

# **Skills for work: National Consultation Seminars**

November 2004

Report



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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This report was prepared by Mike Kincaid of ELT Consultants on behalf of the Scottish Executive Education Department, February 2005.

It is also available electronically on The Scottish Executive website:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/publications](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications)

## General introduction

In the Partnership Agreement for a Better Scotland in May 2003 the Scottish Executive committed to “*enable 14-16 year olds to develop vocational skills and improve their employment prospects by allowing them to undertake courses in further education colleges as part of the school-based curriculum*”.

Following the National Debate in Education which was held throughout Scotland in 2002, Scottish Ministers established a Curriculum Review Group in November 2003 to identify the purposes of education 3 to 18 and principles for the design of the curriculum. The result of this work is the document *A Curriculum for Excellence*, published in November 2004. In the Ministerial response the Scottish Executive committed to ‘*deliver a new course and qualification in learning about skills for work for 14-16 year olds by 2007*’.

*A Curriculum for Excellence* establishes the purposes of the curriculum from 3 – 18:

*Our aspiration for all children and for every young person is that they should be **successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors** to society and at work. By providing structure, support and direction to young people's learning, the curriculum should enable them to develop these four capacities. The curriculum should complement the important contributions of families and communities.*

To achieve these aims a new type of ‘Skills for work’ Course, to allow young people in S3 and S4 to develop practical, experiential and vocational skills is being developed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, in conjunction with Learning and Teaching Scotland, the Scottish Further Education Unit, the Scottish Executive and a range of stakeholders.

## Consultation seminars

Three seminars were held on 24, 25 and 29 November in Glasgow, Inverness and Dunfermline respectively, to give an opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders to influence developments at an early stage and to discuss the new courses with fellow professionals. Over 140 delegates attended over the three events, and a considerable volume of feedback was received.

The three discussion themes were:

1. **Design and delivery** - The design and structure of the new courses, focussing in particular on the make up of the 4<sup>th</sup> Unit – how can this be designed to add value? This session also explored practical delivery issues, including timetabling and resourcing.
2. **Credibility** - The new courses will not be subject to external assessment, unlike existing National Courses– this raises a number of important practical considerations and problems of negative perceptions: how can these be overcome?
3. **Relevance** – This session aims to explore how to ensure these courses are relevant for all end users – learners, teachers, employers, parents, and further/higher education. In

particular, the balance between core and other skills and progression routes from these courses will be the focus of discussion.

At the seminars delegates were seated at tables of up to 10. Each table was asked to nominate a scribe who noted the group's responses to the discussion points. This report is a record of the discussions held during the three seminars. It contains the background briefing material issued to delegates in advance, the activities the delegates were asked to undertake, and a selection of delegates' responses.

## **Programme**

09.30	Coffee and registration
10.00	Welcome and introduction
10.10	Session 1 Discussion: Design and delivery
11.10	Coffee/tea
11.30	Session 2 Discussion: Credibility of the New Courses
12.30	Lunch
13.30	Session 3 Discussion: Relevance
14.30	Feedback from discussion sessions
15.15	Concluding remarks
15.30	Tea and depart

## Overview briefing

It is proposed to extend the range of purposes served by National Courses to include courses which are practical, experiential or vocational in nature, principally for school pupils in S3 and S4, to help fulfil the commitment in the Scottish Executive Partnership Agreement: ‘to enable 14-16 year olds to develop vocational skills and improve their employment prospects by allowing them to undertake courses in further education colleges as part of the school-based curriculum’. Scottish Executive Ministers have formally committed in the ministerial response to *‘A Curriculum for Excellence’* to ‘deliver a new course and qualification in learning about skills for work for 14-16 year olds by 2007’.

The new skills-for work courses will be available at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels 2 – 6. (Access 2 & 3, Intermediate 1 & 2, Higher) They will consist of 3 Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) National Units at levels 2 and 3, and 4 SQA National Units at SCQF levels 4 – 6. Each Unit will be assessed on a pass/fail basis.

### Purposes

The new Courses will provide progression pathways to employment, training or further education. They will be developed in areas where assessing and certificating the candidate’s competence in practical or other skills is the key to progression, where graded assessment is not appropriate for progression purposes. In such areas, a strong element of experiential learning is felt to be suitable – this will provide the integrative element to the Course (the “glue” to hold it together). While many of these Courses will be in new areas, others will be created by revising existing Project-based National Courses and revising or “re-badging” National Clusters at SCQF levels 2 and 3.

### Target group(s)

The primary target group for these new Courses school pupils in S3 and S4. It is anticipated that the new Courses may also be taken by older schools pupils.

