 5: Schematic Illustration of the SCQF Structure
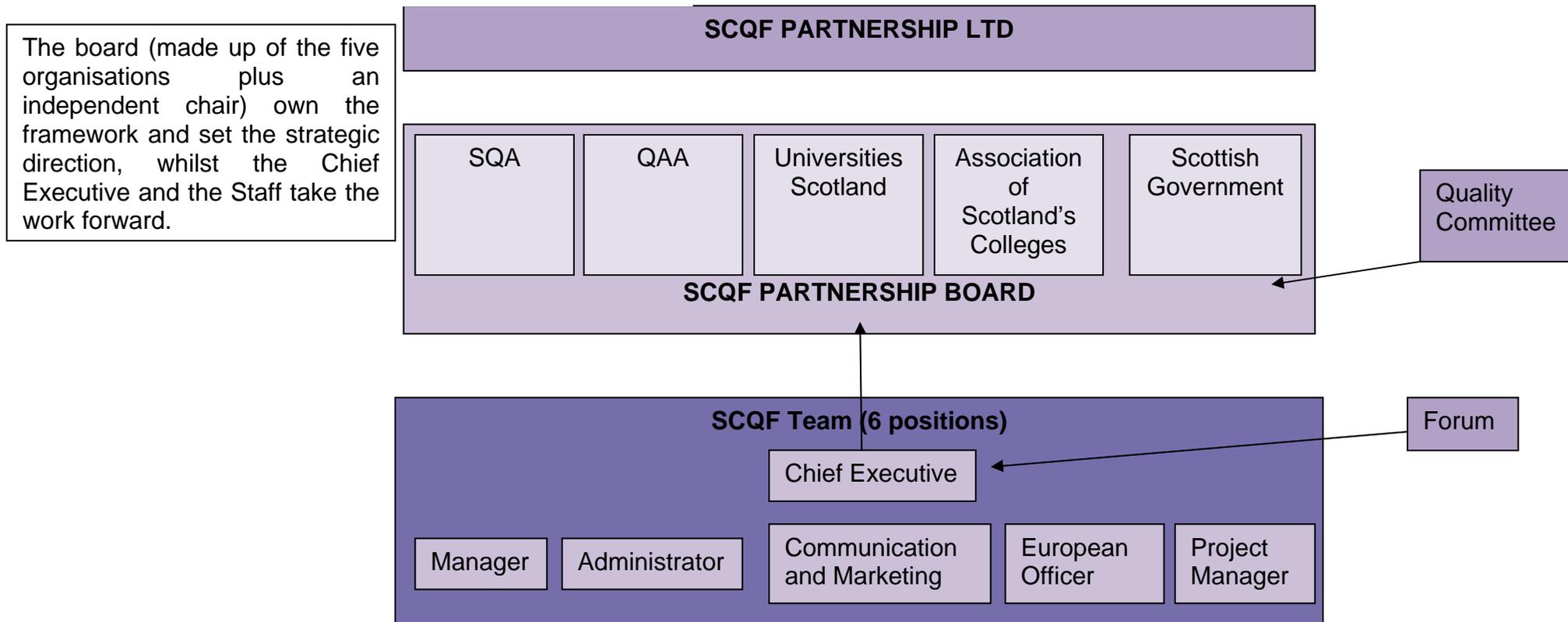
The board (made up of the five organisations plus an independent chair) own the framework and set the strategic direction, whilst the Chief Executive and the Staff take the work forward.

SCQF PARTNERSHIP LTD

SQA	QAA	Universities Scotland	Association of Scotland's Colleges	Scottish Government

SCQF PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Quality Committee

SCQF Team (6 positions)

Chief Executive

Forum

Manager	Administrator	Communication and Marketing	European Officer	Project Manager

The **quality committee** is made up of individuals (not organisations) that have good QA experience. They are responsible for managing the integrity of the framework. The Quality Committee report to the Board.

The **Forum** is made up of about 25/26 stakeholders. This includes providers, trade unions, guidance organisations, community learning providers, independent providers. The forum does not report directly to the board, although they have a link to the board in the Chief Executive who reports back on ideas and consensus. As they do not report to the board, the stakeholders feel free to say what they want. They are now starting to take work forward.

The **Forum** has an advisory role – they help to decide what the priorities should be, what are the strategic objectives.

The stakeholders also commit to actions; they are currently drawing up a collaborative action plan with the key stakeholders which will be an agreed set of actions. Individual organisations are committing to do things to move the SCQF forward.

Ireland – National Framework of Qualifications

The National Framework of Qualifications, the NFQ, was proposed through the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 and launched in 2003. It is a system of ten levels that incorporates awards made for all kinds of learning, wherever it is gained.

School, further education (FETAC awards) and higher education (DIT, university and HETAC awards) are all included. The NFQ has also introduced new qualifications to the Irish education and training system, such as the Advanced Certificate at Level 6 and the Ordinary Bachelor Degree at Level 7.

The NFQ, through its ten levels, provides a means of comparing and contrasting national and international education and training qualifications. It helps learners to plan their education and training and employers to identify the qualifications they require. The NFQ forms the basis of a new, more flexible and integrated system of qualifications which puts the needs of the learner first and supports the national objective of moving towards a 'lifelong learning society'. The aim is that individual learners will be able to take up education and training opportunities at any stage throughout their lives that are appropriate to their ambitions, commitment and capacity and receive due recognition for what they achieve.

Ireland recognises that if it achieves a 'lifelong learning society' there will be a diverse learning community with different learning needs. To help meet these needs, the Qualifications Authority has been given the statutory role to promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression. The Qualifications Authority has developed and published Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression for Learners. It also sets out a range of policies which are designed to address many of the issues involved in improving learner mobility.

Figure 6: Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications
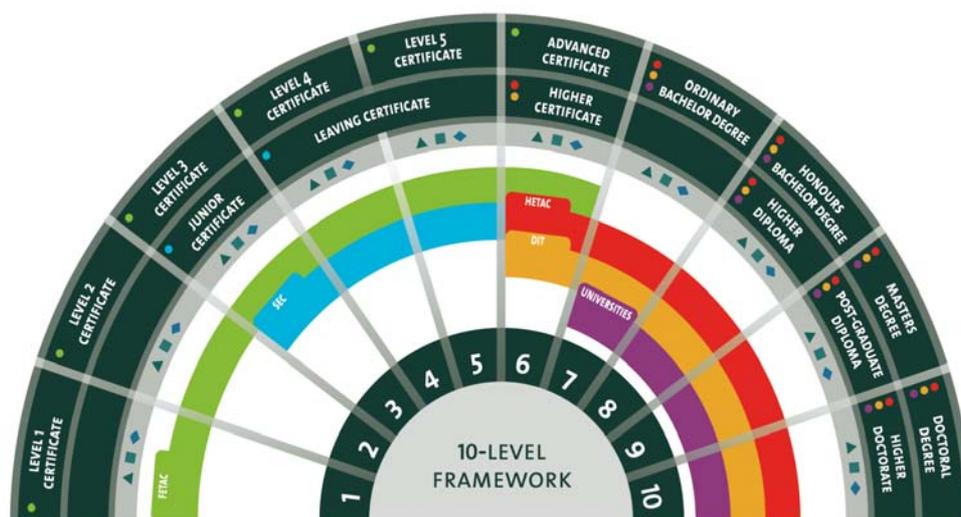
Source: www.nfq.ie

The NFQ is designed to recognise both large and smaller packages of learning, so more than one type of award was designed. The NFQ has four award-types, they are:

- Major Awards: the principal class of award made at a level

- Minor Awards: for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award

- Supplemental Awards: for learning that is additional to a Major Award for example, relate to updating and refreshing knowledge or skills, or to continuing professional development

- Special Purpose Awards: for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement for example, the Safe Pass certification of competence in health and safety in the construction industry.

The Authority has defined specific policies, actions and procedures through which it will meet its objectives in relation to access, transfer and progression. This includes credit, transfer and progression routes, entry arrangements and information provision.

Ireland is looking to develop and implement a national approach to credit which will complement the NFQ. It will meet the needs of learners in a lifelong learning context, facilitating credit accumulation, credit transfer and processes for the recognition of prior learning. It will also accord with ongoing developments in Europe in relation to credit systems. Principles and objectives for a national approach to credit are defined. Procedures are set out for providers in relation to the specification of arrangements for the recognition of prior learning.

