

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

## **Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL) Project**

### **Interim Report**

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## **SCQF RPL Project Interim Report**

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# 1. Purpose and structure of Interim Report

1.1 The purpose of the interim report is to present the outcomes of phase one of the project for consideration by the project steering group and Joint Secretariat. It will identify the key issues to be explored further in the national debate, through both the sector-based SCQF RPL Workshops, and the discussion forum on the RPL project website ([www.scqf.org.uk/rpl](http://www.scqf.org.uk/rpl)) in order to define and agree the scope and structure of the SCQF RPL Guidelines. These key issues have emerged through a review of the current extent and nature of RPL activity in Scotland across the post-16 education and training sectors, and the potential for further RPL development within the context of the SCQF.

1.2 The report will first indicate the purpose and scope of the SCQF RPL project and will then consider the key issues to be explored in phase two of the project. It will then focus on the outcomes of the review of current and potential RPL activity, which led to the identification of the key issues. The European context for RPL development will then be explored briefly.

## 2. Purpose and scope of project

### 2.1 Project aim

2.1.1 The aim of the project is to facilitate a national debate on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) within the context of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The key outcome of this debate will be the development of guidelines to support the implementation of RPL provision across all post-compulsory education and training sectors in Scotland.

2.1.2 The guidelines will form a section of the SCQF Handbook and will cover all prior learning which has not previously been assessed or credit-rated. This will include prior learning achieved through life and work experiences, as well as prior learning gained in less formal contexts; in community-based learning, work-based learning, continuing professional development and voluntary work. Developing effective mechanisms for recognising prior learning is an essential element of the successful implementation of the SCQF.

### 2.2 Definition of terms

2.2.1 The working definitions of the different types of learning referred to in this project are derived from those used by the EU in its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EC, 2000):

- **Formal learning** takes place in education and training institutions leading to recognised diplomas and qualifications.
- **Non-formal learning** takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formal certification

e.g. learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and through community-based learning.

- **Informal learning** can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning. The learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to the development of their skills and knowledge. This recognition may only happen retrospectively through the RPL process, unless the experiences take place as part of a planned experiential or work-based learning, programme.

2.2.2 While it is useful to differentiate between these different types of learning for the purposes of this project, it is likely that an individual's learning experience will have a combination of formal, non-formal and informal aspects. (H. Colley, P. Hodgkinson, J. Malcolm, 2003)

2.2.3 **Recognition of prior informal learning** can be undertaken by a learner for both personal and career development and for gaining credit (for entry and/or credit within formal programmes of study).

2.2.4 **RPL, often described as the Assessment, or Accreditation, of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**, is a process engaged in by learners, or adults considering returning to learning, that involves describing experiences, reflecting on those experiences, identifying the learning associated with the experiences and providing evidence of their learning. The role of the learning provider is to provide effective support to the learner in this process and to manage the process of recognition in a clear and consistent manner.

## 2.3 Purpose of the guidelines

- To provide guidance to learning providers across all post-16 education sectors in Scotland on managing the process of recognising prior informal learning within the context of the SCQF;
- To provide a core set of principles that will enable users of the SCQF to have confidence that there is a consistent approach to assessing and credit-rating prior informal learning;
- To support the more widespread practice of recognising prior learning as part of the lifelong learning agenda in Scotland.

## 2.4 Project timescale

The project is being undertaken in three phases from October 2003 until March 2005. A summary of the project activities is attached as Appendix 1

## 2.5 Phase one: October 2003 - April 2004

2.5.1 In order to identify the key issues which require to be further explored within the national debate on RPL, the current range of RPL activities both across and within each sector were investigated: Higher Education Institutions

(HEIs); colleges/ SQA provision; community-based learning and development (CLD); voluntary organisations, and workplace learning and training.

2.5.2 This research activity included an exploration and identification of:

- the context of learning;
- the type of learning being supported and assessed;
- the way in which it is being supported and assessed;
- the way in which the learning is credit-rated (if appropriate);
- the reasons RPL is being used and expected outcomes;
- the potential scope for RPL, if not already being utilised.

2.5.3 This research was conducted through a combination of desk-based research and discussions with representatives of key stakeholders within the different sectors. A list of the key stakeholders consulted during phase one is attached as Appendix 2.

2.5.4 European and non-European developments in RPL, and in particular their relationship to credit and qualifications frameworks were also investigated as were quality assurance issues in relation to RPL provision.

### **3. Key Issues to be explored in National Debate**

3.1 The central challenge underpinning the project is how the SCQF can support the wider recognition of prior informal learning in a way that is useful to the learner; to the learning provider; to the receiving institution; to the community and to employers.

In what ways can this learning be recognised in the form of credit rating within the context of the SCQF and how can this be linked to the personal and professional development of the learner and the planning of future learning pathways?

3.2 The key issues in relation to this challenge which have emerged during phase one of the project fall broadly into two categories:

- **The need to raise confidence in the RPL process through identifying and agreeing core principles to ensure quality;**
- **The need to widen the accessibility of the RPL process through developing approaches that make better use of limited resources and meet the needs and expectations of ‘hard to reach’ learners.**

#### **3.3 Raising confidence in RPL process through agreement of core principles**

3.3.1 By identifying core principles as the parameters within which all RPL provision within the context of the SCQF will operate, sector-wide, as well as institution-wide, consistency will be more feasibly achieved.

3.3.1 RPL processes relating to learner support, assessment, credit rating and monitoring need to be fully integrated within institutional quality assurance systems to ensure transparency, consistency and equity.

3.3.2 Through discussion with key stakeholders it is clear that staff in colleges and universities consider that they need more effective training and support in developing and implementing RPL systems for learner support and assessment.

3.3.4 Receiving institutions need also to address the issue of 'parity of esteem' which is a fundamental goal of the SCQF. This relates not just to the equal recognition of academic and vocational qualifications, but to the equal recognition of experiential, informal learning and non-formal learning. RPL as an entry route and a means of gaining credit within formal programmes of study needs to become more embedded within curriculum design. Learning outcomes should be expressed in a way that enables a variety of different routes for their achievement, as well as the use of flexible modes of assessment. The issue of parity of esteem between informal and formal learning will be explored.

3.3.5 The role of learning and training providers, both community- and work-based, and careers guidance organisations in supporting learners who are undertaking RPL for personal/career development; to facilitate the transition between informal and formal learning; or to seek recognition in the form of credit from a receiving institution (college or HEI), should also be explored in the national debate.

3.3.6 The core principles underpinning an effective and quality-assured RPL process will be defined in the national debate

### **3.4 Widening accessibility of RPL process**

The issues and potential developments to be explored in the national debate which relate to widening the accessibility of the RPL process across the different sectors will be considered within the context of:

- RPL for personal/career development
- RPL within bridging activities to support the transition between informal and formal learning
- RPL for credit ( for entry to, or credit within, formal programmes of study)

#### **3.4.1 RPL for personal/career development**

- **SCQF 'levelling', or general SCQF credit-rating, of prior informal learning**

The idea of a *notional* SCQF 'levelling' that can be attached to prior informal learning by learning providers, or an *actual* general SCQF credit-rating awarded by a credit-rating body as a means of locating a learner on the SCQF as part an educational or career guidance process, has been welcomed by the key stakeholders who have been

consulted to date. RPL activity, whether taking place within community or voluntary sector provision, workplace training, or college outreach centres for example, that could lead to an SCQF general credit-rating would confer an external recognition of that learning. This would both enhance the self-confidence of the learner as 'a learner', and provide a clearer indication of the potential pathways the learner can take to progress their learning in order to achieve their personal or career goals.

- **A two - stage approach to RPL**

The distinction drawn between formative and summative 'validation' in the proposed 'Common Principles for Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning' might be a useful way of defining a two-stage approach to RPL for personal/career development. Formative validation is defined as the process of identifying learning outcomes without formal recognition (for personal and/or career development), while summative validation leads to certification of that learning. Formative validation may potentially provide the basis for formal recognition, (EC, March 2004). A two-stage approach to RPL, based on a formative recognition and summative recognition has the potential to provide a more holistic approach to recognition of an individual's learning. A formative recognition could focus more on the notion of 'distance travelled' and embrace learner defined goals more easily than a summative recognition process based on the achievement of externally defined outcomes. Formative recognition might lead to a notional SCQF levelling in terms of defining broadly where a learner is located in the Framework as part of educational and career guidance, while summative recognition might lead to a general SCQF credit-rating. This could then be used by the learner to seek specific credit within a formal programme of study. The mechanisms for a notional SCQF levelling, and/or general SCQF credit rating process for prior informal learning need to be explored in the debate.

- **Use of SQA core skills framework to recognise prior informal learning**

The use of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) core skills framework to certificate the 'soft' or transferable skills developed through prior informal learning gained within the community and the workplace should be considered in the national debate. Such skills underpin both effective learning and employability. The possible SQA development to certificate 10 hour units/1 SCQF credit within the context of the core skills framework could be a more manageable way of recognising the skills gained by learners as a step towards completion of full core skills units. (See paragraph 5.4.29)

- **Shared responsibility for providing evidence of prior informal learning**

Within CLD provision, learning providers could facilitate the RPL process by recording the learning achieved in a format that could be presented by the learner at some future point as a source of evidence

to a credit-rating organisation. This would share the responsibility of evidence gathering between learner and learning provider, and would enable learners who wished to seek credit for their learning to obtain the evidence more easily. It would be important to avoid a formal assessment process as a means of recording such learning, as this may distort the learning experience and as such be a disincentive for learners. This issue will be explored in discussion with CLD learning providers.