### Design principles

Possible design principles for these Courses might include:

#### *Course structure*

- ◆ The Courses will consist of a coherent set of three SQA National Units at SCQF levels 2 and 3, and four SQA National Units at SCQF levels 4 – 6. The 4<sup>th</sup> Unit may involve a greater focus on reflective self assessment, experiential learning, and work placements.
- ◆ Courses will normally be made up of single 40-hour Units
- ◆ Courses can include optional Units where there is a need for these.

#### *Focus of the Course*

- ◆ New Courses can only be validated where research has established that there is a sustainable market for the Course.
- ◆ There will be a Course rationale which will describe the relationship between Course content and relevant National Occupational Standards, where relevant.
- ◆ The Course will provide opportunities for candidates to develop Core Skills and other soft skills and/or be credited with Core Skills attainment, as appropriate to the purpose and focus of the Course.

### **Pilot programme**

A Steering Group, comprising a range of stakeholders including representatives from schools, the FE and HE sectors, local authorities and sector skills councils as well as the Scottish Executive and SQA, has been formed to advise and support the development of these courses. SQA will develop a number of courses between autumn 2004 and summer 2005 for piloting in a limited number of centres in session 2005/06 and 2006/07. School pupils aged 14-16 years old are the primary target audience though it is anticipated that the courses will also be taken by older school pupils. These courses will be predominantly delivered in a school/college partnership – either at college or by college staff in schools, although in some circumstances these courses may be deliverable in school by school staff, or indeed in a combination of in-school delivery and school/college partnership.

The pilot will aim to test out some key aspects of design, including course rationale and purposes, design principles, assessment regimes, timetabling and delivery issues. The Steering Group will invite pilot centres to take part in a formal, independent evaluation exercise before the courses are rolled out nationally.

Whilst the pilots are being developed and run consideration will also be given as to whether it is possible to develop this course model to certificate some existing vocational activities. Further, over the longer term, we will investigate whether it would be possible to formally certificate some activities which take place outside the formal school curriculum, such as community involvement activities and voluntary work.

The pilot subjects for the first year will be Construction, Sport & Leisure, Early Years Care and Financial Services, each available at one or two levels from Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2.

## Design and delivery

### Briefing paper

#### The design of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit

The design of the fourth unit in this model is not exclusive. This paper recognises that there are a variety of approaches to the design and implementation of a fourth unit in *skills for work* courses and presents this model as one of a number of possible alternatives.

The rationale behind this approach demonstrates that teaching and learning involves preparing young learners for employment, further study and citizenship, improving their ability to function within the economy and to contribute to the wider social and cultural environment.

There is now wide acceptance among educationalists that a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning can help students to be more independent – the focus therefore shifts to the teacher being the provider of guidance, constructive monitoring and feedback.

The structure laid out below represents a move toward this shift in focus and develops prior and ongoing learning for the individual by concentrating on:

- self-reflection and evaluation of learning
- dialogue between learners and teachers and the quality of relationships
- productive use of resources
- attainment of smart goals.

It is crucial in the development of this approach to identify smart goals and outcomes for *skills for work* programmes. In the 4<sup>th</sup> unit the learner will:

- establish and pursue clear and challenging smart goals and outcomes for learning
- work with a tutor to explore current capabilities, learning styles and learning goals in more depth
- apply knowledge and skills effectively in new learning situations
- reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they have achieved learning goals and plans

To achieve these aims the unit could prepare learners to

*1. Develop short- and long-range goals for learning. For example the learner should:*

- explain the characteristics and value of short and long-range learning goals
- gather information pertinent to smart goals from a variety of sources, where appropriate, including people, print, and electronic sources
- establish priorities among goals and plan target dates for achieving goals
- choose goals that stretch but do not exceed competence
- seek advice on goal setting
- adjust short- and long-range goals based on priority, feasibility and advice
- identify and agree the criteria for success in learning experiences.

2. *Implement learning plans using appropriate resources, skills, and strategies. For example the learner should:*

- implement learning plans developed for specific situations.
- identify resources needed to succeed in learning plans
- identify skills needed to succeed in learning plans
- seek advice on implementing learning plans.

3. *Evaluate the learning experience and the outcomes achieved and reflect upon attainment. The learner should be able to:*

- determine the contribution of learning experiences to the achievement of learning goals and highlight the characteristics of successful learning plans
- reflect upon the effectiveness of learning in achieving learning goals
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning plans in achieving learning goals
- demonstrate the attainment of learning goals
- identify how learning can release potential to acquire new skills.