Credit in Europe[47]

European Qualification Framework

The European Commission has proposed the establishment of a European Qualification Framework (EQF). The EQF is designed to act as a 'translation device' through which national frameworks such as the CQFW can relate to frameworks in other countries. The EQF will provide a way of describing qualifications across Europe in a common manner which will support individuals who move across borders for work or study. The EQF will also enable employers to understand the qualifications of employees from other countries. The diagram below shows a graphical representation of how the EQF maps to individual countries.

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[47] QCA (June 2007) *International Evidence on Credit Frameworks*; Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework Website (www.scqf.org.uk) and SCQF (October 2007) *Using the SCQF to Break Down Barriers*. Climb Aboard the SCQF Putting Policy into Practice.

Figure 7: Graphical Representation of the EQF
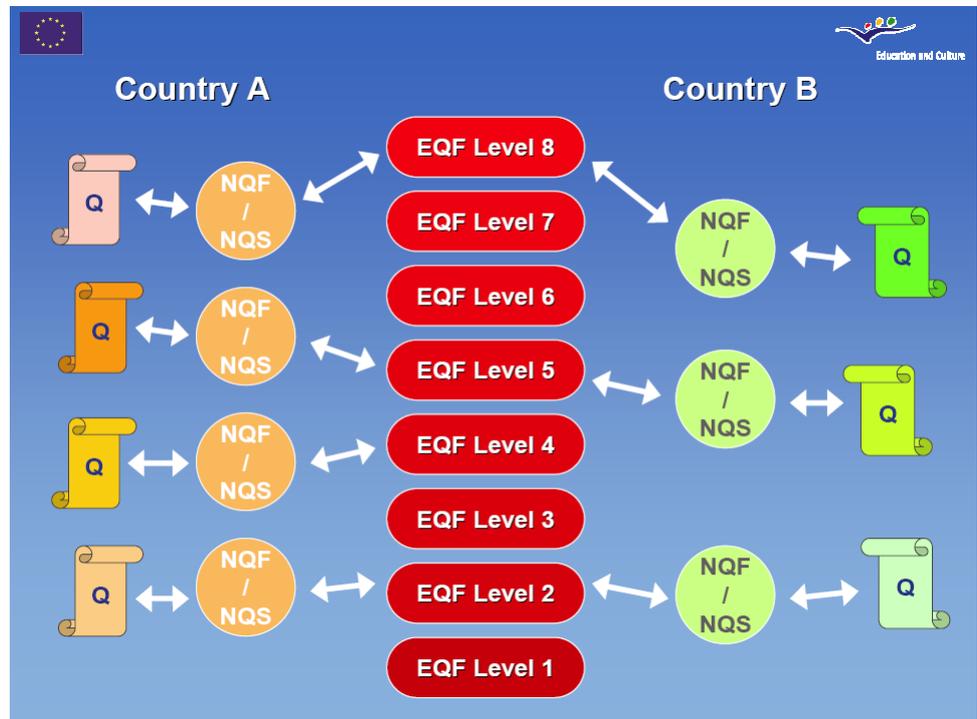
Source: Bjornavold, J (2005) *Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.* Presentation on the EQF on http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/presentation_eqf_en.pdf

The EQF is due to be implemented by member states by 2012. By this time the member states are expected to have mapped the levels of their national frameworks to the EQF and all new qualification certificates, diplomas, and Europass documents issued should contain a reference to the relevant EQF level.

The four administrations responsible for each UK national framework have agreed that they will relate directly to the EQF and that there will therefore be a number of coordination points. It has also been agreed that the four countries would collaborate as they carried out their duties as national coordination points. The UK EQF Coordination Group provides the forum for the national coordination points and the most relevant stakeholders to work together to provide a coherent approach across the UK.

In addition to the EQF there are other areas of work being undertaken in Europe which are related to the Credit agenda, these are:

- Bologna Declaration
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

- European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

Bologna Declaration[48]

The Bologna Declaration is a pledge by countries to reform the structures of their higher education systems in a convergent way to create a European higher education area by 2010.

Although there are a number of differences between European higher education systems, they are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, and the expansion of private and transnational education and so on. The Declaration recognises the value of coordinated reforms, compatible systems and common action.

The Declaration put in motion a series of reforms needed to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for European students and for students and scholars from other continents. Reform was needed if Europe is to match the performance of the best performing systems in the world, notably the United States and Asia.

The three priorities of the Bologna process are:

- Introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate),
- quality assurance and
- recognition of qualifications and periods of study[49].

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

The Berlin summit in 2003 called for the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to be used as a transfer and accumulation system across Europe. ECTS was developed by the European Commission to support recognition of exchange programmes under the Socrates-Erasmus programme. There is a lack of consensus in Europe on whether ECTS provides adequate information for use as

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[48] UK HE Europe Unit (2006) *Guide to the Bologna Process – Edition 2*; Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences and the Association of European Universities (CRE) *The Bologna Declaration On European Space for Higher Education – An Explanation*

[49] The Bologna Process – Towards the European Higher Education Area http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html

an accumulation system and on how to allocate credit to periods of study[50].

Like other credit frameworks the ECTS is a student-centred system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives preferably specified in terms of the learning outcomes and competences to be acquired. ECTS was set up initially for credit transfer. The system facilitated the recognition of periods of study abroad and thus enhanced the quality and volume of student mobility in Europe. Recently ECTS is developing into an accumulation system to be implemented at institutional, regional, national and European level. This is one of the key objectives of the Bologna Declaration of June 1999[51].

Many European countries have, or are proposing to adopt national, regional or local credit frameworks. As discussed previously, a key benefit of a credit system is it provides flexibility to education and learning. Therefore it is sensible to develop an over-arching and common credit framework that serves to increase the transparency and comparability between diverse national education systems. Such a system could be adopted wholesale as the national credit framework (as in Italy, Austria, etc.) or just used as a translation device against which an existing system is expressed[52].

European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

The EU Member States and the European Commission are developing a system to facilitate the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals through periods of vocational education and training abroad. The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) will give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and make it easier to move between different countries and different learning environments[53].

The UK Higher Education sector supports the aims of ECVET, its focus on learning outcomes and its overarching, voluntary nature.

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[50] UK HE Europe Unit (2006) *Guide to the Bologna Process – Edition 2*

[51]   European   Credit   Transfer   System   (ECTS)   Key   Features
http://ec.europa.eu./education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html

[52] Principles of a Pan-European Credit Accumulation Framework – Good Practice Guidelines
http://www.tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=178

[53] The European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/ecvet/index_en.html

As ECVET continues to develop, it will be very important that links to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) are strengthened so as to ensure their compatibility.

The Commission recommends that EU Member States should implement ECVET by 2012. The proposal is now due to be considered by the European Parliament and the European Council[54].

Perspectives on European Credit Systems

Each area of work is progressing at a different rate and is at different stages of development and understanding – although in principal all are working in partnership.

Wales is fully involved in the European credit work. In many respects the CQFW is further advanced than many other national and European frameworks as it looks to consider learning outside of regulated frameworks and qualifications.

Although work is currently being undertaken to align the CQFW and other UK frameworks to the EQF, there is a poor understanding of the relationship between national credit systems and European systems. There needs to be a clearer understanding between the UK frameworks and European Frameworks. This may be helped by the publication of a new ECTS Users' Guide (expected spring 2008)[55].

Benefits of CQFW against other Frameworks

The main difference between the CQFW and other UK frameworks is that the CQFW has built in the scope to acknowledge units, modules and qualifications that sit outside of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). It is therefore perceived as an "overarching meta-framework" within which the existing NQF would sit (see Figure 1).

Where CQFW is recognised it is strongly perceived as an inclusive Framework. The majority of respondents to this evaluation prefer the Welsh model for its ability to hold accreditation of non formal and informal learning and learning outside of the NQF, and suggest that there could be some benefit in CQFW promoting itself as the

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[54] Commission adopts VET proposal.

http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/news_and_information/news_page_2.cfm

[55] Stephen Adam (Jan 2008) *APL/WBL. The Bologna Process, lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning* .Presentation to the Higher Education In Wales Conference 24th January 2008

more inclusive model than any other – *'more of an 'holistic' and flexible model'.*

Barriers and Challenges for the Development of the CQFW

QCF

One of the most discussed challenges to the development of CQFW in our investigations was the QCF and how it relates to the CQFW. There is a great deal of confusion over the QCF and where regulated qualifications fit within the CQFW.