- **Placing the needs of the learner at the centre of the RPL process**  
It is clearly important to avoid developing RPL systems which could force learners to 'shoehorn' their learning into the framework in a way that is either devaluing or unhelpful. It is imperative that the needs and expectations of the learner should be at the centre of this process rather than those of the learning provider or the receiving institution. Not all prior informal learning should be assessed and credit-rated and learners and learning providers should not feel compelled to seek a credit-rating for all learning. The opportunity for formal recognition should however be available.

#### **3.4.2 RPL within bridging activities to support transition stages.**

- **Potential development**  
There is a need to link RPL directly to further learning opportunities, not just in terms of claims for entry and credit within formal programmes of study, but in terms of bridging activities to ease the transition between informal and formal learning. Links should be made with other projects and developments that are taking place in relation to bridging and learner support and guidance such as the SACCA Bridging project and the Effective Learning Framework (see paragraphs 5.3.5 and 5.4.19 respectively). This transition stage can be at various points of a learning pathway - the transition between informal and non-formal learning and training; or between informal/non-formal and formal learning at a college or university. The issue of how such bridging activities could be resourced and who should provide them should be considered in the national debate

#### **3.4.3 RPL for credit**

- **Development of more manageable approaches to RPL**  
Specific credit rating of prior informal learning takes place within colleges and HEIs through existing APEL processes. These could be potentially less resource-intensive by utilising models which provide more structured guidance to the learner on the type of evidence that is required for their RPL claim and which utilise group approaches to learner support, rather than solely individualised tuition. Self-evaluation and the use of e-learning tools should also be considered as methods to complement the support and assessment provided by academic staff. The integration of RPL processes within Personal Development

Planning approaches should also be considered (see paragraph 5.4.19). Less resource-intensive approaches, (from the perspectives of both learner and learning provider or receiving institution) require to be developed in order for RPL to become a feasible option for a greater number of learners.

- **Consideration of effective approaches to RPL within different contexts**

The project needs also to consider whether particular models or mechanisms for RPL work better in different settings or sectors. Consideration of alternative models for RPL support and assessment will be another focus of the national debate.

- **Links with European developments in RPL**

Innovative developments in RPL at national, European and non-European levels will be identified during the national debate and through links with the REFINE and VaLEx projects. (See paragraphs 6.3 and 6.4 respectively)

### **3.5 Nature and scope of guidelines**

3.5.1 The core principles underpinning RPL will be defined as a result of the national debate. It is proposed that the guidelines will have three strands – RPL for personal/career development; RPL for bridging to support the transition between informal and formal learning and RPL for credit (for entry to, or credit within, formal programmes of study).

3.5.2 The section on RPL for credit will reflect the existing good practice that takes place within colleges and universities. The sections on RPL for personal/career development and RPL for bridging will seek to encourage a more developmental approach to RPL than currently underpins most RPL practice in the UK (Butterworth, 1992). The SCQF provides the opportunity to recognise the process of RPL itself as a learning experience as well as to facilitate the planning of further learning. RPL has a prospective, as well as retrospective, dimension.

3.5.3 It will also be important to convey in the guidelines that, for the learner, all three strands of RPL may be interconnected. This will require mutual trust and cooperation between learning providers and receiving institutions across the different sectors to ensure that the needs of the learner are best served.

3.5.4 The national debate will also provide the opportunity to consider what additional guidance, learning and training providers and receiving institutions will need in order to implement the guidelines.

## **3.6 National debate and production of guidelines**

3.6.1 In conclusion, the following questions will be explored in the sector-based RPL workshops and the discussion forum on the SCQF RPL project website.

- What are the key challenges and issues facing the wider and more effective recognition of prior informal learning within each sector?
- How can the SCQF support the development of creative solutions?
- What should the nature and scope of the SCQF guidelines be, in order to best support wider RPL activity and a more explicit link between informal and formal learning opportunities?
- What core principles need to be addressed in the guidelines in order to ensure quality of provision and that the needs of the learner are met?

3.6.2 The discussion generated by these questions in the national debate will contribute to the production of the SCQF RPL guidelines. Draft guidelines will be produced by November 2004 and circulated for consultation across the different sectors. The final guidelines will be produced during 2005.

3.7 The report will now consider the outcomes of the review of current and potential RPL activity across the different sectors which led to the identification of the key issues above.

## **4. Summary of current RPL activity in Scotland**

### **4.1 Overview**

Since its introduction in the late 1980s with the development of the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (SCOTCATS) and its integration within SQA (then SCOTVEC) provision, RPL (or APEL) has remained a marginal institutional activity within further and higher education. There are currently no overall nationally agreed principles for recognising and credit rating non-formal and informal learning in a consistent manner. RPL developments take place within the context of institutions, some of which are supported through nationally, or European-funded development projects.

### **4.2 RPL within HEIs**

RPL activity is most prevalent in the 'new', or post-1992 universities which continue to place a greater emphasis on widening access to higher education, especially amongst adult returners. Little RPL activity takes place within the older universities. Within most of the new universities, RPL provision is not mainstream but is undertaken in particular vocationally specific areas such as nursing and social work. This limited use of RPL continues despite the development of university wide policies and procedures for RPL/APEL within several HEIs which are intended to relate to all or most undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

### **4.3 RPL within colleges**

Despite the development by SQA (formerly SCOTVEC) of APEL support and assessment mechanisms, most RPL activity that takes place within colleges is an informal, non-recorded process for the purposes of access to a programme of study. The formal programmes of study that are undertaken within further education colleges, such as National Courses from Access 1 to Advanced Higher, Higher National Qualifications (Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas), Professional Development Awards and Professional qualifications are designed for college-based delivery. RPL claims for credit are usually regarded as overly complicated and more time-consuming than undertaking the learning through the conventional route

### **4.4 RPL within Community Learning and Development (CLD)**

'RPL-type' activity takes place within community learning and development and voluntary sector learning providers, focussing largely on the development of core skills, adult literacy and numeracy, 'return to learn' and confidence-building but much of this is not formally assessed or credit-rated.

### **4.5 RPL within the workplace**

Equally, there are a few mechanisms to formally, or externally, recognise the wide range of informal learning that takes place within the workplace, unless linked to Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) provision. SVQs are competence-based qualifications based on National Occupational Standards and evidenced largely through work-based performance. A number of employers or training providers who are approved centres regard RPL as an integral part of their SVQ provision. RPL approaches have been developed within these companies which enable employees to provide evidence of their achievement of the competences as a fast track route to completing the qualification. Several of these employers have reported that the recognition of experience and competence has led to increased self-esteem among the workforce – individuals feel empowered to accept new responsibility and have the confidence that the external recognition of their skills has a currency within their industry or sector as a whole.

### **4.6 RPL within the voluntary sector**

Much of the workplace training and informal learning that takes place in the voluntary sector for volunteers is non-accredited unless linked to SVQ provision or to pre-qualifying work-based degree programmes. In order to facilitate the personal development of volunteers, both personal development planning and the compilation of portfolios is encouraged in many voluntary organisations. This enables volunteers to gather evidence of the learning gained through training as well as through the experience of volunteering. Portfolios can be used to support a request for enhanced responsibility or a change in role or participation in further learning and development, whether non-formal or formal.

## **4.7 RPL for personal/career development**

4.7.1 A wide range of informal learning is undertaken by individuals through community learning and development activities provided by local authorities, college outreach centres, or Learn direct-recognised centres, within the voluntary sector and within the workplace. This learning is highly valuable to the learner as well as to the community or employer, but is usually non-assessed and therefore not credit-rated. Informal learning activities in these sectors can focus on core skills, such as communication and ICT skills, literacy and numeracy; context-specific skills such as committee skills or vocational skills, as well as confidence-raising, 'return to learn' type provision. Many of the learner groups engaged in these activities are often described as 'hard to reach' learners. External recognition of this learning within the context of the SCQF would enhance the self-confidence of these individuals as 'learners' and could facilitate the identification of further learning pathways as part of an educational and career guidance process.

4.7.2 A more developmental, rather than instrumentalist, approach to RPL needs to be developed in order to better meet the needs of learners. The awarding of specific credit within the context of formal programmes is an important function of RPL. Equally valuable, however, is the formative role RPL can play in terms of personal growth and development.

## **4.8 RPL for credit (APEL)**

4.8.1 In the early 1990s, SQA (then SCOTVEC) and many HEIs developed APEL mechanisms based on the portfolio approach. This tended to be a flexible, open-ended approach to evidence-gathering, highly learner-centred and therefore requiring highly individualised learner support. The process of compiling a portfolio is a demanding one for learners, particularly for those learner groups, such as adult returners who have been out of the educational system for some time, and for whom APEL was developed as a more flexible means of enabling access to, and credit within, programmes of study. The assessment of portfolios, particularly those which have been compiled without structured guidance to limit the quantity of evidence, is a lengthier process than other forms of assessment.

4.8.2 As a result, within college/SQA provision, if RPL for credit takes place it is normally managed through 'assessment on demand' i.e. undertaking the normal unit/programme assessment. RPL for entry onto programmes of study takes place during the admissions process, normally through an interview. It is not described or recorded as an RPL process. However the prior informal learning of applicants over the age of 21 is taken into account if they do not have the normal entry requirements. RPL-type activity is also embedded in many Access and Return to Learn programmes provided by colleges.

4.8.2 Within HEIs, most RPL activity has as its focus the gaining of credit within programmes rather than as a means of gaining initial access or entry to a programme as an alternative to traditional entry qualifications. Moreover, most RPL claims within Scottish universities are made at the postgraduate level. This is because institutions find it easier to accredit experiential learning which equates to the specialised, professional learning that is undertaken at postgraduate or post-experience level. Attempts to match the outcomes of experiential learning to the outcomes of subject areas at undergraduate levels are often unsuccessful. The outcomes of most undergraduate programmes are designed to be achieved through conventional delivery, not experiential learning. Even if a match can be made, the perception of the outcomes of experiential learning as lower status knowledge may be reinforced by an accreditation process which requires that it is translated into the form of knowledge recognised in academia.