Assessment strategies for the 4<sup>th</sup> unit could include :

- profiles and records of achievement
- portfolios
- projects

These techniques are particularly useful in measuring learner outcomes that are difficult to quantify with traditional assessments. They demonstrate competence rather than infer it from responses to questions about the subject. Moreover, assessment techniques motivate learners to learn because they are involved in the evaluation processes and promotes the development of their own personal standards of quality.

College lecturers have long used tasks, projects, and demonstrations to assess student achievement. Assessments for a 4<sup>th</sup> unit could include a variety of testing and response models and provide information on the development of basic skills as well as information about the application of those basic skills in solving problems.

An assessment system developed by Professor David Boud in Australia, relies upon self assessment and involves students taking responsibility for monitoring and making judgements about aspects of their own learning. It can be broken down into two stages:

1. Identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to an understanding of subject content
2. Making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards

The aim in designing a 4<sup>th</sup> unit, which integrates with the other units in the *skills for work* programme, should be to draw together learning from the other units into a coherent review of learner achievement and distance travelled. This approach emphasises the view that the learner actively reviews and evaluates their learning rather than adopt a passive approach. This will demonstrate how they can think critically about their learning, establish ways to

improve their learning strategies and move forward with confidence to the next stage of their education.

In summary, the benefits of deploying this type of approach to assessment are:

1. to help learners become critical about their own work
2. enable learners to develop their learning and assessment skills whilst engaged on them rather than afterwards
3. provide a structure for discussion about quality of work
4. be used as evidence of standards/ engagement in the process of assessment

**Model One – Integration of 4<sup>th</sup> unit with 3 taught units**

<b>Unit One</b>		<b>Unit Two</b>		<b>Unit Three</b>	
Duration: 40 hours + 13 hours integrated unit	Duration: 40 hours + 13 hours integrated unit	Duration: 40 hours + 13 hours integrated unit	Duration: 40 hours + 13 hours integrated unit	Duration: 40 hours + 13 hours integrated unit	Duration: 40 hours + 13 hours integrated unit
To integrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> unit it will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>	To integrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> unit it will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>	To integrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> unit it will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>	To integrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> unit it will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>	To integrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> unit it will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>	To integrate the 4 <sup>th</sup> unit it will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>
<b>Unit Four</b>					
<p><b>This unit has a notional duration of 40 hours. If it is integrated into the three existing units then staff will be able to discuss the learning approaches to be taken, implement and monitor learning plans, accommodate any alterations as the course progresses and allow for appropriate evaluation to take place as the course completes.</b></p>					
<b>Unit 1</b>		<b>Unit 2</b>		<b>Unit 3</b>	
Duration: 40 hours	Duration: 40 hours	Duration: 40 hours	Duration: 40 hours	Duration: 40 hours	Duration: 40 hours
					Duration: 40 hours - the unit will incorporate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussions with students to establish and pursue clear and challenging goals and develop plans for learning</li> <li>apply knowledge, skills and strategies effectively in new learning situations</li> <li>reflect upon and evaluate learning experiences and how they match learning goals and plans</li> </ul>

## **SKILLS FOR WORK PROGRAMMES**

As mentioned earlier this model is not exclusive. There a number of ways these programmes can be delivered. Research shows however they are at present delivered predominantly in two modes:

- school pupils travel to a college for the programme
- staff deliver the programme within a school

### **School pupils travelling to college**

*Skills for work* programmes have a nominal duration of 160 hours

Colleges normally operate a 36 week annual teaching programme

One afternoon or morning per week. Colleges usually operate three 12/13 week blocks

Potential to have 108 hours of teaching in the college environment per annum for each skills for work programme

Considerations:

- travelling time
- schools finish earlier in the day than college
- study leave arrangements in S4

Schools normally work a 40 week annual teaching programme

The students usually have 1 double and 1 single period of around 50 minutes per period in length

Potential therefore to have 2.5 hours of teaching per week or 100 hours per annum

The skills for work programme would take 160 hours in total

Considerations:

- classes taught twice per week
- period lengths may alter from school to school
- study leave programmes and early change of timetable

## Questions for discussion

1. It would be very useful if you could discuss the content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit:

Do you feel the content is appropriate?

Are there other areas you would like to see included, e.g. a customer care element. Having considered the detail of the possible content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit in the skills for work programme, which models would best suit the delivery of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit for your organisation?

2. Having considered the detail of the possible content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit in the skills for work programme, which models would best suit the delivery of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit for your organisation
3. In considering these questions it would be appropriate for you to discuss operational issues such as timetables, availability of resources, and so on. What operational issues do you perceive as important in the delivery of the skills for work programmes in the local context?