The QCF will make up one of the 'pillars' of the CQFW framework, and as such, qualifications that have been approved on the QCF will also be approved for the CQFW (see Figure 1). However, there is confusion amongst awarding bodies who perceive that they will have to write their qualifications/units in different ways for each of the different Frameworks (England and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).

> *'None of the awarding bodies will want to have to resource getting a different qualification that fits in with the Welsh framework. They will prefer to use the same qualification/units for Scotland, England and Wales.' (CCAF Member)*

> *'There is a great deal of confusion about what can be put forward to the different frameworks, the awarding bodies want qualifications that will be acceptable across the UK and Europe' (Awarding Bodies)*

Although credit has been on the Welsh agenda for a number of years there is now a perception that Wales is perhaps lagging behind England in terms of the development of its Framework. In 2005, the CQFW Stocktake report highlighted

> *"We're way ahead of England. England just last week announced a consultation document. They've not produced any implementation plans or timescales. We're doing a lot more hands on work, breaking new ground, big projects going on"[56]*

Now however, work with the main awarding bodies is practically 'on hold' in Wales whilst outcomes are awaited from the QCF. This is

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[56] CQFW Stocktake Report December 2004 – January 2005 (May 2005) Beaufort Research and Golley Slater

partly to do with the awarding body involvement in the development of the QCF and also the importance of the Welsh market to their overall business.

'The business case for awarding bodies is considerably smaller in Wales than the rest of the UK (approximately 6%)' (Awarding body)

As the Welsh market is so small compared to the whole market and the value of work that they have in England, stakeholders have concerns that the awarding bodies could refuse to use CQFW.

'There is a risk that the awarding bodies will turn their back on CQFW and insist on only using the English one. England is their main market' (CCAF Member)

Having launched a consultation document in 2005 the QCA have been undertaking tests and trials involving learners, employers, awarding bodies, sector skills councils, colleges and training providers (similar to the capacity building work undertaken by CQFW) which ran from September 2006 through to June 2008. The regulators are writing a final report with recommendations on the tests and trials. In the light of this report, ministers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will decide whether the new framework should be fully implemented.

Some awarding bodies commented that the QCF is being implemented very rapidly, and may be seen negatively as a result. There is a view that QCF is not managing expectations sufficiently.

One awarding body observed that currently there is intermittent discussion between the QCF and the CQFW; with joint working limited to the areas they have in common. Currently anything outside of the NQF is left out of talks.

One consultee was of the opinion that that the CQFW should slot into the QCF.

'They shouldn't aim for a separate Welsh system, but a common system that will encourage employer and learner take up and increase mobility and transferability' (Welsh Assembly Government)

Welsh Assembly Government Support

As has been discussed previously, there is a perception of a 'policy gap' between the stated support for the development of the CQFW in strategy documents and the actual support at a senior civil servant, and to some extent, ministerial level. Indicative of this is

the gradual downsizing of the core team working on the development of the framework, currently just three full-time staff and examples cited previously of a lack of alignment between the principles of CQFW and other Welsh Assembly initiatives. Also reflecting the importance of the CQFW to senior Welsh Assembly Government officials was our inability to secure consultations with many individuals and the collapse of the Policy Reference Group.

One consultee commented

'Resources are being spent without political will and therefore the awarding bodies are just tinkering with it' (Awarding Body)

There is a feeling amongst consultees that there is a lack of clarity over credit within the Assembly Government. Whilst credit is pushed in some projects, in others there is no progress. Even where credit is on the agenda there does not appear to be a coherent discussion about credit. There was a view that the Welsh Assembly, and in particular, DCELLS should be leading by example and demonstrating credit is at the heart of all that they do – including its own workforce development.

'*To have an impact all DCELLS departments and sub departments need to know about [CQFW] and fund it'. (Awarding Body)*

The CQFW is at a key junction for its future development and therefore clear intentions are needed from the Welsh Assembly Government in terms of its internal infrastructure and top level strategic direction for CQFW.

Funding

In Wales there is a link between credit and funding with both Higher Education funding and the National Planning and Funding System (NPFS) being credit-based. The NPFS is based on 10 hours of learning and is called a Credit Equivalence "funding" Unit (CEU) and is therefore fully flexible and responsive.

A challenge for the Welsh Assembly Government will be to make the NPFS more obviously demand driven in Wales so that it supports units and credit directly.

'Lets ensure we maximise the understanding of demand led provision and funding' (Welsh Assembly Government)

Consultees were of the opinion that the credit framework appears to be funding friendly, but there is a genuine concern around what happens when credit is applied to existing, recognised and funded qualifications. Irregularities in funding could have serious negative

consequences, and failsafe mechanisms would need to be in place to ensure quality and status. Thus, credit values need to be well managed to ensure 'credit inflation' (claiming a higher amount of credits than is the case in order to get more funding) does not occur. It was perceived from these consultations that given the size of the CQFW team they could not currently manage these issues without a radical review of capacity and skills.

Quality Assurance

Currently the CQFW does not prescribe specific processes for assigning credit so that awarding bodies can adjust their existing procedures to incorporate credit requirements.   The only requirement is that the awarding bodies conform to the requirements of the CCA.   A study into the quality assurance procedures of awarding bodies involved in the ESF Capacity Building project reported that although each awarding body used a slightly different quality assurance process these had accorded with CCA principles, definitions and guidance and demonstrated a flexible, logical and rigorous approach to the practice of assigning level.

Awarding bodies commented on the resource intensive nature of assigning credit to units. To ensure the quality of credit values awarding bodies tend to ask several people to credit rate a unit independently, before looking to come to a consensus. Clearly this is a very expensive process but does ensure there is confidence in credit values.

Awarding bodies also highlighted the importance of a robust approach to getting the level of a unit right before assigning credit to it

> *'We need to be really sure that units are at the level it's supposed to be' (Awarding Body)*

Concerns were raised over a scenario where different awarding bodies have differing opinions over how much credit a unit is worth, which could have implications for transferability of credit. Representatives in Scotland highlighted that they are having problems making credit transferable.

> *'There is no confidence that a module in a certain subject that has been credit rated as level 5 in one university is the same in another. At the moment all universities and colleges can assign credit and there is a great deal of variation'. (SCQF Partner)*

Despite possibly being more advanced in the use of credit, particularly amongst general qualifications, Scotland are still struggling with being able to quality assure the level and credit rating of units. Some feel that this is due to the voluntary nature of the Framework combined with the lack of regulatory powers of the SCQF team to make awarding bodies use credit and accept credit from other institutions/bodies.

'At the moment [SCQF] have no powers of enforcement so they cannot have a governance role. They have no stick!' (SCQF Partner)

There is perhaps a need to provide more clarity/guidance on the processes required to get units and qualifications on to the CQFW as some awarding bodies are confused or lack the confidence over what they need to do in order to credit rate units.

Awarding bodies commented that CQFW needs to take a rigorous marshalling role to ensure that credit values and levels are robust enough to go out to market.

Mutual Recognition

CQFW has had a couple of attempts at formalising arrangements for mutual recognition; the first in 2006 and then again in 2007. The 2007 project looked to develop the principles of mutual recognition of similar awarding body units to facilitate the cohesion of the CQFW. The outcomes of the work were to be draft guidance and principles that could be tested out against a small number of identified units in different sectors.

As the CQFW contains units owned by awarding bodies, mutual recognition is needed in order to enable credit accumulation and transfer. Mutual recognition will support learners to gain recognition for their achievement.

The key findings of the study were that:

- Awarding body qualifications have been designed to meet particular market needs; as such there will be legitimate differences in, for example, the way they have interpreted the National Occupational Standards.

- Awarding bodies are willing to work together to find a solution, while recognizing that mutual recognition is complex and time consuming and not always possible

- Credit Accumulation and Transfer requires an incremental approach and the support from awarding bodies at a strategic level.

- Awarding bodies already operate mutual recognition successfully for general qualifications and NVQs

- Subject expertise and knowledge of units is essential when carrying out mutual recognition.

- Mutual recognition may not always be possible at individual unit level but may be achievable with clusters of units

- The information requested on the unit template and on the checklist was sufficient to carry out mutual recognition.

The study was able to establish some draft principles for mutual recognition but also raised further issues on the approach needed.

One awarding body considered it may be easier to consider recognition of units on a case-by-case basis, but also pointed out that when the QCF is implemented it will enable more 'blanket' credit fits as the QCF specification has taken the principles of mutual recognition further and has provided a framework for doing this.