## **4.9 Summary**

4.9.1 In sum, current RPL activity in Scotland is limited and marginal, largely due to the complexity and time-consuming nature of RPL processes. This issue requires to be addressed through the development of more manageable approaches to RPL support and assessment if wider RPL activity within the HEI and college/SQA sectors is to be encouraged. The current lack of resources to support increased RPL provision will continue to act as a barrier to further RPL activity. The joint corporate plan of the merged funding councils highlights their commitment to social inclusion and lifelong learning. RPL has the potential to tackle some of the barriers to participation in further and higher education. A funding mechanism, which encourages more flexible approaches to learning and assessment, would be a major factor in enabling increased RPL activity.

4.9.2 Discussions with key stakeholders indicated that there is a huge potential for RPL activity particularly within community learning and development, voluntary-based learning provision, workplace learning and training and in relation to careers and educational guidance. The SCQF has the capacity to provide an enabling mechanism for recognising the prior informal learning that takes place within these sectors and, moreover, encourage the identification of further learning pathways.

## **5. Approaches to RPL**

### **5.1 Overview**

5.1.1 RPL processes can be used for personal/career development; in bridging activities to support the transition between informal and formal learning; and for credit-rating (for entry and/or credit within formal programmes of study).

5.1.2 Most RPL processes contain an element of reflection and identification of the learning gained through experiential or informal learning which can be matched against a set of core or subject-specific skills within a community-based learning or workplace training context (personal/career development); against the core learning skills required to successfully undertake a programme of formal learning (bridging); against the entry requirements to a formal programme of study (recognition for entry); or against the outcomes of a formal learning programme (recognition for credit).

5.1.3 As indicated earlier, the definition of RPL that underpins most RPL activity is a process that involves describing experiences; reflecting on those experiences; identifying the learning associated with the experiences; identifying, selecting and presenting evidence of that learning.

5.1.4 The learning and assessment strategies currently used to support RPL processes, possible further developments and relevant quality assurance issues, will be considered across the different sectors within the context of these three broad types of RPL activity.

### **5.2 RPL for personal/career development**

#### **What is the purpose of RPL activities linked to personal/career development?**

5.2.1 RPL activities, within both formal and non-formal settings, can be linked to the personal and career development of learners. The RPL process enables learners to make clearer connections between the learning they have already achieved and future learning opportunities. The personal value of engaging in the RPL process in terms of confidence-building and promoting self-direction is a key outcome. The RPL process provides a basis for enhancing self-knowledge in a way that encourages personal development and prepares learners not only for further learning, but also for the labour market.

#### **What does the process involve?**

5.2.2 During such RPL activities, learners can be encouraged to think about their life and work experiences and identify their skills and knowledge through a series of prompt questions which take them through each stage of the

reflective process. A variation on Kolb's learning cycle is often used to describe this process to learners (Kolb, 1984). For example, learners can be asked to think about a particular incident and to describe what happened, what changes in perception occurred and what they felt they had learned from the experience. They are then asked to consider the transferability of this learning, i.e. how this learning can be applied (and further developed) in different contexts. Learning outcomes which may be initially defined by the learner in a contextually-specific way are then redefined as broader, more transferable outcomes.

5.2.3 The crucial feature of this process is to highlight to the learner that learning occurs through a variety of life and work experiences; can be made explicit; and as a result can be recognised as learning by the individual and by others.

### **What can be the outcomes of this process?**

5.2.4 Whether this process leads to self-recognition of learning or formal recognition as part of a programme for personal or professional development or for entry to a formal programme of study at a college or university, it can lead to greater self-confidence and higher self-esteem on the part of the learner. By becoming more conscious of themselves as learners, the transition into more formal learning, if that is the direction the learner chooses to take, can become less daunting as a result. By developing a clearer understanding of the nature of her knowledge and skills the learner can make more informed decisions about the direction she wishes to take in terms of further learning, employment or community activity. By defining what she already knows or can do, an individual is better equipped to identify her goals and the steps she needs to take in order to achieve them.

### **Where does, or could, such activity take place?**

5.2.5 Such RPL-type processes can take place within the context of access programmes leading to entry to a programme of study within colleges or HEIs; community-based learning provision offered by colleges and local authorities; community learning and development providers and voluntary sector learning provision and within workplace learning programmes offered by such organisations as the Workers Educational Association (WEA).

## **Informal learning within Community Learning and Development**

### **5.2.6 Overview**

Participation in informal and non-formal learning can be an important pathway into more formal learning. Community-based learning provides a non-formal learning experience for individuals who are not ready or confident enough to embark on formal or certificated learning. It has a vital role to play in encouraging participation in lifelong learning. The provision and developments taking place within the following organisations provide examples of this type of activity:

### **5.2.7 The Worker Educational Association (WEA)**

The WEA programme targets adults facing barriers to learning as a result of economic circumstances, low self-confidence or lack of educational opportunity. WEA courses build confidence and skills, are organised and progressive, sometimes accredited and often a bridge to other learning. The five broad types of learning provision are community training; liberal studies; social and political studies; community arts; workplace learning. The latter includes return to study, literacies, core skills development, confidence building as a bridge to further or formal learning or preparation for retirement. The WEA's approach to learning includes valuing and making use of a student's life experience and involving students in organising provision and planning their own learning. The 'Return to Learn' programme provided in workplaces by the WEA is a learning and communications skills course with a high level of personal development and student guidance. The programme provides accreditation for three SQA core skills modules, but has the potential to integrate RPL processes to enable the credit-rating of a wide range of skills within their community-based provision as well as in the workplace.

### **5.2.8 Youthlink Scotland**

The '**Step it Up**' materials used by Youthlink Scotland are designed to support developmental work with young people in youth work settings across Scotland. The self-assessment programme, the Step it Up website, provides a structure for young people to chart their progress in social and emotional development and show evidence of this. The process also provides focus for reflective discussion between the youth worker and young person in those areas of development to which the competences relate. The outcome of this process is confidence building and relates to core skills development but is not formally credit-rated.

### **5.2.9 Careers Scotland**

The All-age guidance provided by Careers Scotland employs an RPL type approach when conducting interviews with adults who require a more assisted or intensive form of careers guidance. Individuals are encouraged to think about the skills and knowledge they have developed through a variety of different life and work experiences in order to identify future work or career goals and the steps needed to be taken in order to achieve them, such as further learning. Utilising the SCQF to inform the educational guidance and planning process would be a useful tool for Careers Scotland advisors.

### **5.2.10 Learning link Scotland**

Voluntary organisations also make substantial contribution to learning and 'first steps' type provision. Learning Link Scotland is a support and umbrella organisation for voluntary organisations providing learning opportunities. In a workshop organised by Learning Link Scotland on RPL in February 2004, the use of the SCQF to recognise the prior informal learning of learners was explored by a number of different voluntary organisations. The organisations which participated in this workshop is included as Appendix 3. One of the key challenges facing such learning providers is the retention and progression of their learners. The experience of engaging in a learning activity is highly motivating for the learner in terms of undertaking further learning. However,

often there is no obvious route by which the individual can build on that learning.

#### **5.2.11 Learn direct Scotland**

The challenge of learner retention and progression as a key issue was echoed by Learn direct Scotland in relation to the adults engaging in the learning provision in many of their Learn direct centres. Guiding the learner more effectively in terms of further learning opportunities through identifying pathways through the SCQF would be useful tool for such learning providers.

#### **Informal learning within workplace learning and training**

5.2.12 The experience of undertaking a specific project in the workplace; the experience of undertaking a job (paid or unpaid) for length of time; on the job training; and the non-accredited employee development and workplace training provided by trade unions results in substantial informal learning, as does involvement in local community projects, or working as a volunteer as the prerequisite skills and knowledge are developed in order to carry out a specific role.

5.2.13 The Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) guidance pack on learning and human resource development within voluntary organisations 'Putting People in the Picture' (SCVO, ESF, NTO, 2001) describes informal learning experiences as well as more formal approaches to training as a means of meeting the staff development needs and expectations of both paid staff and volunteer

#### **How can the recognition of prior informal learning for personal/career development be managed?**

#### **Community Learning and Development**

5.2.14 Much of the non-formal and informal learning engaged in within the community and within the voluntary sector is measured through the notion of 'distance travelled' by the learner rather than an assessment against externally defined learning outcomes. The learning journey is as important as the outcome and begins from where the individual defines himself to be, rather than from an externally prescribed starting point. The individual learner defines his own outcomes and is supported in planning their achievement by the learning provider.

5.2.14 The recently developed **Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework** utilises the concept of an Individual Learning Plan which can incorporate both prior and planned experiential learning as well as more formal learning in the achievement of core skills. The learning is contextualised within the individual's own experience ensuring that its relevance and applicability are immediate (Communities Scotland, 2003) . The Adult Literacies team at Communities Scotland is involved in investigating the way in which the SCQF can provide a context for credit-rating the training of tutors and volunteers working in the area of adult literacy, as well as the learning undertaken by individuals.

5.2.15 The recently published **Scottish Executive guidance for Community Learning and Development** 'Working and learning together to build stronger communities' (Scottish Executive, January 2004) sets out a long term framework for the promotion and development of CLD. With regard to the CLD action plans to be produced by Community Planning Partnerships, the guidance points out the need to make reference to the SCQF. It refers to the credit-rating of informal, experiential and community based training and development work in order to 'help people to recognise their own learning achieved in informal settings and through activities in the community, and to see how each learning experience connects with other opportunities as part of a process of lifelong learning'. The Scottish Executive is funding a worker to support local authorities and other partners in the development and implementation of CLD action plans through raising awareness of the SCQF.

