

## References

The general SCQF website can be found at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk). This will provide access to the SCQF level descriptors.

There is an RPL section on the SCQF website at [www.scqf.org.uk/rpl.asp](http://www.scqf.org.uk/rpl.asp)

SCQF (the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) Adding Value to Learning: the Scottish credit and qualifications framework, SCQF, Glasgow, 1999

*Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*, The Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland: The Scottish Executive 2003 ( this can be accessed on the Scottish Executive's website [www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/lifelong/lism-00.asp](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/lifelong/lism-00.asp) )

There are also a number of publications some of which can be downloaded and some which have to be ordered on the SQA website [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk):

### *An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework*

This is a booklet providing an overview of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and its main features. It also describes how the Framework will help to address issues regarding lifelong learning and increasing participation in education. September 2001

### *Crediting Learning - Understanding Qualifications Introducing the new Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework*

This is a general information leaflet to help employers understand the SCQF and how Scottish Qualifications relate to each other. April 2003

### *SCQF Implementation Guide Update 2*

This is a brief update on the arrangements and timetable to develop and implement the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). July 2003

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# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the Scottish and Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF)

This article is aimed at practitioners in learning centres who need to address learner requests to recognise prior learning, or to initiate recognition of prior learning on behalf of learners and link this to the SCQF.



## What does Recognition of Prior Learning cover?

Recognition of Prior Learning covers all prior learning which has not previously been assessed or credit-rated. In other words it does not cover formal learning where certification has been gained. RPL includes prior learning achieved through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as prior learning gained in non-formal contexts through, for example, community-based learning; workplace learning and training and continuing professional development. There is a very close relationship between RPL and SCQF because SCQF, which will be explained below, is the framework used to assess the level and the amount of learning involved in claims for RPL.

## Ongoing (formative) and final (summative) recognition

A learner can undertake recognition of prior informal learning for different reasons. It could be for personal and career development, to support the move between informal and formal learning or for gaining credit for entry into, or credit within, a formal programme of study.

RPL for personal/career development focuses on ongoing or formative recognition. Formative recognition may result in a kind of mapping exercise, using SCQF, by identifying the right level for an individual to progress as part of an educational guidance or personal development planning process.

RPL for credit, focuses on final or summative recognition, for example, it gives a learner credit to gain entry to, or credit within, a formal programme of study. Summative recognition will involve a formal assessment of prior informal, or experiential, learning as part of the credit-rating process.

The provision of both forms of RPL will take place within a set of defined procedures to make sure that the process of gaining credit is properly quality assured. So, for example, as well as the learner's tutor making judgements about the level and amount of credit that ought to be awarded for a particular piece of learning, an external assessor might also be involved in ensuring that common standards are being met.

It is important that the learner clearly understands the process and possible outcomes of both RPL routes before he or she decides to proceed. At the outset therefore, the tutor should:

- try to find out why a learner is seeking RPL - this will help identify which kind of recognition he or she needs
- try to ensure that the learner understands the process in terms of the quality assurance mechanisms that will be applied

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### How do we compare the outcomes of formal and informal learning?

All RPL processes will involve an element of reflection and the identification of the learning gained through experiential or informal learning which can be mapped to formal learning by relating the informal learning to:

- a set of core or subject-specific skills or national occupational standards within a community or work based learning context (for example, those which make up a Scottish vocational qualification)
- the outcomes of a formal learning programme or qualification as described in, for example, unit specifications

What it is very important for the learner to know is that:

- recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone. For example, a long time may be spent at work on a particular task, but the amount of learning required to do it may have taken either a short or a very long time, depending on the complexity of the task
- the learning that is recognised should be transferable and not just context specific. In other words the learner should be able to undertake different tasks using the same learning
- credit awarded as a result of RPL is of the same value as credit gained through formal learning

Key factors in a successful RPL process include:

- ensuring learners understand that RPL focuses on the learning that takes place as a result of activity, not the activity itself. This can be quite a difficult idea to understand because it means that two activities which take the same amount of time to complete may yield different levels of credit
- as a tutor involved in the process of supporting or recognising RPL claims, being aware that RPL should be a way of increasing access to learning and not a barrier to it. This means that credit, no matter how it is gained, must be treated equally. There must be 'parity of esteem'

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

One of the key purposes of establishing The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework was to achieve such 'parity of esteem'. The document which set out its objectives (Adding Value 1999) stated:

*'In particular, the SCQF will: establish a national framework for recognising all learning, including that which is not already part of any formal qualification system, provided it has been or can be subject to valid, reliable and quality assured assessment.'*

This has been achieved by mapping each major qualification in Scotland and giving each of them a number of credit points. The credit point is exactly the same (10 notional hours of learning time) whether the qualification is school based, college based, university based or offered by a professional statutory body. Crucially for RPL the same credit based system can be used for the purposes of accrediting RPL.

In addition to providing a map of qualifications and how they relate to each other, SCQF also provides a set of level descriptors. These describe the knowledge, skills and understanding required at each of 12 levels in the SCQF.

It therefore became possible to match experiential learning to the SCQF by relating it, as suggested above, to outcomes or national standards and making a judgement as to where it should be located on the SCQF table and, based on the 10 notional hours of learning time, making a judgement as to how much credit should be given.

Tutors should become familiar with the SCQF table below and, in particular, how levels are numbered, to be in a position to give advice on where qualifications sit in relation to each other and what progression routes might be possible.

### Resources

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Level	SQA national units, courses and group awards	Higher Education	SVQ	SCQF Level
12		Doctorate		12
11		Masters Degree	SVQ 5	11
10		Honours Degree		10
9		Ordinary Degree		9
8		HND, Dip HE	SVQ 4	8
7	Advanced Higher	HNC, Cert HE	SVQ 3	7
6	Higher		SVQ 3	6
5	Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade		SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade		SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade			3
2	Access 2			2
1	Access 1			1

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