Impact of the CQFW

Awarding Bodies

The ESF pilot projects looked to raise awareness and increase capacity whilst testing out the territory. This work has been resource intensive and to date yielded approximately 700 units of quantifiable output. The value gained by awarding bodies and others engaged in the process has been reported to be invaluable in helping them to understand credit and 'learn by doing'.

However, as reported earlier, very few awarding bodies have continued to assign credit to units and submit them to the CQFW or have started awarding credit to learners. This has consequences on the scale of impact the CQFW can have with learners, as only very few will have seen credit values on their certificates.

It is clear that action from awarding bodies has stalled somewhat since the launch of the QCF development period. Given the size of the Welsh market in comparison to their overall business, it is understandable that awarding bodies are looking to ensure their regulated qualifications conform to the QCF requirements rather than CQFWs. Indeed, some awarding bodies reported that they have used their experience from the ESF Capacity Building Project when assigning credit to meet the needs of the QCF.

Awarding Bodies themselves have benefited from involvement in the CQFW. This has mainly been in the form of increased partnership working between awarding bodies, who now recognise they can work together whilst essentially remaining competitors in the market. Awarding bodies are currently working together to develop processes for the mutual recognition of units. However, there is limited evidence that awarding bodies have taken steps to adjust their internal policies and processes to accommodate the requirements of the CQFW, or the QCF for that matter:

> *'most awarding bodies haven't given much thought to their internal systems – IT, awarding individual units etc. They have not thought about the roll out after the initial tests and trials' (Awarding Body)*

Employers

As discussed previously, there is very low awareness of the CQFW amongst employers, with the exception of some small pockets in sectors that are engaged with the CQFW.

There is the suggestion that employer engagement with the CQFW is not at its optimum effectiveness. The Health sector is reported to be an exception, although the impact of this work has not been clearly evidenced, and that work remains in need of rigorous evaluation. It is reported to be raising the profile well in the sector, but not in terms of credit on certificates or volumes of units in the framework. A further quantitative analysis of this is recommended to verify claims. The Engineering and Manufacturing sector have established clear systems and protocols for adopting credit based units and have been productive in their output in line with CQFW requirements. There is clear accessible evidence here via the SSC.

Some awarding bodies did question the real demand for credit from employers. Employers frequently express the need for flexible learning and 'bite-sized' units but how often is credit demanded?

'Credit is viewed sceptically, especially in terms of real demand from employers' (Awarding Body)

Awarding bodies point out that many existing qualifications already offer training in bite-sized pieces, though they recognise that these units are not always accredited and are not given a level to allow transferability.

Awarding bodies also identify the potential issue of employers possibly having learners with qualifications made up of credits/units from different awarding bodies who have different standards. This raises important issues around the quality assurance of credits.

Learners

The overall impression was that CQFW's impact on the learning sector was low. Currently credit is only awarded to learners in small sections of the school and Further Education sectors – e.g. on the Welsh Baccalaureate and through awards in Welsh Universities. Consultees strongly believe that the true measure of impact will not be assessable until credit is a currency visible on all certificates and learners are registering in institutions asking for their credit to be taken into account.

Due to the low level of awareness of the CQFW amongst learners, consultees had limited comments to make with respect to the impact of the CQFW on learners. However, one consultee did highlight the need to focus on how the CQFW can be used to open up opportunities for learners rather than how opportunities are credited. It was emphasised that the learner needs to be at the centre of the development of the CQFW rather than the process of assigning credit.

This point was also made by credit partners in Scotland:

'In Scotland we see how the SCQF can work from a learner's perspective – we put the learner at the centre of everything. My impression is that the framework in England is developed more from a systems and institutions perspective' (SCQF Forum Member)

There will be a need to ensure there is adequate guidance and advice for learners about credit. Credit is a new concept and they will need to understand what it is about in order to benefit from it.

Within Higher Education, credit has been used for a number of years. Consultees felt that credit had had a positive impact in the Higher education sector. They feel most progress has been made on the 'accumulation' part of credit, although further work is needed on 'transferability' to ensure the mobility of learners between institutions and countries.

Widening Participation

There was a general view that while at a very local level there has been some benefit to employers and learners who have been involved in CQFW through the pilot projects, on the whole there has been no impact from the CQFW on widening participation.

However it was widely understood that more time is needed in order to raise awareness, develop units with employers, providers and awarding bodies and implement credit in the work and learning place. Consultees felt that once the framework is operational it has the potential to meet learners demands and widen participation but caveated this by saying the success of the framework depends on effective joint working and co-operation between a number of different partners.

However it was also noted that well directed resources and staff have not always been available to 'roll-out' successful pilots and capitalise on the opportunities that have arisen.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

The key findings from the evaluation are set out in this section, along with recommendations that have emerged from the review process.

Strategic Alignment

There needs to be a clear view that the CQFW is supported politically and operationally. This evaluation has highlighted that there is a policy vacuum between the importance placed on CQFW in policy documents and the operational evidence.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with HEFCW undertake a strategic review of CQFW to determine whether to continue supporting the framework. In order to have an impact the Framework needs to be fully and publicly supported by the Assembly Government. The credit principles need to be seen to be running through all Welsh Assembly activities.

There is a view that CQFW is marginalised within DCELLS and lacks a senior management advocate in the Welsh Assembly who is championing the framework and ensuring that credit runs through all of the DCELLS activities.

Recommendation 2

If the decision is made to continue with the development of the Framework the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills should raise the profile of the CQFW amongst senior civil servants to ensure it is on their agenda. There should be a senior level DCELLS member of staff given the role of ensuring all departments know about the Framework, support it and use it where appropriate.

Credit is not a mainstream concept within the Welsh Assembly Government. Stakeholders reported that awareness of the CQFW tends to be limited to those directly involved in it, and gave

examples of how Welsh Assembly practice is at odds with the principles of a credit framework.

The Welsh Assembly Government should be using credit and aligning all of DCELLS activities and initiatives to the CQFW. The Framework needs to have visible Assembly Government support.

Recommendation 3

The Assembly should be looking to credit rate its own staff training and professional development provision and then share this experience with other employers to demonstrate the benefits of the Framework to other employers.

Recommendation 4

Any new learning initiatives that are developed should align to the principles of the CQFW and should look to use credit.

Strategic Planning

As has been highlighted there is an element of confusion over the CQFW, the team and its supporting structures in terms of purpose, role and future direction. There was an underlying feeling that whilst CQFW has achieved a lot by being 'slow and steady' it has not fulfilled its full potential. There is a need to translate the framework's current potential into much more visible outcomes.

Whilst CQFW activity is driven by a three-yearly Implementation Plan, the confusion surrounding the Framework perhaps indicates the need to revisit the strategic vision and objectives for the framework.

Following a similar review of the SCQF, the Partnership revisited the vision and objectives of the Framework to ensure they were clear about its role and purpose and also the role and purpose of the team, partners and stakeholders. The objectives, key goals and actions to achieve these are readily available on the SCQF website for any interested party to access.

Recommendation 5

In the light of the approaching end of the current implementation plan (2009), the changes in the credit arena through the introduction of the QCF and this evaluation, it is recommended that the partner organisations behind CQFW look to revise the Vision, objectives and actions for the CQFW.

Consultees called for clearer, more visible strategic planning for the future vision and direction of the framework, which is complemented by operational planning with key milestones and targets for achievement. All key stakeholders need to be issued with the revised vision and objectives so that they can be used as a point of reference for moving the Framework forwards. The vision and objectives should also be publicly available on the CQFW website.

As part of this forward planning the CQFW partners will need to consider the future role of the CQFW team. There was a universal view that the current team of three is too small, but clarity is also needed over the team's role in the future – are they to:

- facilitate the development of the framework?

- develop the CQFW?

- promote the Framework?

- Regulate the Framework?

- Quality Assure?

Recommendation 6

As part of the strategic forward planning outlined in Recommendation 5, consideration needs to be given to the future role of the CQFW team and adequate resources allocated appropriately.

Some concerns were raised over the sustainability of 'project based' research, where it was not always clear that the findings of the research had been incorporated into the development of the Framework.

Recommendation 7

During the strategic planning it is important to outline the research that will need to be carried out to support the vision and objectives. Key research findings and recommendations need to be widely disseminated and there should be visible evidence of action arising from the research findings. Where appropriate, the findings of the research should be developed into case-studies so that similar organisations can learn from their experience and be encouraged to engage with the CQFW.