5.2.16 The recognition of such informal learning within the context of the SCQF will require more than simply an 'outcomes matching' approach. A more holistic approach that places the learner at the centre of the process (rather than the learning provider or receiving institution) will require to be developed.

5.2.17 Currently most of the informal and non-formal learning activity undertaken in the area of personal development falls outwith the scope of formal recognition systems.

5.2.18 One possible approach which has emerged during discussions with key stakeholders is the targeting of 'hard to reach' learners through existing groups within community learning and development and voluntary organisations. The learning activities already provided by these organisations motivate individuals as learners. RPL activities undertaken by such learners in a semi-structured environment in which a personal narrative approach is used would enable learners to talk about what they do and therefore what they know. This approach of identifying skills (rather than gaps) and contextualising this learning within the realm of the person's own experience underpins much existing CLD and voluntary sector learning provision. A process of 'levelling' of these skills and knowledge within the context of the SCQF could then take place, utilising the level descriptors. The learner could then go on to seek formal credit-rating of this learning through SQA provision or an HEI if the result of this process is the choice of a formal learning pathway. Such a two-stage approach can be explored in the national debate.

### **Workplace Learning and Training.**

5.2.19 **Volunteer Development Scotland** (VDS) have produced guidance on recognition and accreditation for volunteers in Scotland 'Getting recognised, giving credit' (Volunteer Development Scotland, Community Fund), which includes various tools of recognition such as certificates of training; record of training; personal development plans; general and specific portfolios; national occupational standards; and accreditation through recognised schemes and awards, for example Youth Achievement Awards, and individual units or a

group of units for an SVQ. SQA core skills units have not achieved high completion rates within the context of volunteer development and as result VDS are encouraging voluntary organisations to become registered as centres for the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Certificate in Community Volunteering (CCV) as a means of recognising the skills and good practice of volunteers working effectively in the community. The CCV has been approved by QCA/ACCAC/CEA in the National Qualifications Framework at Levels 1 and 2. It is not yet recognised within the SCQF. VDS have recently commenced an in-house piece of research into how learning gained through volunteering training courses and the experience of volunteering itself can be recognised in the SCQF. This work will inform, and be informed by, the production of the SCQF RPL Guidelines.

#### **5.2.20 SQA Provision / National Occupational Standards**

The outcome of informal learning in the workplace is core skills development as well as vocationally-specific skills. SQA core skills and SVQ provision can provide a means of recognising these skills while the National Occupational Standards defined by UK-wide bodies can be used to measure workplace performance. National Occupational Standards are perceived as useful in terms of the skills agenda as they can be used as benchmarks within qualifications; in the design of job specifications; and assessing and recognising the work-based achievements of employees. These standards could be used for RPL for formative purposes within the workplace without necessarily leading to formal credit-rating in the form of SVQs or SVQ units.

#### **5.2.21 SCQF level descriptors**

SCQF level descriptors are not easily translated within the context of work-based settings. This was indicated when five Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) tested out the proposed methodology for measuring the kinds of skills and knowledge defined in national occupational standards against the level descriptors (Miller West for SQA, 2003). As a result SQA has commissioned Miller West Ltd to produce a commentary on each of the level descriptors which will assist SSCs and other sector bodies to contextualise them in workplace settings. SQA as the regulatory body in Scotland places SVQs on the SCQF at a notional level, but does not yet allocate SCQF credit to SVQ. SQA is currently in discussion with UK partners on how to implement credit-rating and levelling of SVQs and NVQs in a manner which is appropriate to the different stages of development of UK frameworks. While credit and qualifications frameworks may be different in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, common principles and mutual recognition are being employed in the credit-rating of SVQs and NVQs. A review of the nature and use of level descriptors in Scotland is being planned for later this year.

#### **5.2.22 Sector-specific SCQF level descriptors?**

The project recently undertaken by Sector Skills Alliance Scotland (SSAScot) investigated the potential benefits of producing a sector-specific SCQF toolkit including a sector-specific framework and level descriptors for employers and Sector skills bodies. If it is decided that such a framework should be developed, it would 'show the employer exactly what qualifications are

available and the relationship between qualifications, which will allow employers to map career paths for their employees. The sector-specific level descriptors will provide employers with a description of each level within the Framework and show which sector-specific qualifications relate to these descriptions' (SSAScot, March 2004). This report concludes that such a sector-specific toolkit would be welcomed by Sector Skills Bodies and could be highly useful to employers in terms of recruitment and selection; career progression, staff appraisal and training strategies. Not only could it enable employers to locate industry-relevant qualifications, both vocational and academic, and 'Industry Standards and Qualifications' which are not yet formally recognised in the SCQF, it could also facilitate for employers the process of seeking approval for SCQF credit for their in-house training provision. Employees could utilise a sector-specific framework to plan their own training and learning pathways in order to achieve their career development goals. Sector-specific level descriptors might also enable employees, with support from their employer or through a careers guidance process, to relate their prior informal learning to appropriate levels in the framework, thus facilitating an RPL process. Moreover, tailoring level descriptors for different learning contexts could have broader applicability across the different education and training sectors.

### **What is the potential scope of RPL for personal/career development?**

5.2.23 Not all informal learning should be assessed and credit-rated. Formal recognition will not be desired by, or appropriate for, all learners. However if mechanisms can be developed which are accessible to learners and manageable for learning providers, it should then become a matter of learner choice.

5.2.24 Key stakeholders from the CLD and voluntary sector, including Communities Scotland, Association of Scottish Colleges (ASC) (in terms of college community/outreach provision) Learning link Scotland, SCVO, Volunteer Development Scotland, learn direct Scotland, Careers Scotland and representatives of the workplace learning and training sector, STUC Lifelong Learning Unit, CBI, COSLA and SSASCOT considered that a process of mapping an individual's skills and knowledge onto the SCQF as a means of identifying broadly where they sit within the framework would be useful to the learner and to the learning provider.

5.2.25 A 'notional' idea of level (utilising the level descriptors as a guide) would assist the learning provider, whether a tutor in a voluntary organisation, or a Trade Union Learning Rep or a careers advisor for example, in providing guidance on ways the learner can use and build on their skills and knowledge in terms of further learning opportunities.

5.2.26 Discussions with representatives of colleges indicated the benefits of organisations like Careers Scotland or Learn direct Scotland providing a pre-entry RPL service to learners who are making the transition from informal to formal learning. Learners who have been guided in the identification of their skills and knowledge through an RPL process which involved a levelling of

their learning within the SCQF would be able to provide a record of that process to admissions staff in colleges and HEIs to support their application. This would also benefit admissions staff in helping them to reach decisions about an applicant's potential ability to successfully undertake the programme.

5.2.27 The proposal for EU Common Principles for the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning as part of the Copenhagen process provides a useful distinction between formative and summative validation. The overall aim of validation (or recognition) is to make visible and value the full range of qualifications and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where these have been acquired. The purpose of this validation may be formative (supporting an ongoing learning process) as well as summative (aiming at certification). Formative validation is defined as the 'process of identifying learning outcomes without formal recognition (for personal and/or career development). Formative validation may potentially provide the basis for formal recognition' (EC, March 2004). It is expected that the common principles will be agreed at the Education Council at the end of May 2004. Such an approach could be usefully explored in the national debate as a means of providing a two-stage approach to RPL for personal/career development.

### **5.3 RPL within bridging activities to support the transition from informal to formal learning**

#### **What does the process involve and what can be its outcomes?**

5.3.1 RPL can recognise and enhance the informal learning processes in which individuals are already engaged, and provide links between that type of learning and other more formal types of learning. This can be achieved, for example, through the identification of learning skills which can be transferred between different learning contexts.

5.3.2 Make Experience Count provision, which encourages learners to identify the core learning skills they have already developed through life and work experiences, and ways in which these can be further developed as a preparation for a formal programme of learning at a college or university, has also been developed and used with adult returners.

#### **Where does, or could, such activity take place?**

5.3.3 Such activities can be undertaken through 'pre-Access' and Access courses, CLD provision in the community and the workplace as indicated in the range of activities offered by such organisations as the WEA.

5.3.4 Make Experience count provision can be stand alone or part of a wider programme of return to study or bridging activities provided in university summer schools, for example, to support the transition into degree level

study. Examples of HEIs which offer such provision include Napier, Paisley and Glasgow Caledonian universities.

### **What is the potential scope for RPL in supporting the transition from informal to formal learning?**

5.3.5 The **Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA) Bridging Project** is identifying good practice in supporting learners moving from colleges to HEIs through 'bridging activities'. The project is focussed on meeting the needs of learners making the transition from HNQs to degree programmes. Evaluative toolkits are being developed for both institutions and learners. The toolkit for institutions will guide staff in HEIs in identifying the key outcomes of levels 1 and 2 in degree programmes (SCQF levels 8 and 9) and comparing these to the learning experience of HN students. The process of comparison will identify gaps that could be a barrier for learners and will assist the process of planning to meet those gaps. The learner toolkit is generic, i.e. non-institution and non-programme-specific. It focuses on the differences a learners will face when moving from an HN programme to a university course and will guide them to appropriate forms of support, for example programme tutors and specialised support staff within colleges and HEIs. The toolkit itself could potentially be adapted for other learner groups in different contexts who are moving from informal and non-formal learning, in the community or workplace, to formal learning.