## Responses

*It would be very useful if you could discuss the content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit:*

*Do you feel the content is appropriate?*

*Are there other areas you would like to see included, e.g. a customer care element. Having considered the detail of the possible content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit in the skills for work programme, which models would best suit the delivery of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit for your organisation?*

Most felt that the content was appropriate, although others saw a need for a work experience element in the unit. Doubt was also expressed over including a customer care element but there was nevertheless a strong view that other skills should be included e.g. enterprise, communication, interview skills and practical skills.

- On the right track but needs firming up
- Content good
- The group felt that the proposed content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit could be difficult to deliver and difficult to structure
- Need to avoid further reinforcement of the schism between vocation/academic
- Not sure if content will be appropriate for disaffected pupils per se
- Content should include – industry/sector specific citizenship features and attitude to work
- Customer care – yes, but this would change nature of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit
- Customer care – could contradict thinking behind unit 4, but may have relevance as a core unit in some courses.
- Other areas – business component, how to survive in the world of work
- Fourth unit – practical work experience in workplace for 1-2 weeks with project report / diary of experiences
- Fourth unit practical element could be work experience

- An alternative would be a Work Experience unit - there is a role for this unit for all across the whole curriculum
- Use the unit to integrate the vocational skills taught within the 3 vocational units - possibly a project to integrate and bring together practical and planning skills and general work skills
- Questionable if there is space for another element e.g. customer care – depends on vocational area – customer care not for all; problem solving and team working is what is important
- Team working – setting goals for the team would be important skills to develop – reflecting on their role in the team.
- Interview skills – schools have found this has fallen on them, but shouldn't this be part of the college role? – can this be included in the course plan e.g. skills, mock interviews in real work settings
- Customer care: seen as being of central importance – skills can be transferred to any job
- Wide range of skills – communication skills, more enterprise / practical skills
- Importance of making 4<sup>th</sup> unit as wide as possible including interview skills/interviewing skills
- Enterprise may be worth considering, or project based integrative units similar to courses developed under Higher Still

*Having considered the detail of the possible content of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit in the skills for work programme, which models would best suit the delivery of the 4<sup>th</sup> unit for your organisation*

Overall, model 1 was seen as the better model.

- Model 1 seems to be the only feasible model
- Integrated Model 1 seen as best – always done in context - ongoing review within learning cycle seen as most helpful to students learning.
- Difficult to see any advantages to Model 2 - even with current project-based courses it can feel like repetition – ongoing, integrated work feels a better idea
- Model 2 will mean more knowledge of course to then pull together for Unit 4.
- Separate unit might lose relevance but if integrated can be 'lost'
- Group saw some value in both models
- Integrated perhaps educationally more sound but questions regarding staff training and development.
- Possible 3 model mix of 1 and 2 with less time in units 1-3 and then a unit 4, but with less time than Model 2
- No conclusion drawn, but depends on the environment, i.e. urban or rural. The expertise and resources are more often in colleges and not schools for many specialist programmes

*In considering these questions it would be appropriate for you to discuss operational issues such as timetables, availability of resources, and so on. What operational issues do you perceive as important in the delivery of the skills for work programmes in the local context?*

A range of diverse issues were identified

- Reluctance of pupils/parents to drop a Standard Grade or 2
- Possible start of Standard Grades in S2 and Highers starting in S4 could cause problems
- Aligning timetable for schools / college courses - Example of 1 college working with 8 schools who all timetable differently – college input makes many students miss core school work – had not initially appreciated the logistics involved.
- Timetabling issues can be overcome
- Resource and co-ordination of resources
- Some very positive issues - experiences of school pupils maturing / benefiting from being on college site
- Are lecturers able to work with 14 year olds – SFEU plan to integrate training, develop skills of lecturers used to working with adult returners
- Hope is that all students would be able to access these courses – would perception of parents be that this was not ‘real education’. In some peoples experience they have not seen enough places on this kind of course
- Codes of conduct – attendance, attainment, behaviour
- Need to link FE/HE and employers to provide work experience and ‘skills for work’ input as appropriate to young person
- Transport and insurance are issues, particularly for work experience input – travel costs
- Advertising, selection procedures and agreements with young persons and parents are required
- Information sharing (phoenix integration with college MIS system)

## **Credibility of the New Courses**

### **Briefing paper**

A pass/fail assessment regime will be used in the new qualifications. The courses will be developed in areas where assessing and certificating the candidate's demonstration of competence in practical or other skills is more appropriate than graded assessment for measuring their progress and determining their progression to the next level of learning.