Management and Delivery Arrangements

CQFW Team

There was general consensus that whilst the CQFW team is very effective, approachable and informed, it is too small to effectively drive forward the framework and undertake tasks such as verifying credit values and ensuring the quality and integrity of the framework.

Recommendation 8

There needs to be an increase in capacity and resource of the CQFW team to achieve the strategic positioning and volume of work if the framework is to succeed, and be sustainable over time.

Although the CQFW has been developed in partnership with awarding bodies and other stakeholders, as the CQFW sits within the Welsh Assembly Government, it therefore (by implication) feels like it is being imposed on organisations/awarding bodies by Government. There was a view that the CQFW needs to be seen to be independent of all partner organisations. This was highlighted in the 2005 Stocktake Review of CQFW and was also re-iterated by some consultees in this evaluation.

> **Recommendation 9**
>
> There is a need for the partner organisations to explore different options for the future structure and organisation of CQFW. Consultees suggested that rather than being hidden within the Qualifications and Curriculum division, the CQFW should actually sit as the overarching framework.
>
> The potential for setting up the CQFW as an organisation separate from the Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW.

Policy Reference Group and Credit Common Accord Forum

The Policy Reference Group has not met since 2006 and there is now a concern that the CCAF has become self-governing.

> **Recommendation 10**
>
> There is a need to review the structure and function of the CCAF to incorporate a distinction between its operational and governance activities. From this review functions for each element will need to be strategically planned.
>
> Options could be explored regarding the potential of developing a governance group that involves a strategic complement of HEIs, awarding bodies and regulators and employer representatives.

Awareness Raising

The consultation process and responses revealed a high degree of variability in people's understanding of CQFW, how the Framework works and what it is looking to achieve. Whilst it is understandable that some sectors/groups will have a more vague understanding of the Framework given it is still in development (e.g. employers, learners), it was concerning that many awarding bodies – including those who have been involved in the ESF Capacity Building project, expressed both areas they did not understand and overall confusion.

The evaluation process revealed that there is quite low awareness of the CQFW within the Welsh Assembly Government.

Recommendation 11

There is a need for the CQFW team to raise awareness of the Framework, its benefits and its impacts on the learning agenda in Wales amongst colleagues within the Welsh Assembly Government. Only when the profile of the Framework is raised internally can its principles be built into strategies and implementation plans and be used as a suitable mechanism to achieve some of the key aims of policies such as The Learning Country.

Mechanisms such as an internal newsletter or email, seminars or briefings would assist in raising the profile internally within the Welsh Assembly.

There is a need for improved awareness raising and information sharing with wider stakeholders, both inside and outside of Wales, to maintain the profile of the CQFW and keep stakeholders informed about the developments on the Framework.

Recommendation 12

Mechanisms such as a regular e-mail bulletin or updates to the website can help to improve communication with external wider stakeholders and help improve the profile of the Framework.

There were concerns and areas of confusion amongst most awarding bodies (i.e. those that had been involved in the ESF Capacity Building project and those that had not). It is likely that the high level of confusion results from inadequate dissemination of information within organisations (so that only one or two individuals fully understand the Framework) and the turnover of staff in organisations/departments (the individual who was involved in the Capacity Building work may have moved on).

Recommendation 13

It is vital that awarding bodies and stakeholders fully understand the Framework and what it is trying to achieve. It is recommended that CQFW undertakes regular workshops that go 'back to basics' to inform awarding bodies and other stakeholders of the key details of the CQFW. This would ensure that new organisations and individuals are fully and clearly briefed on the Framework.

Employers

An important area for work for the CQFW going forward is to engage with employers to encourage them to submit their work-based learning and training courses to the CQFW, so that employees can be recognised for learning undertaken in the workplace.

Recommendation 14

Whilst a full scale marketing campaign is not really appropriate at this time, CQFW should look to engage with employers (covering a range of sectors, sizes of organisations) and look to support them in submitting training courses to the CQFW. Their experiences can then be developed into case-studies and can be used to promote the Framework to other employers.

QCF

It is clear that the QCF has significantly affected the progress of the development of the CQFW in recent months. The QCF has introduced confusion amongst awarding bodies and other stakeholders as to how it will interact with the CQFW and also diverted awarding body attention away from the CQFW.

Recommendation 15

There is an urgent need for the CQFW team to clarify the relationship between the QCF and the CQFW for the benefit of awarding bodies and other organisations who may be submitting units and qualifications to the Frameworks. The evaluation has shown there is a lot of confusion amongst awarding bodies about what they need to do in order to meet the requirements of both Frameworks.

CQFW should consider mechanisms to clearly spell out what the impact of the QCF is for the CQFW and what impact (if any) this will have on awarding bodies.

Although the QCF is doing a lot to raise awareness of the concept of credit, consultees were generally agreed that the CQFW is a 'better' framework because of its inclusive nature. Whilst activity on regulated qualifications is reported to be 'on hold' until the QCF arrangements are finalised, CQFW should focus its activity on the remaining pillars of the Framework.

Recommendation 16

Recommendations for CQFW point to activity and effort being focused on the other three pillars of the framework – particularly informal and non-formal learning and learning and training outside of the NQF. It will be important for Wales to work closely with credit partners across the UK in this work.

Wales could be pro-active in its approach and use its experience in these areas to influence how the QCF approaches these types of learning in the future to ensure alignment between the QCF and CQFW.

It was reported that whilst Wales is contributing to the development of the QCF, discussion is limited to arrangements for qualifications in the NQF.

Recommendation 17

All those consulted with who had reasonable knowledge of the QCF and CQFW, agreed that there should be better joint working between the teams in England and Wales. It was recognised that Wales has led the way in terms of research into how credit could work outside of regulated qualifications and it was felt that Wales should share this experience with colleagues in QCA. This would ensure that the two Frameworks are compatible and try to ensure that any future development on the QCF does not hold up the CQFW as it has done recently.

Recommendation 18

One recommendation suggested investing more time and effort in providing a solution for the UK, which incorporates the Welsh perspective. This would work for the inclusion of Wales within a collective approach, whilst valuing the prior experience and knowledge gained in Wales over the last 20 years.

Recommendation 19

In addition, CQFW staff need to continue to promote the CQFW in Europe and other UK countries and work with credit colleagues in order to develop the CQFW to complement other national and European Frameworks.

This will demand enhanced staffing and resources to achieve.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There were some concerns with respect to ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Framework. There was recognition that whilst monitoring and evaluation activities had been carried out, the outcomes of this work had not always been made as clear and transparent as possible for wider audiences.

Recommendation 20

Stakeholders need to be clear about what the project is trying to achieve, what activities have been undertaken, how this has been funded and what outputs and outcomes have been achieved. There is a need both to strengthen and to make more transparent the processes of evaluation and accountability.

Clear monitoring and ongoing reflection of activity, along with regular formal evaluation can help to prevent self-governing activity that has the risk of steering work away from the agreed objectives.

Funding

The National Planning and Funding System supports the development of a credit-rated curriculum but a challenge for the Welsh Assembly Government will be to make the National Planning and Funding System more obviously demand driven than it is, so that it can support credit and thus units more directly.

Irregularities in funding could have serious negative consequences, and failsafe mechanisms would need to be in place to ensure quality and status. Credit values need to be well managed to ensure that 'credit inflation' (claiming a higher amounts of credits than is the case in order to get more funding) does not occur.

Recommendation 21

Work needs to be undertaken within the Welsh Assembly Government to now establish the relationship of actual credit values and the current credit equivalence unit value.

Marketing and Promotion

Whilst all consultees agreed that the time is not right for a large scale marketing and promotion campaign for the CQFW, there is a

need for the CQFW to strengthen its public image, particularly outside Wales.

Recommendation 22

An improved website will go a long way towards improving perceptions and awareness of the CQFW both within and outside Wales.

Lessons can be learnt from the websites of the national Frameworks in Scotland (www.scqf.org.uk) and Ireland (www.nfq.ie) where the site is split into Learners, Employers, Providers and Policy Makers – and then provides tailored information, guidance and case-studies on how the Framework will affect them and where to go for more information.

There could also be benefits to using the website to keep stakeholders informed of forthcoming meetings, minutes of meetings, records of key decisions, research and evaluation reports and so on, to ensure that stakeholders feel that the Framework is being developed in an open and transparent manner.

Mutual Recognition

Whilst significant progress has been made with respect to Mutual Recognition, there remains a lack of agreement. Recent work carried out for the CQFW recommended that further work needs to be carried out on the relationship between APL, exemption and mutual recognition and their role in the UK wide programme of reform of vocational qualifications

Recommendation 23

CQFW should continue to work with awarding bodies to try and come to an agreed set of principles for recognising each other's units and to follow up on the recommendations from the 2007 research on mutual recognition.