5.3.6 The **West of Scotland Wider Access Forum Project Decision Making in Progression and Transition** aims to address the ways in which students can be supported in the decision-making process relating to progression and transition from FE to HE. The project will develop a programme that will assist students to make appropriate educational decisions at key points in their lives. A set of materials and workshops will be developed that will complement the existing guidance mechanisms within institutions. The student groups the project is focussing on will be students undertaking non-advanced courses in FE who wish to progress to HE courses within a college; students on Access courses or studying Highers within FE progressing to HE courses in a college or degree courses in an HEI; students progressing from HN courses to degree courses. The support materials produced through this project could have a broader applicability in their use with students making the transition from informal and formal learning programmes

## **5.4 RPL for credit towards or within formal programmes of study**

### **What is the purpose of this activity?**

5.4.1 RPL for credit, usually described as the Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), can be undertaken by a learner to gain entry to the first level of a programme of formal learning within further and higher education (as an alternative to normal entry requirements if he or she can demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skill which is equivalent to the

specified entry requirements). It can also be used to gain credit within programmes of study at colleges and HEIs. Credit can be sought against specific units or modules or for entire levels of a programme.

### **What does the process involve and what can be its outcomes within the HEI sector?**

5.4.2 In cases where learners are undertaking RPL (or APEL) processes as part of a programme of study in an higher education institution, the principles of reflection and identification of learning are the same as those underpinning RPL for personal and career development. However, these processes require a number of tasks to be carried out by the learner for the purposes of formal assessment and credit-rating. Learners are normally required to define their prior informal learning in terms of learning outcomes; to demonstrate the equivalence of these outcomes to those of the module, or programme level for which they are seeking credit; and to provide evidence of that learning. The role of academic staff is to provide guidance and support to the learner as they engage in this process and to assess the learning. If equivalence of learning is successfully demonstrated, the learner is awarded the credit that would be obtained through the conventional route. Examples of the ways in which evidence is provided for RPL claims is provided below.

#### **5.4.3 Portfolio compilation**

Within higher education, learners are usually required to compile a portfolio of evidence relating to their experiences. Evidence can include pieces of work generated through their work activities with an explicit statement of the learning demonstrated; letters of confirmation from employers that certain work experiences had been carried out; a logbook or reflective diary reviewing activities they have undertaken; reflective accounts relating to their professional or work experiences; project work; an assignment set by the assessor within the institution. The portfolio might also be supplemented by observation of practice or simulation; or oral assessment/ interview. This material is then submitted for formal assessment as part of an overall programme of study.

#### **5.4.4 Project**

A project used as the basis for an RPL claim might resemble those undertaken by conventional students but would contain direct reference to the learner's experiences and current working practices. It is appropriate if the learner has undertaken a substantial work-related activity which, in itself, would enable him to demonstrate his prior informal learning in relation to a particular module, or level and area of study

#### **5.4.5 'Assessment on demand'/ tailored assignment**

Other forms of assessment can include 'assessment on demand' where the learner undertakes the normal assessment for the course/module/unit that they are seeking credit for, without having to attend the course. Alternatively a learner can be assigned a specific task, for example, writing about an issue or concept, relating it to their own experience and their wider knowledge, which is directly relevant to the particular programme of study she is about to

undertake. Such an assignment can assist the tutor in gauging the level of knowledge and understanding that the learner can demonstrate prior to her actual entry to the course.

#### **5.4.6 Interview**

A learner might be asked to undertake an oral assessment, or an interview, as part of the process of making an RPL claim

#### **5.4.7 Make Experience Count/ Portfolio development modules**

RPL processes can also take the form of a module undertaken as part of a formal programme of study. This can be a portfolio development, 'Make Experience Count'-type course where learners engage in structured sessions to support them in the process of reflecting on their experiences, identifying their learning, identifying evidence of that learning, and selecting and compiling evidence. Credit can be gained for the process of RPL itself, as well as for the subject specific learning demonstrated as a result. This evidence is then assessed by the institution either to gain access to a formal programme of study, or more usually to gain credit towards a programme of study.

#### **5.4.8 Professional biography modules**

Other modules used to support RPL processes employ a professional biography approach. Such modules are usually optional modules within a formal programme of study. Learners are required to draw up a personal and professional history or biography and identify and discuss significant markers in that experience. Again, the defining feature of the process is the reflection and analysis that is undertaken to extract and make explicit the main learning outcomes. Learners not only write about their reflections on their professional experiences, but also accumulate letters and other forms of documentation to demonstrate achievement and participation in those experiences.

#### **5.4.9 Work-based learning programmes**

RPL is an integral part of the planning stage of work-based learning degree programmes. As part of the undergraduate and postgraduate Learning Contract Framework at Glasgow Caledonian University, for example, students are required to undertake the Reflective Practice and Planning goal, in which a student reflects on his development to date, identifies his learning and development goals and the way in which he will achieve them. In this process, students are encouraged to reflect upon the skills and knowledge they have developed through prior experiential learning in relation to their learning goals and to seek credit for this learning as part of the process of negotiating their planned experiential programme.

The VDS award in Volunteering Management is a named pathway at SCQF Level 8 in the BA in Professional Development (BAPD) at the University of Dundee. This is a work-based learning programme for individuals who manage the work of volunteers. Within the programme, learners are encouraged to reflect on their prior informal and non-formal learning and to seek credit for this learning within the programme.

## **How is the process managed within institutions?**

### **5.4.10 Institutional procedures/Quality Assurance**

Many universities have a well-defined RPL/APEL policy and institutional procedures that form part of their Quality Assurance procedures. Glasgow Caledonian University, for example, has revised its Guidelines on APL within the context of the SCQF. As a result of a quality audit, University of Highlands and Islands (UHI), which is comprised of 15 academic partners in HE and FE, is currently developing a UHI Framework for APEL using the SCQF levels. As part of the development of this framework, UHI are developing a strategy for staff development in RPL which will centre on the sharing of examples of best practice. Napier University has developed institution-wide APEL procedures, as a result of a quality audit. These have been developed within the context of the SCQF and are auditable.

### **5.4.11 Management of RPL**

RPL is either managed centrally by a support unit or devolved to faculty/school; department; or programme level. University of Abertay, for example, has a central APL Co-ordinator who deals with all RPL applications to the university. A diagnostic interview is carried out with every RPL candidate and if their application to submit an APL claim is approved, the candidate is then referred to appropriately trained academic staff who will support the preparation of the claim and its assessment.

### **5.4.12 Credit limits for RPL**

All universities have prescribed limits on the amount of credit that can be claimed within programmes through prior certificated and prior experiential learning. This tends to range from fifty percent of the award to up to fifty percent of the final exit level.

### **5.4.13 Fees for RPL**

Most universities charge a fee for RPL claims for credit within programmes to cover the cost of staff time in the support and assessment of the claim. Often the fee structure for RPL is based on the normal module fee for claims against modules within programmes. A reduced fee is charged for 'assessment only' or assessment on demand claims. RPL for entry to programmes is generally regarded as part of the admissions process and therefore applicants are normally not charged. Clearly, however, there is still a staff cost in supporting and assessing such claims.

## **What are the challenges facing RPL for credit within HEIs?**

### **5.4.14 Mainstreaming RPL**

Despite the existence of RPL procedures and institutional commitment to RPL as part of strategies of widening access and more flexible provision, RPL is not a mainstream activity within universities for the reasons indicated earlier in this report. There are areas of well-established practice in APEL such as nursing, social work, engineering and management. Most of this activity takes

place at the post-experience or postgraduate level where APEL is easier to manage and meets a particular student demand

#### **5.4.15 Resources**

The resources available to provide staff with either the time or training and support needed to carry out an effective or widespread RPL function are inadequate.

#### **5.4.16 Confidence in the process**

There is still a perception amongst many academic staff that the RPL process is insufficiently robust as an indicator of student achievement and future performance.

#### **5.4.17 Consistency and transparency**

Despite the existence of institutional procedures for RPL, there is a lack of consistency in the interpretation of them within HEIs regarding such issues as the awarding of specific credit within programmes; the level and type of support and guidance provided to RPL applicants; assessment and quality assurance procedures for RPL; the fees charged for the process and monitoring of the process at school/faculty, department and programme levels. These issues are particularly pertinent within HEIs which have a devolved structure for RPL, rather than a central coordinating unit.

While institutional autonomy should be maintained, the agreement of core principles as the parameters within which RPL provision will operate should provide a more transparent and equitable process and facilitate mutual trust and confidence between receiving institutions.

#### **5.4.18 Parity of esteem between informal and formal learning**

The inherent conflict in APEL processes for credit purposes within the context of higher education is that individuals are required to translate their knowledge into forms that are deemed appropriate for assessment and credit rating. This results in a move away from experiential learning to something that is more readily understood by the 'academy'.

The distinction between Mode 1 knowledge and Mode 2 knowledge, or "Savoir theoretique" and 'Savoir faire' is noted in the Transfine National Report for Scotland. Mode1 knowledge is academic, and based on research and scholarship ('knowing that'), while Mode 2 knowledge is produced through action ('knowing how'). Prior informal learning is based on Mode 2 knowledge and is being assessed into a Mode1 system. (Thomson, TRANSFINE, 2003) This will remain an issue until some parity of esteem can be achieved between these two modes

The issue of parity of esteem between different modes of learning requires to be addressed in the curriculum design stage of programmes. Learning outcomes need to be defined in a way that enables a variety of different means of achieving them and greater flexibility in the mode of assessment, without detracting from the quality of the provision. As part of the new quality framework for Higher Education, SHEFC have produced guidelines for

internal subject review. This will involve a consideration of how institutions are engaging with the SCQF, including through RPL.