Ungraded assessment is not new or unique to these new skills for work qualifications – SVQs, for example, are ungraded. However, courses undertaken by school pupils are generally graded.

There are therefore issues both of perceptions and practicalities to discuss concerning the assessment regime.

At a practical level, the Unit assessments will be internal, with moderation by the Scottish Qualifications Authority i.e. there will be no end of year exam. There will also be pupil self-assessment built in to the fourth Unit, as discussed in session one. The absence of an end of year exam may facilitate more flexible approaches in the learning and teaching of these courses. Attendees may wish to discuss the appropriateness of this approach and whether it will be 'fit for purpose'. It would be useful if you could discuss how the assessment regime can ensure that levels of assessment are challenging and meaningful. Will the ungraded system encourage some candidates to try to reach only the minimum competency standards required rather than pushing them to the highest level they can achieve – if so, how can this be overcome?

Delegates will wish to consider whether there will be a perception that ungraded courses are for the disaffected or slower learners. Does the ungraded approach place students on these course at a disadvantage and perpetuate divisions between "academic" and "vocational" qualifications – if so, how could this be overcome? How can we make these courses credible for end users (employers, training providers, further and higher education and candidates themselves)? You may wish to discuss whether parity will be addressed by placing the qualifications on the SCQF framework. You might also wish to think of alternatives to the word "ungraded".

It would also be helpful if you could discuss how we might ensure that end users of these qualifications fully understand and give appropriate recognition to what candidates have achieved. How can we ensure that employers give due recognition of the content of the skills for work courses in contributing to SVQ units? It would also be worthwhile considering the most appropriate communication and marketing strategies.

## Questions for discussion

1. How can the assessment regime ensure that levels of assessment are challenging and meaningful? Would the ungraded system encourage some candidates to try to reach only the minimum competency standards required rather than pushing them to the highest level they can achieve – if so, how could this be overcome?
2. Do you think that the ungraded assessment system might place students on these courses at a disadvantage and perpetuate divisions between “academic” and “vocational” qualifications – if so, how could this be overcome? How can we ensure that these courses have credibility with end users (employers, training providers, further and higher education and candidates themselves)?
3. How might we ensure that end users of these qualifications fully understand and give appropriate recognition to what candidates have achieved? How can we ensure that employers give due recognition of the content of the skills for work courses in contributing to SVQ units
4. How can we best market these courses to end users?

## Responses

*How can the assessment regime ensure that levels of assessment are challenging and meaningful? Would the ungraded system encourage some candidates to try to reach only the minimum competency standards required rather than pushing them to the highest level they can achieve – if so, how could this be overcome?*

Respondents were fairly evenly divided between the value of ungraded and graded assessment.

- Some pupils already strive for minimum competency and a change in the exam system unlikely to make a difference here – striving for more than minimum competency is dependant upon culture/ethos/personality of teacher and learner in school or workplace
- An ungraded system will not encourage pupils to simply attain minimum competency standards
- We believe that students motivated to do this course would not be de-motivated by an “ungraded” system
- Grading could encourage exam based academic approach rather than practical ‘can do’
- PSE units pass/fail at moment, so no difference
- Serious problems regarding ‘ungraded’ results
- Quality assurance systems should be in place
- Pupils prefer graded results
- Makes students different to others of the same age – why make a difference if supposed to be of equal value; to have same value as standard grades should have same criteria i.e. be graded A, B, C etc.
- Both education staff and employers known to prefer graded assessment – need not link to examinations, can be ongoing recognition of higher achievement

- From parents point of view would seem less valuable if not graded - perpetuates the myth that students do college courses if not 'good enough' to do anything else
- Feel strongly that Executive should do a lot more consultation on the issue of grading
- Vocational competence - pass/fail - grading not appropriate or relevant

*Do you think that the ungraded assessment system might place students on these courses at a disadvantage and perpetuate divisions between "academic" and "vocational" qualifications – if so, how could this be overcome? How can we ensure that these courses have credibility with end users (employers, training providers, further and higher education and candidates themselves)?*

No clear view emerged about whether students on the course would be at a disadvantage. There was a clear view, however, that the courses had to be enthusiastically marketed and set alongside 'academic' courses as equally valuable.