Quality Assurance

In order to ensure the success of the CQFW there needs to be widespread confidence in its ability to accurately assign both level and credit to units. Learners and employers need to have confidence that a chemistry unit at level 5 worth 4 credits from

awarding body A is equivalent to a chemistry unit at level 5 worth 4 credit from awarding body B. Confidence in the system will ensure that the Framework can enable the transferability of credit and learning between institutions and across countries.

Currently the Quality Assurance procedures for the CQFW are somewhat loose. Whilst this was intentional, so that awarding bodies could build in credit requirements around their existing quality assurance policies and procedures, it has raised concerns with some awarding bodies and could have an impact on the ability of the Framework to fulfil its role in enabling the transfer of learning.

Recommendation 24

Further research needs to be carried out to look at mechanisms to ensure the quality of credit and levels and to demonstrate robustness in the Framework. Within this research, consideration needs to be given to the role of the CQFW team – are they there to marshal and quality assure all units, or is this the role of awarding bodies?

There could perhaps be an argument for making the CQFW more prescriptive in its requirements for submitting units in order to build a sense of confidence that all recognised bodies are using the same approach in developing units

Conclusions

There have been some significant achievements in the development of the CQFW since its inception. It has been widely congratulated through the evaluation process on the level of buy-in that it has achieved with awarding bodies and the inclusive way in which the Framework has been developed. Consultees liked the way in which the Framework looks to encompass all types of learning no matter when or where it takes place.

However, there are some weaknesses – there remains a high level of confusion about the CQFW with some key stakeholders not understanding it at all. Even organisations that have been involved in the development of the framework expressed that there were areas that they found confusing or unclear.

The CQFW has been marginalised to some extent because of the development of the QCF. Awarding body commitment to the CQFW has waned as they look to see how the QCF will impact on their business; although the CQFW should be congratulated for continuing their development work in areas outside of the QCF. The team should look to work closely with colleagues in England to ensure that their experience in these areas can be utilised should the QCF expand outside of regulated learning.

The biggest challenge that the CQFW faces is the perceived lack of support from the Welsh Assembly Government. Although the CQFW is highlighted in many key Assembly documents there is limited support for the Framework at the operational level. The partners behind the CQFW (Welsh Assembly Government and HEFCW) need to review whether they are going to continue with the development of the Framework or just utilise the QCF. If a decision is made to continue with the project it is important that the team is given adequate resources and for a senior DCELLS member of staff to be given the role of ensuring all departments know about the Framework, support it, use it where appropriate and ensure that new initiatives align to the principles of the CQFW.

Appendix 1 – NICATS Level Descriptors

CQFW uses the Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS) level descriptors to explain the relative demand, complexity, depth of study and learner autonomy of a unit.

Descriptors should be seen as a developmental continuum in which preceding levels are necessarily subsumed within those, which follow. Learning accredited at this level will reflect the ability to:

Entry level - employ recall and demonstrate elementary comprehension in a narrow range of areas, exercise basic skills within highly structured contexts, and carry out directed activity under close supervision.

Level 1 - employ a narrow range of applied knowledge, skills and basic comprehension within a limited range of predictable and structured contexts, including working with others under direct supervision, but with a very limited degree of discretion and judgement about possible action.

Level 2 - apply knowledge with underpinning comprehension in a number of areas and employ a range of skills within a number of contexts, some of which may be non-routine; and undertake directed activities, with a degree of autonomy, within time constraints.

Level 3 - apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories; access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a considerable choice of procedures, in familiar and unfamiliar contexts; and direct own activities, with some responsibility for the output of others.

Level 4 - Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base; employ a range of specialised skills; evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies and to determine solutions to a variety of unpredictable problems; and operate in a range of varied and specific contexts, taking responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs.

Level 5 - generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level, with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems; analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a broad range of functions; and accept responsibility for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

Level 6 - critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge, utilizing specialised skills across an area of study; critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources; transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations; and accept accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes.

Level 7 - display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical or professional activity, accepting accountability for related decision making including use of supervision.

Level 8 - Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of inquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers; accepting full accountability for outcomes.

Appendix 2 - Policy Reference Group

In October 2002 the Policy Reference Group was formed to represent the interests of key organisations involved in training, education and workforce development throughout Wales. The group had a strategic remit to provide support and guidance for the development and continuing maintenance of the CQFW.

The group represented

- Awarding Bodies in Wales;

- Federation of Awarding Bodies

- Careers Wales

- Dysg

- FFORWM Further Education in Wales

- Federation of Small Businesses in Wales

- Higher Education in Wales

- The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

- Estyn – Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

- Learndirect

- Open College Network Wales & NOCN

- National Training Federation in Wales

- National Leadership Agency for Health

- NIACE Dysgu Cymru

- Sector Skills Councils

- Sector Skills Development Agency

- Welsh Assembly Government

- Welsh Higher Education Credit Consortium

Appendix 3 - Credit Common Accord Forum

Membership from 2003 – 2007

- ACCAC (now represented by the Welsh Assembly Government)

- City and Guilds

- Edexcel

- OCR

- WAMITAB

- WJEC

- ELWa (now represented by the Welsh Assembly Government)

- NOCN

- NWOCN

- SEMTA

- Dysg*

- LSDA*

- CCEA*

- SQCF*

- LSC*

- QCA*

* Observers

From 2007 membership of the CCAF was expanded to include:

- AAT

- Merthyr Youth Service

- FFORUM

- NILAH

- CWVYS

Appendix 4 - CQFW Implementation Plan (July 2003)

Key Action 1 – Develop and Launch CQFW Implementation Plan

To develop CQFW credit principles and credit common accord guidelines and to ensure they are compatible with other developments throughout the UK.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Develop CQFW Implementation Plan	Publish guidelines and principles and evaluate operation though Policy Reference Group.	Summer 2003
Develop Credit Common Accord	Publish guidelines and principles and evaluate operation though establishment of Credit Common Accord Forum.	Summer 2003

Key Action 2 – Credit Common Accord

The Credit Common Accord (CCA) underpins the principles for assigning and awarding credit and agrees terminology and quality assurance. The migration strategy will pilot and test the CCA before the introduction of wider participation of non-regulatory framework programmes and non-accredited learning.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Pilot Credit Common Accord and quality assurance arrangements for awarding bodies, sector skills councils and Open College Network.	In conjunction with ACCAC define the management of the CCA and establishment of Credit Common Accord Forum (CCAF) and various sub groups.	Summer 2004
Agree arrangements for inclusion of Higher Education, Professional Bodies, non NQF programmes accredited through Awarding Bodies & other regulated professional development into the framework.	Working closely the Welsh Higher Education Credit Consortium, Higher Education Institutions, Professional and Trade Bodies identify the processes and resource issues for the development of CCA outside NQF and regulatory frameworks.	Summer 2004
Agree arrangements for inclusion of non-accredited learning into the framework.	The work is very varied and complex will include company or community learning accounts; ILA (Wales), Adult and Community Learning and other learning programmes. This will involve voluntary and community organizations, among others in making recommendations for the design of credit quality assurance procedures for non-accredited learning.	Autumn 2006
Development of unitized credit database for programmes within and outside the NQF	QCA/ACCAC three stage process proposal: i) Agree system for accessing NQF programmes from centralized database. ii) Identify resource issues for non-accredited Welsh database. iii) Continued maintenance and ownership and continuous updating for programmes and Welsh CQFW credit database.	Autumn 2006 Autumn 2006 From Autumn 2006

Key Action 3 – Higher Education in Wales

A credit related funding system for all full and part time learners has been introduced by HEFCW for HEI in Wales from September 2002. Determining level and credit value is well-established practice and this expertise will be built upon into fully implementing the HEI programmes into the compatible CQFW framework. Additional support on the developing framework will be required and through HEFCW and the WHECC a programme to identify professional and staff development will be introduced.