### **What is the potential scope for development in RPL for credit within the HEI sector?**

#### **5.4.19 Personal Development Planning: the Effective Learning Framework (ELF)**

This embeds the principle of personal development planning within the overall teaching and learning strategy of HEIs. ELF is recommended by QAA Scotland and Universities Scotland as an approach to develop and implement personal development planning (PDP) in HEIs. (QAA, 2004) Its underlying principles are that a student's learning experience is holistic i.e. not restricted to the learning undertaken in a formal programme of study, and that PDP should be integrated within academic programmes. ELF has implications for the quality enhancement themes of both 'employability' and 'meeting student needs'. It centres on the concept of a self-audit process which endeavours to interlink the three 'circles' of a student's Personal, Academic and Career experiences. Students will be supported in the self-audit through a framework of questions – Focussed Learners Questions (FLQs). These FLQs aim to support students in their reflection, planning and development. Through the reflective process, students will be encouraged to evaluate their skills and knowledge gained through both informal learning and formal learning; identify gaps in their skills and knowledge and plan how to address them. This process could be linked to RPL activities related to personal development and educational guidance. It could also facilitate the recognition of prior informal learning within programmes of study at HEIs after the student has commenced the programme. It would also enable students to reflect on the contribution their current and planned experiential learning, gained for example through part-time work, can make to their overall learning experience.

5.4.20 **QAA Guidelines for Accreditation of Prior Learning** have been drafted for consultation (QAA, 2004). The guidelines define the accreditation of prior learning as one of the 'central functions of HE'. The purpose of the guidelines is to explore a range of issues that can emerge when developing and refining approaches to the accreditation of prior learning. The focus is the maintenance and enhancement of quality of standards. The SCQF RPL guidelines that are developed will complement the QAA Guidelines that are produced after the consultation in relation to higher education.

### **What are the processes involved, and what can be the outcomes of RPL for credit within the college sector?**

5.4.21 RPL processes for entry to formal programmes of study within colleges, such as HN programmes, are generally managed through an interview as part of the admissions process. Candidates engage in a matching exercise between the learning gained through their experience and the requirements of the programme. This process is usually non-recorded and is a matter of individual professional judgement.

5.4.22 Most RPL is managed at programme level at the admissions stage but a few colleges, such as Aberdeen College have a more centralised RPL function in the form of an APL Coordinator.

5.4.23 Discussions with college representatives indicated that the advantages of identifying core principles for RPL for entry to programmes would be that the process already engaged in at the admissions stage would be formally recorded and that the application of core criteria would facilitate a greater consistency in approach. A more formalised, recorded system would help to make the decision-making process more transparent which could potentially be useful for colleges when the Freedom of Information Act comes into force in December 2004. A model pro-forma to be used in the admissions interview that could be piloted was suggested as a possible way forward.

### **What are the challenges facing RPL for credit within the college sector?**

#### **5.4.24 Barriers to RPL for credit within programmes**

Design barriers to RPL for credit include the fact that programmes such as HNCs and HNDs are designed for conventional delivery. Communication barriers centre on difficulties in translating the prior experiential learning in terms of the unit requirements and difficulties in identifying the means of demonstrating the achievement of these requirements. RPL claims for credit most often take the form of assessment on demand, although there are institutional barriers to this in terms of timing if the assessment is being sought outwith the normal assessment schedule.

#### **5.4.25 RPL to support transition**

While discussions with representatives of colleges and SQA indicate that there is no real demand for increased RPL for credit within programmes of study, there is a potentially highly useful role for RPL in supporting learners making the transition from informal to formal learning programmes in colleges (a pre-entry process) and the transition from HN to degree programmes at Levels 2 and 3 (SCQF levels 8 & 9) .

### **What are the processes involved and what can be the outcomes of RPL for credit within workplace learning and training?**

#### **5.4.26 SVQ provision**

The tension between the outcomes of informal and formal learning is not so evident in RPL processes within the context of vocational provision, such as SVQs. SVQs are competence-based qualifications based on National Occupational Standards and designed to be undertaken in the workplace. The outcomes of prior experiential, or informal, learning can therefore be integrated more easily in the workplace learning and training assessment process.

Evidence of achievement of competences through prior informal learning is managed through written tests, either undertaken in the workplace or requiring only a short amount of time away from the workplace in a college, private training provider or an assessment centre; a portfolio made up of the

candidate's CV and work records - a 'living document' recording real activity; observation of practical competence or questioning carried out by assessor; witness testimony from a candidate's previous or current employer; cross-referencing of tasks performed to the units; and evidence of function and remit.

RPL is regarded by many colleges and workplace learning and training providers as an integral part of SVQ delivery. Equivalence of learning is sought rather than an exact match. If there are gaps in terms of addressing the criteria, they can be met through the training process. Such providers recognise that undertaking an SVQ at a level of learning that is lower than that already attained through experience can be highly de-motivating to the learner.

#### **5.4.27 Professional and statutory bodies**

RPL is being increasingly considered and utilised by professional and statutory bodies. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), for example is developing RPL mechanisms as part of the process of enabling all paid staff in Scotland working in the area of social care to achieve the vocational qualifications required by the Regulation of Care legislation. The SSSC is also developing improved RPL approaches for social workers in relation to their post-qualifying professional awards. The Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland (CIOBS) is actively engaged in seeking SCQF credit-rating for the range of professional qualifications they provide, from the post-school Diploma in Financial Services to their CPD programme which leads to the status of Chartered Banker. As a pilot exercise, CIOBS are currently undertaking an approval process with SQA in order to achieve an SCQF credit-rating for their Diploma in Financial Services. CIOBS itself operates an exemption scheme within its provision for individuals who have undertaken particular training courses in the workplace. Informal learning, as well as formal learning and training, is an integral part of the CIOBS CPD programme engaged in by senior staff in the financial services sector in Scotland.

Currently professional bodies can gain an SCQF credit-rating for their professional awards through SQA or an HEI. If the process of approval is not responsive enough to meet the needs and expectations of the professional bodies and employers, the possible extension of credit-rating powers to other organisations would potentially be of great advantage to them.

#### **What is the potential scope for developments in RPL for credit within CLD, workplace learning and training, and the college sector?**

#### **5.4.28 Extending SCQF credit-rating powers**

Developmental work on extending the range of SCQF credit-rating bodies beyond SQA and HEIs is currently being undertaken. A formal consultation process will be underway during 2004. The advantage of extending credit-rating powers is that learners not currently engaged in SQA or HEI provision could gain a formal recognition of the learning undertaken, for example within the context of CLD provision linked to a college or through workplace learning and training, which has an external currency in its own right. It would also

facilitate an individual's move into formal learning by enabling her to have a more informed discussion with a receiving institution regarding the credit that can be recognised in the programme she wishes to undertake. The quality assurance process underpinning a general SCQF credit-rating process undertaken by other organisations or consortia will clearly be a crucial issue if both learners and receiving institutions are to have confidence in the process.

#### **5.4.29 The use of the core skills framework to certificate informal and non-formal learning**

SQA have recently carried out research into the use of certification in adult literacies learning and what would facilitate its use. The findings of the research confirmed that where certification is used to recognise the progress of adult literacies learners, this is mostly via SQA Core Skills units at Access 2 to Intermediate 1 and that there is a need for additional materials to be produced to support their delivery in the context of adult literacies learning. This would include guidance on determining the level of materials submitted by a learner and distinguishing between levels as well as how to encourage a reflective approach to learning and give the learner more sense of ownership and control of both the learning and certification process. It was also recommended that case studies with exemplar portfolios should be produced, initially in the contexts of two broad curricular areas, Private (personal life and family) and Work. The investigation of the development of 10-hour units for certificating adult literacies learning was also recommended to measure distance travelled and to contribute towards core skills achievement. (SQA, 2004) Certificating smaller 'chunks' of learning within the context of the SCQF in relation to core skills achievement would be potentially a useful way of recognizing the prior informal learning of individuals undertaking CLD and voluntary learning provision as well as workplace learning and training.

#### **5.4.30 HN Review**

The HN Review incorporates two new units within HNQs, the Work role Effectiveness unit and the Personal Development Planning unit. The Work role Effectiveness unit uses a performance appraisal model which involves a matching of the learning undertaken in the workplace against the unit titles of an SVQ which is then confirmed by the candidate's line manager. The standardisation of HNCs to 96 SCQF credit points as a result of the review has consequences in progression from HNC to degree programmes. The Work role Effectiveness unit is a means of making up the additional credit for part-time HNC students through workplace performance in a more robust way than in many HNC programmes pre-review. The Personal Development unit requires the learner to develop a portfolio as they progress through the HNC/D of evidence relating to core skills. When developing HNC/Ds colleges will have to signpost opportunities, such as undertaking project work, when the learners are utilising core skills, for example problem-solving. Core skills are therefore not explicitly undertaken but are implicitly embedded within the programme. SQA are currently developing guidance for colleges for both units. Both units provide a potential means of recognising skills gained through prior informal learning as well as through the planned learning undertaken in a college or workplace setting.

#### **5.4.31 APEL and Refugee Group**

This group has been established to promote the recognition of prior experiential learning of refugees seeking access to employment or access to programmes of learning and training as a route into employment. The group comprises of representatives of Scottish Enterprise - Glasgow; Scottish Refugee Council; the Bridges Project; Glasgow North; Anniesland College; Glasgow University; University of Stirling and Glasgow Caledonian University. The group are exploring the feasibility of a Scottish Refugee Advice and Guidance Unit (RAGU) which utilises a portfolio-building approach. This integrates an RPL process with career and educational guidance for refugees. The group is also working with the EU-funded Socrates project- Valex to identify a group of refugee learners to pilot the APEL toolkit which is being developed by the project (see paragraph 6.4).

### **5.5 What systems of guidance and support for the learner are used within RPL processes?**

5.5.1 A key element in a review of RPL processes is the extent and level of support and guidance that the learner receives both at the beginning of the RPL process and as that process progresses. The support networks that exist for learners vary. Notably, there are few formal structures - the networks appear to revolve around personal contacts rather than institutional frameworks.