- Needs to have parity on SCQF points system
- These courses have to be included as options on a par with others
- Should be no reference at pupil level to vocational/academic
- Both academic and vocational lead to work – this needs to be stressed
- Need to ensure agreed progression into FE and into HE - progression routes
- Need to do a lot of marketing/demonstrating the value etc.
- Danger of divide if 'vocational' is not marketed enough
- Importance of marketing and informing parents of the worth of courses – difficult!
- Employers need to be part of planning process and be able to identify clear progression routes
- Involve sector council, CITB etc to validate course content, criteria and assessment
- Key role for effective guidance
- Parents have to be educated, as do teachers, to its value
- Not necessarily, provided value and progression is there
- No! Underestimating young people
- Could be disadvantage – depends on how it is contextualised
- Possible disadvantage to students in that ungraded courses are in contrast to academic qualifications which are graded

*How might we ensure that end users of these qualifications fully understand and give appropriate recognition to what candidates have achieved? How can we ensure that employers give due recognition of the content of the skills for work courses in contributing to SVQ units*

There was a widely held view that employers in particular should be involved in the decision-making and design of courses and that there must be clarity with regard to progression

- Has to be on the second year option sheet
- Employers need to be part of planning process to 'ensure they feel 'ownership'
- Employers at the national scale need to disseminate to those at local level
- Need to clarify link with these courses as 'basic skills' in preparation for full vocational qualifications courses
- Communication needed throughout all sectors and organisations that are involved
- Colleges, CITB must not repeat elements of skills for work courses

- Active involvement of employers in content of programmes - they would then understand what was in them and be able to progress work and vocational units in the workplace
- Employers need to be involved in the design of courses from the outset to ensure credibility
- Need feedback/collaboration with local labour market Must have clear lines of progression
- Main benefits have to be very clear, also links to other qualifications
- Need to involve all partners in deciding criteria, content and progression

*How can we best market these courses to end users?*

A variety of ideas were suggested for marketing the courses.

- Options evenings/parents nights - market to parents that youngsters' general performance is increased across the curriculum and has a parity with academic alternatives – also show value and progression
- Determined to succeed team – a major role to play in educating employers across a whole range of qualifications
- Really market the 'framework' so that employers recognise levels of attainment
- Have a link to work experience providers at a local level
- Information in a streamlined and easy to understand form illustrating the various progression routes available and their equivalences would be helpful - schools/local authorities/colleges can not do this on their own - national approach is required
- Breakfast meetings/twilight meetings with employers to discuss content and value of courses
- Make use of people who have been taken through it - the quality of candidates will sell it to others in future
- Market 'good practice' examples
- There is a real need for a consistent and high profile media message on the skills for work agenda along the lines of:
  - We are preparing young people for the future knowledge economy (of Scotland) in a global marketplace;
  - Scotland needs continuing growth in technical and management skills;
  - Need to promote this as a premium 'qualification' and use good case studies of achievers.

## Relevance

No briefing paper was issued for this part.

## Questions for discussion

1. Core skills are built into existing National Units and Courses. There are currently five certificated core skills: Problem solving; Communication; Numeracy; ICT; Working with others. How much emphasis should these new courses give to core skills, and how can these be best developed and certificated? Should other 'soft' skills be considered?
2. What else will help ensure the courses are relevant and useful for end users?
3. Will these courses provide suitable progression to further/ higher education and/or employment?
4. Would it be appropriate to consider applying this course model to formally certificate some activities which take place outside the formal school curriculum, such as community involvement activity and voluntary work?
5. Please note any other comments you wish to make.

## Responses

*Core skills are built into existing National Units and Courses. There are currently five certificated core skills: Problem solving; Communication; Numeracy; ICT; Working with others. How much emphasis should these new courses give to core skills, and how can these be best developed and certificated? Should other 'soft' skills be considered?*

There was general agreement about the importance of core skills and most thought it was worth considering the inclusion of 'soft' skills. A range of possible skills was suggested.

- Core skills matter - more important than academic skills
  - Core skills embedded but focus on specific vocational features
  - Ensure relevance to subject area e.g.. numeracy skills needed for joinery
  - Courses should not be 'distorted' to over – emphasise core skills
  - Interpersonal skills e.g. leadership, team working, personal planning – link to citizenship and "people skills"
  - Soft skills: -skills for life
    - Presentation skills
    - Interview skills
- These skills are promoted in enterprise in education activities
- Should be other core skills recognised such as time management health and safety, employability?
  - Motivation, presentation skills, etc should also be assessed and reported on
  - Include ability of person to market themselves – also employability skills e.g. timekeeping
  - Soft skills/competence profile/comments would be helpful e.g. report from course provider/lecturer/teacher.

- Unclutter curriculum - therefore do not add more 'soft skills' to these courses

*What else will help ensure the courses are relevant and useful for end users?*

A good range of ideas were put forward.