The credit developments in Europe are critical and considerable work is required to analyse and implementing the impact of the Bologna agreement and the developing European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

A strategy to gain acceptance and understanding of the developing framework by all sectors of higher education and professional bodies throughout the UK is also critical.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
3 year roll out plan with HEFCQ	Identify additional resources and agreement of strategy from HEI in Wales	2003
Harmonisation of Higher Education Programmes into CQFW	In conjunction with HEI in Wales work towards adopting the CQFW level descriptors for all Higher Education programmes.	2005
Harmonisation of Higher Education continuing and professional development (CPD) programmes into CQFW.	IN conjunction with HEI in Wales and professional bodies, work towards adopting the CQFW level descriptors for all Higher Education CPD programmes.	2006
Harmonisation of Higher Education higher level awarding bodies (i.e. HND/HNC) programmes into CQFW.	In conjunction with HEI in Wales and awarding bodies, work towards adopting the CQFW level descriptors for all Higher Education programmes.	2006
Development of credit transfer and progression routes, in line with ECTS and Bologna agreement.	Ensure ECTS is compatible to CQFW and encompasses vocational and academic learning.	2007

Key Action 4 – Development of Marketing Plan

The development of an effective internal and external communication strategy is central to the development of the framework. The external stakeholders are of critical importance to gain acceptance and ownership of the framework.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Market research and creative brief.	Develop marketing plan to raise awareness and ensure the benefits of the CQFW are inculcated in all education and training activities throughout Wales.	2003
Implement marketing plan and deliver external stakeholders staff development programme.	Develop, communicate and maintain a consistent and appropriate brand personality and image for the development of the CQFW; develop strategic, business and community partnerships to outline benefits of framework; continue CPD training and updating with external stakeholders; develop a communications strategy for key stakeholders i.e. learning provider network, awarding bodies, sector skills councils, world of work, parents, teachers, voluntary sector and higher education; and establish a pro-active and robust media and public relations strategy.	Autumn 2003 – Summer 2006
Develop unambiguous understanding of the credit values of all learning programmes.	Working in conjunction with education marketing and communication staff develop a comprehensive strategy to agree a common approach to the development of the CQFW.	Summer 2006
Market Research and evaluation of credit framework	To evaluate the benefits of developing the CQFW.	Summer 2007

Key Action 5 – ELWa National Planning and Funding System

The CQFW implementation plan will provide the opportunity to introduce a credit related ELWa National Funding and Planning System for further education, school sixth forms, work based learning and adult and continuing learning.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Design credit related National Funding System	To ensure the funding system enables flexibility of delivery and programmes without increased bureaucracy	2003
Continuous updating Credit Equivalence Units (CEU) for National Funding System.	To ensure appropriate CEU are ascribed to learning programmes.	Ongoing from 2004

Key Action 6 – Curriculum Development

The development of the CQFW enables more responsive and appropriate learning programmes. Greater flexibility for learners will require close involvement with learning network and partner organisations.

The innovative Welsh Assembly Government curriculum initiatives such as the development of flexible learning programmes for Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ), Individual, Company and Community Learning Accounts, Modern Skills Diploma for Adults, the All Age review for work based learning and the 14-19 review all embrace the principles of the CQFW. Importantly, to ensure new teaching and learning activities such as e-learning embrace the CQFW.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Development of flexible provision.	Provide appropriate information to allow careers advisors, admission tutors, advice and guidance services to provide appropriate and informed choices.	2005
Development of Welsh Curriculum Initiatives such as 14-19 Review, All Age Review and Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification.	Seek to arrive at a position where all key awarding bodies such as WJEC assign and award credit to learning programmes. Ensure the administration of credit is as simple as possible.	2007
Ensuring new learning programmes such as e-learning are included within the framework.	Ensure involvement of the CQFW in e-learning initiatives.	2005
Extend the CQFW across all Welsh education and training initiatives**.**	Working in partnership with Basic Skills Agency, Welsh Development Agency, Wales Tourist Board, and other Welsh Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.	2006

Key Action 7 – Quality

To ensure maintenance of standards and public confidence, the CQFW needs to ensure appropriate quality assurance systems are in place. For some organisations, new quality assurance systems will need to be developed.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Review the quality systems required for CQFW	Working in partnership with Estyn, QAA, HEFCW, ELWa, ACCAC and other quality assurance agencies.	2005
Introduce, evaluate and monitor CQFW quality systems.	Identify resources to carry out quality assurance programme.	2006

Key Action 8 – Accessing European Social Fund Support

Within the European Social Fund (ESF) for Wales the development and capacity building for the CQFW has been highlighted as a priority area in Objective 1 Priority 4 Measure 3 and Objective 3 Priority 3 Measure1.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Develop ESF programmes	Ensure appropriate systems and procedures are established for the successful operation of the ESF programmes.	2005
Investigate costs and value for money with Awarding Bodies, sector skills and other bodies.	Identifying additional expenditure to set up and maintain credit system.	2005
ESF for non-accredited learning	Ensure appropriate systems and procedures are established for the successful operation of the ESF programmes with bodies offering non-accredited learning.	2006

Key Action 9 – Lifelong Learning Pathway and Qualification Database

The development of the lifelong learning pathway with Careers Wales On-line and the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) will provide learners in Wales with an on-going record of learning achievement. The development of the unitised and credit related qualifications database will provide wider opportunities for choice and flexibility.

ACTIVITY	KEY ELEMENTS	TARGET DATE
Qualifications that awarding bodies have not yet unitised are redesigned voluntarily on a unit basis and accredited.	Activity of regulatory authorities and ensuring database information is accessible to all external users	2004
Designation of size indicator and level becomes compulsory for units in all qualifications at levels 1 to 3, excluding NVQs.		2004
Designation of size indicators and level becomes compulsory for units in all qualifications at Entry level and higher levels, excluding NVQs.	Activity of regulatory authorities.	2005
Designation of size indicators and level for units becomes compulsory for NVQs and other occupational qualifications.	Activity of regulatory authorities.	2006
Careers Wales On Line develop Lifelong Passport	Development of unique learner identifier for learner's post 14.	2006

Consult on impact of Data Collection	Data Analysis	2007
Development of the non-accredited learning database.	Agreement on the establishment and maintenance of Welsh non-accredited credit learning database.	2007
Full credit accumulation and transfer (CATS)	Ensuring CQFW is compatible with credit systems throughout UK.	2007

Appendix 5 – Project Inception Report

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to review the overall objectives, stages, tasks and activities that are to be undertaken as part of the Evaluation of the CQFW and to also clarify roles, responsibilities, and reporting and communication during the course of the project.

This document has been produced using Miller Research's proposal to DCELLS, and notes from the inception meeting held with the DCELLS project manager, representatives from the CQFW team and Miller Research evaluation team on the 22nd October 2007.

Project Background

The aim of the study has been agreed as:

"Evaluate the effectiveness, and impact of the CQFW project to date; and to evaluate the ESF Capacity Building Project with awarding bodies"

The above aim will be conducted through the following two activities

1. To conduct a CQFW Baseline Impact and Awareness Study and conduct an 'Initial Evaluation'
2. Evaluate Activity Specific to ESF

To provide DCELLS and CQFW with a detailed assessment of the current position of the CQFW work in context with other countries framework developments, and to thoroughly evaluate the ESF activity engagement the following key objectives arose during the inception meeting discussion.

The key objectives of the research are:

- Assess the progress of the CQFW against the 3-year Implementation Plan
- Develop a baseline of evidence
- Explore how effective the CQFW is in meeting the demands of employers and learners for flexible learning
- Determine the effectiveness of the Framework in widening participation in non-formal and informal learning

- Explore reasons for non-usage amongst awarding bodies, employers, learners and other key stakeholders and :

- Evaluate activity specific to ESF

The project will run from October 2007 to March 2008, with a draft report by the middle of February 2008, to coincide with an external CQFW time line commitment.

Project Activities

The project is to be undertaken within the following key stages:

- Inception

- Desk Research

- Initial Strategic Scoping and Topic Guide Development

- Fieldwork interviews

- Analysis

- Reporting and Dissemination

Stage 1 – Inception

An inception meeting was held at the DCELLS offices in Newtown on October 22nd 2007. DCELLS was represented by Julie Owens; CQFW by Trevor Clark, Kenn Palmer and Mervyn Morgan. Miller Research was represented by Nick Miller and Lindsey Roberts.

A detailed summary was presented by the members of the CQFW team on the background and development process the CQFW has undergone in the last years of planning and implementation. This was supported by a range of relevant documentation i.e. copies of the original ESF bid(s) The Credit Common Accord and the Implementation plan.

This was followed by a revision discussion on the desired approach to the evaluation of the project objectives and a thorough debate on some practical issues of implementing a revised methodology in light of a modified focus to the objectives.

Part of this meeting was also to identify and request relevant research material and clarify the stakeholder list for interviewing.