#### **5.5.2 Tutor support**

Initial guidance is usually given by a tutor. Learners can be given verbal advice regarding their tasks; examples can be given of how to carry out those tasks or initial guidance can be given in the form of written advice and examples. Written support materials may include concise guides, comprehensive workbooks, self-study packs, APEL literature, or past submissions.

Tutor support is usually available throughout the process either through one-to-one counselling or provided through group support sessions. In some cases, tutor support is made available on a request basis - those learners who need further advice can contact tutors if necessary, but otherwise additional tutor support is not a part of the process. In other cases, tutor support is built into the RPL process in the form of regular seminars/meetings or a Make Experience Count-type module. This can ensure that guidance and support become an integral part of the RPL process. Tutor support can also be provided as part of a distance learning package via telephone and e-mail. Contact can be regulated by the learner and increased or decreased according to need. Often the tutor has to take on a role of championing the work of the learner to ensure that RPL processes are initiated and progressed.

#### **5.5.3 Employer support**

The role of the employer in encouraging their employees to undertake RPL can be crucial for learners employed on a full or part time basis who are using their work experiences as the basis of their RPL claim. In some cases, the employer is instrumental in encouraging the pursuit of RPL as part of a

broader programme of education and training within the company to encourage individual career development. Such employing organisations perceive the link between improved skills levels, as well as enhanced employee motivation to engage in continuing development, and improved company productivity. The kind of support provided by employers usually includes allowing the individual to attend college and time out for the employee to discuss progress with tutors and undertake assessments towards, for example, SVQS or to provide the opportunity for assessment within the workplace.

Voluntary organisations provide an extensive range of in-house training for their volunteers as well as supporting their development through the recognition of informal learning both internally and through external accreditation where appropriate.

#### **5.5.4 Peer support**

A formal or informal network of support can be established amongst learners themselves. The process of putting together an RPL claim can be an isolating experience. Sharing experiences and problems with other learners undertaking the same process can enable further insights and learning to take place as well as provide a source of mutual support.

### **5.6 What are the Learners' perspectives on RPL?**

5.6.1 As part of the Socrates-funded project, Social Inclusion Through APEL: the Learners' Perspective' (CRLL, 2001 and 2002), learners across different sectors in Scotland were interviewed about their experiences of the RPL process. Without exception the learners reported positively on the experience of RPL processes. Learners were asked to identify positive and negative aspects to the process, to identify any areas which they felt could be improved and to make any recommendations for change that they felt were appropriate.

5.6.2 All learners were positive in their appreciation of the value of RPL and the contribution it would make in terms of access/entry or credit towards a programme of study. In many of the cases, learners made it clear that they found the process of APEL demanding in terms of the effort needed to complete work and to collate materials, but this did not in any way detract from the recognised benefits of the overall process.

5.6.3 This was especially true in instances where a portfolio of evidence was the main task to be carried out. Most learners expressed the view that the process might be made simpler and less time-consuming.

5.6.4 The most important feedback from learners was the consistent comment that engaging in the RPL process had been a worthwhile experience in itself in that it had developed their abilities of self-analysis and self-evaluation. The process of reflection was perceived as a valuable exercise in learning about themselves and drawing out learning outcomes or core skills with which they could identify.

5.6.4 The main satisfaction or benefit from the process of RPL was the self-confidence gained from engaging in the process itself. Individuals emerged with a stronger sense of learner identity and a greater understanding of the way in which they learn. This metacognitive development can produce more effective learning strategies which can be applied in further learning experiences whether non-formal or formal.

## **6. European Developments in RPL**

### **6.1 Context of European RPL Development**

#### **6.1.1 Bologna and Copenhagen processes**

European developments in RPL are taking place within the context of the Bologna and Copenhagen, or Bruges, processes which are working towards mutual recognition and learner mobility through the development of a European area for Higher education and Vocational education and Training respectively.

#### **6.1.2 Europass**

The development of Europass (a single framework for transparency of qualifications) will 'link separate documents aimed at the transparency of qualifications and competences into a single framework in the form of a structured portfolio of documents known as 'Europass' (EC, December 2003) Europass will be the single framework organised around the European CV, linking together other transparency instruments such as the Certificate and Diploma supplements for vocational education and training and higher education respectively; mobilipass; and the European language portfolio. An individual will be able to use the instruments within the Europass framework to draft his personal CV and include additional documents in order to make his qualifications more transparent. The framework will be used by individuals to describe their qualifications when applying for jobs at home and abroad and to support their application for participation in continuing education and training. 'The single framework aims at helping European citizens to better communicate and promote their qualifications and/or skills and competences, including those gained through vocational training, working life, voluntary work and life experience in general' (EC, 2003).

#### **6.1.3 European Qualifications Framework**

The development of a European Qualifications Framework, underpinned by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), has now been agreed. The credit and qualifications frameworks of Member States will either utilise ECTS as the basis of their frameworks or make relevant links between their frameworks and ECTS. As a result of the conference on Common Themes and Approaches across HE and VET in Europe in Dublin in March 2004 Nikolaus Van Der Pas, Director General Education and Culture, European Commission concluded that 'the ultimate aim should be to have a single system of credit transfer and accumulation for lifelong learning...an important starting point would be to develop principles for credit transfer which are

applicable to both HE and VET' He also stated that 'it is crucial to aim for a single qualifications framework for lifelong learning at European level' (Cedefop, 2004)

## **6.2 European developments in RPL**

### **6.2.1 RPL within the context of Lifelong Learning**

RPL is recognised at European Union level as an integral part of European lifelong learning strategy. It is perceived as having a key role to play in supporting the European Commission's strategies of facilitating access to learning opportunities and of creating a learning culture (EC, 2001) The implementation of credit and qualifications frameworks in European countries, such as Ireland, are currently addressing the issue of RPL.

### **6.2.2 TRANSFINE project**

The EU-funded TRANSFINE (TRANSfer between Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education) project explored the idea of a European architecture for the credit-rating of non-formal and informal learning. The Final Report identified the principles that should underpin a European Framework. These principles included a holistic and developmental approach to recognition 'At the individual level – we have to assess these different forms of learning as a whole not as separated elements, and as part of an individual project/plan' , and at the institutional level 'it should be part of the central mission of institutions not a marginal activity' (Davies, 2003)

### **6.2.3 RPL development in France**

European countries are at different stages in terms of RPL development. France has a highly developed system where the citizen's right to claim credit for entry to, and credit within university programmes, on the basis of prior informal learning is underpinned by national legislation. The latest legislation on social modernisation (Loi de Modernisation Sociale) in January 2002 has strengthened the previous VAP (Validation des Acquis Professionels) into a VAE process (Validation de l'Experience). Individuals now have the right to claim credit for a complete qualification on the basis of their prior experiential learning and are supported in this process through the practice of 'accompagnement'. There are nationally, well-defined stages to the VAE application process, and if partial credit is gained towards a diploma, the 'validation' jury provides recommendations on how the candidate can undertake the further learning in order to complete the award. (Pouget et al, 2004)

The approach to RPL for credit in France is a more holistic, developmental one than in the UK. Evidence of prior informal learning is evaluated in terms of its relevance to a programme of study, rather than the outcomes-matching approach at module or unit level utilised in the UK. If gaps in learning are identified, candidates are supported in planning how to meet these gaps through the RPL process.

### **6.2.3 Developments outside Europe**

The recognition of prior informal learning is also being addressed within the development of Credit and Qualifications Frameworks outside Europe, for example New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. RPL is regarded as integral to strategies of widening access, social inclusion, and in South Africa, that of social redress. However, the benefits of RPL are still generally described in potential rather than actual terms.

The Victoria Qualifications Authority in Australia, for example, is currently investigating a number of proposals to support the more widespread use of RPL. These include a block credit proposal whereby learners would be able to gain credit within VQA qualifications, up to a designated value, for learning attained through any form of non-credit-rated education and training, work, participation in the community or other informal learning experience. 'Provided this learning complies with a set of minimum quality assurance guidelines, credit would be granted virtually automatically' (VQA, 2004). The report recommends that the block credit proposal be supported by a new RPL model based on a broader view of equivalence and risk assessment principles.

The credit recognition and transfer policy of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework identifies principles which are intended to apply across sectors and cultures. One of these principles is that 'credit awarded as a result of either recognition of prior learning or recognition of current competency is of equal standing to credit awarded through other forms of assessment and should be able to be carried with the learner once awarded'. (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2002)

#### **6.2.4 Impact on production of SCQF RPL Guidelines**

The challenges and approaches associated with these developments will be considered in the production of the SCQF RPL Guidelines.

Within Europe, two current RPL projects which will inform the production of the SCQF RPL guidelines are the REFINE project and the VaLEx project.

### **6.3 The REFINE project**

6.3.1 The EU funded Joint Action Project REFINE, REcognising Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education aims to 'test the tools for a European methodological framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as recommended by the Transfine project funded under the first Joint Action call); to foster trans-national and trans-sectoral collaboration; to build mutual trust in the practices and procedures. The primary target groups are practitioners, managers and policy makers at institutional, regional, national and European level; the indirect target groups are those with no or few formal qualifications but with skills acquired outside the academy. Refine has 17 partners - universities, vocational training, adult education and youth organisations and involves 12 countries, 5 of which bring experience from the Transfine project. Each country co-ordinator has between 2 and 8 associate partners, a total of 60 organisations including employers and social partners, each of which will act as a 'laboratory' to test tools for recognising non-formal and informal learning with 4-5 real candidates. The results of these tests will be compared: how they have been used in the different settings and different

countries, the common elements, the necessary variations for different national and sector contexts, how they can be improved. There will be a virtual meeting place on the web and 2 live meetings in autumn 2004 and autumn 2005, the latter will also be a dissemination event.'(REFINE website, 2004)

6.3.2 A range of European tools for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning will be tested and reviewed. These include ECTS; the Euro CV; the European language portfolio; Europass; codes of practice and guidelines for practitioners; and the Computer Driving Licence.