- Skills must be relevant and up to date
- Functional levels of core skills e.g. numeracy, communication, appropriate to vocation being followed
- Collaboration with employer representatives – FE/HE representatives – establish mapping processes and a reporting format to include statistics
- Mapped frameworks to include SVQs and other NQ's
- Use "ungraded" to advantage - hopefully employers will see someone having 7 Standard Grades and "skills for work" qualifications being better than someone with 8 Standard Grades
- Progression must be seen by learner and other end users
- Ask for opinions of young people themselves
- The main end users are the pupils and employers; transferable skills are therefore the most important given the increasing tendency towards changes in careers
- Tasters – aim of these would be to reduce drop-out rate in courses

*Will these courses provide suitable progression to further/ higher education and/or employment?*

Most thought the courses provided suitable progression if certain conditions were fulfilled.

- Yes, if account is taken of prior leaning and taken other achievements into account
- Yes, feeling is that courses may be flexible enough to provide suitable progression
- Yes, if we can address parity of esteem between VQs and Highers route.
- Yes, but essential that existing VQ framework continues so that employers and FE colleges can continue the process
- Yes, if structured in core and options or part of the main stream curriculum, has equal currency with school curriculum, and is understood by parents and employers
- Yes, as part of a life long learning strategy/package
- Yes, if we enable progression to Highers for each vocational route and take employers views on this
- Need to dovetail these with other courses to ensure progression – must not be free standing
- More negotiations to be done with HE – acceptance for UCAS qualifications

*Would it be appropriate to consider applying this course model to formally certificate some activities which take place outside the formal school curriculum, such as community involvement activity and voluntary work?*

Respondents were divided about using the model for certificating activities outside the formal curriculum.

- Yes, would consider - but students must not repeat tasks just for the sake of accreditation

- Benefits of work in drama, sports and participation in pupil councils should be acknowledged
- Ideally yes, but resource intensive
- Part-time paid employment should also be included
- Work experience should also be taken into consideration
- Possibly, though problems relating to certification/verification
- Not every aspect of life needs assessing but some outside activity evidence could be brought in by students
- Record in some way pupils extra curriculum activities - recognition is key not necessarily certification
- No - unanimous!
- Fourth unit model is not appropriate for informal curriculum – existing schemes e.g. ASDAN and Duke of Edinburgh fulfil this purpose
- Danger of certificating everything!
- Not necessary! Recognised through personal statements/progress file/school references
- Yes and no - certification not seen as desirable in all cases - in some cases assessment procedures could be part of a continuum, i.e. activities allowing the processes to be assessed e.g. working with others

*Please note any other comments you wish to make.*

A number of points mentioned earlier were introduced again at this stage e.g.

Accessing views of learners;

Importance of marketing the courses to parents and employers;

The practical skills developed through the courses are also relevant for 'able' pupils;

If seen as worthwhile courses would be motivating for pupils.

- Views of the learner need to be incorporated as feedback
- Link to personal development plan concept
- Marketing very important, if this is to be successful – employers, parents, pupils/students
- If seen as worth while, could be very motivating for pupils and practical skills become relevant for able pupils
- One noted benefit of today's discussion was the sharing of opinion by school staff and school students. This does not happen often enough!
- Where are application procedures, interview coaching, CV writing within the programme?
- How do we meet needs of SEN pupils within this structure?
- Funding for training providers to assist in delivery- is it up to local authority to pay from DTS budget?
- Draw on existing good practice e.g. Dundee, Glasgow, Highland – look at different models.

## Summary of evaluations

### Q1. To what extent did the seminar achieve its aims?

Fully

Partly

Not at all

#### Responses

47% of respondents wrote fully and 53% wrote partly.

### Q2. Did the briefing papers provide sufficient background information for the discussions?

#### Responses

Over one third of respondents were satisfied with the briefing papers. Other felt that they could have been clearer, particularly for those with less background knowledge. Also there was a feeling there should have been more detail in relation to the content of the courses.

- They should have been distributed much earlier
- A clearer understanding of the unit content would have assisted the process
- Some formal discussion was required at beginning, so that everyone was sure of the topic
- Not if participants have no background knowledge
- Papers could have been clearer
- Session one papers were vague and required greater clarity, session 2 were fine
- Lacked enough detail of what would be entailed in the courses
- Draft course specifications would have been helpful.
- Good for sessions 1 and 2, none for session 3
- Very good, and wide ranging discussion
- Useful as background to the discussion
- Not quite - need to know more about content of the course
- More detail on structure of units proposed- i.e. emphasis on generic or vocational specific skills
- Papers were very non-specific and vague
- Papers were very clearly put together
- Did not provide enough information to have a real impact on discussion
- No - more clarification was required on the content of units (1- especially) in order to fully understand how much they will (could) be applied in schools
- Papers helpful - however further explanation of the proposed units from the floor prior to the group discussion would have been helpful
- For education (schools and FE) I would think so; for industry there could have been more background reading

**Q3. Was the time given for discussion sufficient to allow completion of the tasks?**

**Responses**

Most felt the time for discussion was sufficient. Some felt that decisions about chairing of groups and scribes could have been made earlier and more clearly.