Stage 2 – Desk Research

The desk research will aim to scope existing evidence, and material on the CQFW's development and implementation of the delivery plan to date in context with relevant policy.

Our approach will be to evidence and analyse relevant policy material and project documentation in order to prepare a baseline

of the CQFW as it stands amid other, similar development work in other UK countries. We will attempt to place the work in context as a response to the need for change in the education credit system utilised by Higher Education.

We will also analyse relevant project material from commissioned work either via CQFWs implementation plan or via ESF funding

Where possible we will explore the possibility of sourcing data from existing quantitative datasets, on the uptake of CQFW credit such as LLWR; the UK's main Awarding Body (e.g. OCN) datasets.

Stage 3 – Initial Scoping Interviews and Topic Guide Development

The initial scoping work will consist of interviews with representatives of CQFW and a small number of major stakeholders. The work will aim to develop further the broad overview presented during the inception meeting of activities and any particular issues affecting the work of CQFW. Whilst the list of contacts for interview was subject to a degree of scrutiny in the meeting we anticipate some clarifications and additions to that list to emerge from these initial discussions.

Following from these scoping interviews and building on the initial analysis of policy and other relevant documentation, we will devise a comprehensive topic guide for use in the subsequent stakeholder interviews.

In addition to this we will prepare a draft evaluation framework for use in the evaluation of ESF activity undertaken by CQFW.

Topic guides for stakeholder interviews and ESF project beneficiaries will be circulated for approval by the project Steering Group.

Stage 4 – Fieldwork

There are two main stages to the fieldwork:

Qualitative interviews (telephone / face to face) with stakeholders and ESF project managers.

The main thrust of the evaluation in line with the agreed change in focus will be based around information gathered from stakeholder interviews. This approach will aim to place the work in its strategic context – assessing where policy has affected the implementation and also future planning for the CQFW.

Additional interviews will be conducted with the project managers and key staff involved in the ESF activity to establish a firm evaluation of that work in line with the agreed evaluation framework.

We have planned for the interview schedule to run early November through to the end of January 2008.

Stage 5 – Analysis

Following the research investigation elements of the work, we will analyse the material to develop a draft report of impact and future potential for the CQFW.

In addition to this focus we will analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the ESF activity against the implementation plan and individual project criteria against Objectives 1 and 3.

Stage 6 – Reporting and Dissemination

The draft report for the Steering Group will be prepared by mid February (w/c 18th Feb 2008), for inclusion in the February client meeting, and presentations in CQFW management schedules. The period after this meeting and report presentation will be to incorporate any additional material, feedback, editing and translation submission of the final report in early March.

Reporting and Communication

Client

The client is DCELLS – Julie Owens being the nominated project manager. Invoicing will be conducted through Julie Owens, but directed to Joan Thomas (responsible for CQFW accounts).

Consultant

The main contact at Miller Research is the project manager, Lindsey Roberts supported by Kristel Sootarsing and directed by Nick Miller.

Reporting

The Steering Group and project team will meet twice during the timeline of the project, once more before Christmas (10th Dec 2007 in Newtown) and again on February 18th 2008. In between these meetings, email updates will be provided every fortnight and also when required in terms of information or action.

Reports will be provided at least five working days before any client meeting.

Appendix 6 - Comparison of Credit Frameworks

Main stages of education / employment	England & Northern Ireland National Qualifications Framework	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)	National Framework for Qualifications of Ireland	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework	England, Wales and Northern Ireland framework for higher education qualifications: FHEQ
	Level 8	Level 8	Level 10	Level 12	Level D
Professional or postgraduate education or employment	Highly specialist Diploma from a professional body	Doctoral degree	Doctoral Degree Higher Doctorate	PDA, Doctorates	Doctoral degree
	Level 7	Level 7	Level 9	Level 11	Level M
	Fellowships NVQ Level 5	Masters Degree	Masters Degree, Postgraduate Diploma	SVQ 5, PDA, Post graduate Diploma, Masters, Postgraduate Certificates	Masters Degree, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates

Intermediate / higher education Advanced skills training				
Level 6 (yellow)	**Level 6** (red)	**Level 8** (green)	**Level 10** (blue)	**Level H** (pink)
NVQ Level 4	Honours Degree	Honours Bachelor Degree, Higher Diploma	Honours Degree, PDA, Graduate Diploma/Certificate	Bachelors Degrees with Honours, Graduate Certificates and Diplomas
			Level 9 (blue)	
		Level 7 (green)	Ordinary Degree, PDA, SVQ 4, Graduate Diploma /Certificate	
		Ordinary Bachelor Degree		

Entry to professional graduate employment				
Level 5 (yellow)	**Level 5** (red)		**Level 8** (blue)	**Level I** (pink)
NVQ Level 4	Foundation Degree HND, HNC		Higher National Diploma, SVQ 4, PDA, Diploma of Higher Education	Ordinary Bachelors Degree, Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education and other Higher Diplomas

	Level 4	**Level 4**	**Level 6**		**Level C**
	NVQ Level 4 HND	Certificates of Higher Education, HNC	Advanced Certificate Higher Certificate	**Level 7** Advanced Higher, PDA, SVQ 3, Higher National Certificate, Certificate of Higher Education	Certificates of Higher Education
Specialised education and training	**Level 3** NVQ, VRQ, A Level	**Level 3** NVQ, VRQ, A Level, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification Advanced	**Level 5** Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate	**Level 6** Higher, SVQ 3, Progression Development Award (PDA), NPA National Certificate	
			Level 4 Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate		
Entry to higher education Qualified/ Skilled worker	**Level 2** **Level 2** NVQ, VRQ, GCSEs at grade A*C, ESOL skills for life	**Level 2** NVQ, VRQ, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification Intermediate GCSEs grade A*C		**Level 5** Intermediate 2, Credit Standard Grade, SVQ 2, NPA, National Certificate	

Continuation of secondary education. Progression to skilled employment . Completion of secondary education Secondary education Initial entry into employment or further education

Level 1	Level 1	Level 3	Level 4
NVQ, VRQ, GCSEs at grade D-G, ESOL skills for life	NVQ, VRQ, GCSEs at grade D-G, Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification Foundation	Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificate	Intermediate 1, General Standard Grade, Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) 1, NPA , National Certificate

Level 3

Access 3, Foundation Standard Grade, NPA , National Certificate

Level 2

Level 2 Certificate

Level 2

Access 2, National Progression Award (NPA), National Certificate

Qualifications can be taken at any age in order to continue or return to education or training	Entry level	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 1	
	Entry Level Certificate ESOL skills for life	Entry Level Certificate (sub levels 1- 3)	Level 1 Certificate	Access 1	

Source: Guidance, Learning And Careers: Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/glacier/qual/compare/

Appendix 7 - Organisations Consulted

- Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework
- Scottish Qualifications Authority
- OCN Wales
- WJEC
- Welsh Assembly Government
- AAT
- Merthyr Youth Service
- LearnDirect Scotland
- WHECC/SIHE
- Edexcel
- Fforwm
- NIACE Dysgu Cymru
- City and Guilds
- NILAH/Skills for Health
- WAMITAB
- OCR
- Careers Scotland
- HEFCW
- Dsyg

Appendix 8 – Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

ACL	Adult and Community Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Previous Experiential Learning
CCA	Credit Common Accord
CCAF	Credit Common Accord Forum
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
Credit	An award made to a learner in recognition of the achievement of learning outcomes at a specified credit level. Credit is only awarded following quality assured assessment of achievement.
CREDIS Project	The All Wales Modularisation and Credit-based Development Project (later known as CREDIS) was a Welsh Office funded project to investigate the potential for a modular and credit based learning system in Wales with the aim of increasing participation. The project ran from 1993 – 1997.
CQFW	The Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales
DCELLS	The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ELWa	The Assembly Sponsored Public Body responsible for planning and funding post-16 education and training from 2001 to 2005.
FEI	Further Education Institution (in some instances, for clarity, the word college is used to refer to an FEI)
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and communications technology
Learning Outcomes	Statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.
Level	An indicator of the relative demand, complexity,

	depth of learning and of learner autonomy derived from agreed generic level descriptors
NICATS	Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (NICATS). These are level descriptors to explain the relative demand, complexity, depth of study and learner autonomy of a unit.
NPFS	The National Planning and Funding System
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SEMTA	The Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering, Manufacturing Technologies
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SSC	Sector Skills Council
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WBL	Work Based Learning

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