6.3.3 The SCQF is a self-funded partner in the REFINE project and links have been established between the work of REFINE and the SCQF RPL project.

## **6.4 The VaLEx project**

6.4.1 The Socrates-funded Valuing Learning through Experience (VaLEx) project will build on the work of the previous Socrates-Grundtvig project 'Social Inclusion Through APEL: the Learners' Perspective' (CRL, 2001, 2002). The project raised issues regarding the need for change if RPL is to have a more inclusive and valued role as the project revealed limited RPL activity generally within the UK and across Europe. One of its main findings is that most learners benefiting from RPL opportunities are 'traditional' learners, leading to the conclusion that the potential of RPL to support processes of social inclusion within the lifelong learning agenda is not being realised.

6.4.2 The VaLEx project therefore aims to develop RPL's potential as a reflective and analytical tool to make explicit the connections between informal learning situations and formal learning opportunities and will target 'hard to reach learners'. (Cleary et al, 2003) The Learners' Guide to APEL 'Making Experience Count', (Whittaker et al, 2003) which was developed through the previous project, will serve as a starting point for VaLEx. It will be further developed into a pedagogical tool which will be piloted and evaluated with learners in each partner country. The model underpinning this tool will be based on a personal biography approach linked to adult guidance. In Scotland the pilot groups will be drawn from refugee learners (led by Glasgow Caledonian University in liaison with the APEL and Refugee Group) and learners engaged in voluntary sector learning provision (led by University of Stirling in liaison with Learning Link Scotland).

6.4.3 The project will endeavour to articulate with some of REFINE's objectives, in as much as this project seeks to develop and pilot a European working model for the recognition of prior experiential learning based on pedagogical and adult guidance principles, while seeking to have prior experiential learning credit rated within existing national and European credit frameworks.

## **6.5 Summary**

In sum, the SCQF RPL Guidelines will be developed in a European, as well as national context. Existing good practice and innovative developments should inform both the development of the guidelines and their subsequent implementation by learning providers and receiving institutions.

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### Summary of Project Activities

**Project Aim:** To facilitate a national debate on the recognition of prior experiential and non-formal learning (RPL) and to develop SCQF guidelines aimed at learning providers across the post-compulsory education and training sectors in Scotland.

#### Phase 1 October 2003-April 2004

##### Activities:

1. Develop and agree the final project specification;
2. Establish a range of learning providers across the post-compulsory education sector in Scotland at whom the guidelines will be directed;
3. Research the current range of RPL activities both across and within each sector e.g. within:
  - Higher Education( HE),
  - Further Education (FE),
  - Community – based learning (CBL),
  - Workplace learning and training,
  - Voluntary organisations.

This research activity will include an exploration and identification of :

- the context of learning;
  - the type of learning being supported and assessed;
  - the way in which it is being supported and assessed;
  - the way in which the learning is credit-rated (if appropriate);
  - the reasons RPL is being used and expected outcomes.
  - The potential scope for RPL, if not already being utilised
4. Facilitate a national debate by key stakeholders on the issues pertinent to the recognition of prior experiential and non-formal learning within the context of the SCQF.  
Key stakeholders will include:  
HE, FE, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), SQA, Universities Scotland, Scottish Further Education Unit ( SFEU), Community Learning and Development Forum, Communities Scotland, Learning Link Scotland, learndirect scotland, Careers Scotland, Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and learners themselves. Other stakeholders might include community learning and development services of local authorities, Scottish Adult Learning Partnership, Workers Educational Association (WEA), SCVO, Scottish Refugee Council, Chamber of Commerce, COSLA and professional bodies.
  5. Consider both European and non-European developments in RPL, and in particular their relationship to credit and qualifications frameworks.
  6. Identify quality assurance issues in relation to RPL provision;

**Output :**

Production of interim report to SCQF Implementation Group Sub Group detailing outcomes of research and identifying issues requiring further exploration through, for example, sector-based RPL workshop(s), in order to define and agree the scope and structure of Guidelines

**Phase 2 April 2004- November 2004****Activities :**

- 1 Identify core operational principles and guidelines for RPL, through :
  - a. Consideration of outcomes of Phase 1.
  - b. Consultation with key stakeholders through meetings; an interactive project website and SCQF RPL workshops across the different sectors:

10 February 2004	Voluntary sector (organised by Learning Link Scotland)
27 April 2004	Community Learning and Development sector
11 May 2004	College sector/SQA
18 May 2004	Higher Education Sector
8 June 2004	Work-based Learning and Training sector
15 June 2004	Professional bodies sector
  - c. Consideration of other European developments in the recognition of prior experiential and non-formal learning, in particular through links with the Refine Project.

**Output:**

Production of draft guidelines document and submission to SCQF Implementation Group Sub Group for feedback.

**Phase 3 November 2004- March 2005****Activity:**

1. Incorporation of feedback from Sub Group into draft document .
2. Guidelines consultation exercise managed through SCQF Implementation Group Sub Group.

**Output:**

Production of final document incorporating outcomes of consultation process by March 2005 (preliminary final date, to be reviewed in November 2004)

Further development work as a result of producing core guidelines might include:

- Additional guidance sections for different sectors e.g. FE, HE, CBL, workplace learning and training and voluntary organisations.
- More detailed guidelines to support RPL development and implementation including case studies illustrating use of RPL across post compulsory education sector.

**Meetings with key stakeholders**

19 November 03	<b>Learning Link Scotland</b> (Roberta Downes) <b>University of Stirling</b> (Mireille Pouget) <b>University of Paisley</b> (Anne McGillivray)
20 November 03	<b>SQA – SVQ Development</b> (Aileen Ponton)
3 December 03	<b>SCQF Community Learning and Development Forum</b>
9 December 03	<b>SQA - HN Review</b> (Ann Mearns)
10 December 03	<b>Learning Link Scotland</b> (Roberta Downes; Jayne Stuart)
16 January 04	<b>UHI</b> (Sheila Chapman)
27 January 04	<b>Botswana Study Visit Delegation</b>
29 January 04	<b>SCQF Implementation Group Meeting</b>
2 February 04	<b>Moray House School of Education- Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework</b> (Lynn Tett)
9 February 04	<b>APEL and Refugee Group – Scottish Enterprise; Scottish Refugee Council; Anniesland College; Glasgow North project; Bridges Project; University of Stirling; University of Glasgow</b>
10 February 04	<b>Voluntary sector organisations - Learning Link Scotland</b> (see Appendix 2)
11 February 04	<b>Learn direct Scotland</b> (George Junor)
16 February 04	<b>Scottish Social Services Council</b>
16 February 04	<b>Careers Scotland</b> (Andy Coull)
17 February 04	<b>STUC</b> (Dec McGrath)
18 February 04	<b>Credit Transfer Guidelines project</b> (Bill Thomson)
23 February 04	<b>Scottish Funding Councils</b> (Bill Harvey)
23 February 04	<b>QAA</b> (David Bottomley)
27 February 04	<b>SCQF Joint Advisory Committee</b>
1 March 04	<b>Association of Scottish Colleges</b> (Jane Polglase)
1 March 04	<b>SFEU</b> (Christine Mathers; Eric Massie)
2 March 04	<b>SQA – flexible assessment methods/ core skills</b> (Margaret Tierney; Adrian Kitchen)
9 March 04	<b>National OCN group</b>
10 March 04	<b>SCQF Credit rating workshop</b>
16 March 04	<b>Communities Scotland</b> (Lillias Noble)
16 March 04	<b>Universities Scotland</b> (Gerard Madill)
22 March 04	<b>Cedefop Study visit – Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning</b>
29 March 04	<b>Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)</b> (Celia Carson)
30 March 04	<b>COSLA</b> ( Richard Wheeler)
30 March 04	<b>WEA</b> (Joyce Connon)
31 March 04	<b>CBI</b> (Matthew Farrow)
31 March 04	<b>SACCA</b>
19 April 04	<b>Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS)</b> (Lesley Greenaway, Elizabeth Holden)

20 April 04 **Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland (CIOBS)**  
(Charles Munn, Colin Morrison)

20 April 04 **Sector Skills Alliance Scotland (SSAScot)** (Iain  
McCaskey , Liz Berks)

26 April 04 **QAA ( re: Effective Learning Framework)** (Heather  
Gibson) and **SACCA Bridging project** (Iona Jarvie)

28 April 04 **Association of Scottish Colleges** (Jane Polglasse) and  
representatives from **Clydebank College, Falkirk  
College, Fife College, Langside College, Motherwell  
College, North Glasgow College and Stow College**

**Voluntary Sector RPL Workshop 10 February 2004  
University of Stirling, organised by Learning Link Scotland**

Attendees on the day

Mairi Robinson	ACE Project, Cornton, Stirling
John Hamilton	Dark Horse Venture
Barbara Burns	Falkirk Women's Technology Centre
Julie Stuart	LEAD Scotland
Liz Law	Scottish Centre for Non Violence, Dunblane
Emily Lynch	Scottish Women's Aid
Myra Duffy	SWAP (West)
Tania Henderson	WEA Ayrshire
Jacqui Bower	West Fife Enterprise
Gillian Lithgow	Youthlink Scotland
Anne Marie Devenney	Right Track
Lorraine Judge	SCQF
Shirley Grieve	Learning Link Scotland
Roberta Downes	Learning Link Scotland
Mireille Pouget	University of Stirling
Ruth Whittaker	Glasgow Caledonian University/SCQF