- Yes
- Time given was sufficient to discuss information given
- Time was sufficient but due to lack of prior knowledge, tasks were not completed properly
- Slightly more than was needed
- Yes, however a final session, open to all to contribute/comment, would have been useful
- Yes, although debate can always go on, it is good to be focused
- It was tight for the first session but better for 2-3. Details discussed in 1 were also relevant in 2 and 3
- More than adequate, but chair people should have been identified earlier and given clear briefing to keep discussions focused on issues identified for discussion
- Yes, it has been useful to discuss issues
- Very good discussion
- Time given was sufficient to discuss information given
- Yes, but perhaps a more definite decision on the scribe for each group - ours was a little haphazard.

**Q4. How useful was the report back session?**

**Responses**

There was general agreement that the report back sessions were useful

- Very useful
- Helpful to have the chance to hear other views
- Interesting, but not influential
- Good to find out that other groups came to the same conclusions
- Maybe “group think” takes over in small groups so it was interesting to hear totally different responses
- Very clear views of groups dominated by different backgrounds such as education i.e. schools/ colleges, and industry
- Good. It will be useful to get a look at the report
- Useful – will appreciate a copy of report and further involvement
- Perhaps all groups should feedback as it raises other issues for discussion
- Very much - different groups feedback different issues
- More time required for groups to report back and allow discussions with whole session. No time was allowed for groups to comment on other groups’ feedback
- Good to feedback from sessions, one at a time, not all at the end or to have two groups feedback at a time
- Worked well
- Would liked to have seen some visual representation of what groups had highlighted
- Greater feedback opportunities from all tables would have been useful
- Better to report back after each unit/discussion rather than at the end of the day

**Q.5 Are there any general comments you wish to make about the seminar including the catering and facilities?**

**Responses**

- Very good
- Excellent facilities, comfortable surroundings
- One hour perhaps too long for lunch
- Good
- Trying to “second guess” the unit content made life a bit complicated
- Useful to hear the views of representatives from different sectors
- This place (Glasgow City Chambers) is great, bring us back often
- Thought provoking seminars - excellent at raising awareness of the issues within vocational training
- Good mix of participants
- An initial presentation on the background to these awards would have been helpful
- Very good - promoted discussions on a wide variety of vocational training
- Overall very good - well looked after
- Clearer information about units i.e. course description of content, would have helped to establish their use
- Catering very good
- Very valuable discussions with professionals from other agencies and employers
- Good discussions took place but would have been more beneficial if there was course context and content
- Great to have college staff, school staff, and school students talking at the same table. This doesn't happen often enough!
- Pupil attendance was very helpful – I'm not sure what they thought though.
- Very interesting
- Good to make contact with others within the education system
- Should have been more representation from employer side - you need to encourage the employer at the earliest stage.

## Next steps

Development of the new Courses is well underway in preparation for launching in May 2005. The Course structure and design allows flexibility and follows slightly differing models across the four pilot subject areas and reflects comments received during this consultation exercise.

SQA held an information event on 4 February and subsequently sent an information pack to interested local authorities, FE Colleges and independent schools. This included a proforma for interested parties to return to SQA indicating which subjects and levels they would like to pilot.

The four pilot subjects for the first year 2005/6 will be:

- Construction: Craft Skills                      Intermediate 1
- Sport and Recreation                            Intermediate 1
- Early Education and Childcare                Intermediate 1 & 2
- Exploring Financial Services                  Intermediate 2

These will be launched in May 2005. Further levels will be added to these courses and a further tranche of pilot subjects will also be developed in time for session 2006/7. The intention is that the skills for work Courses will be rolled out from session 2007/8

The Vocational Education Development Steering Group, comprising a range of stakeholders from across the educational spectrum and also including representatives from employers organisations, has been formed to oversee the development and piloting of these new Courses.

For further information about the skills for work pilot programme, please contact SQA's customer contact centre by calling 0845 279 1000 or e-mailing [customer@sqa.org.uk](mailto:customer@sqa.org.uk).

## References

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