



THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

DEGREE PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION for  
MSc in Learning for Sustainability

1. Awarding Institution: University of Edinburgh
2. Teaching Institution: University of Edinburgh
3. Programme accredited by: No external accreditation
4. Final Award: MSc
5. Programme Title: MSc in Learning for Sustainability
6. UCAS Code: N/A
  - a. Relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s): N/A
7. Postholder with overall responsibility for QA: Programme Director of MSc (tbc)
8. Date of production/revision: May 31 / September 11, 2013
9. External Summary

Many issues threaten the future of ourselves and other species on the planet. The most prominent of these is global climate change, but also loss of biodiversity, impacts of manufactured chemicals, inequality and related concerns of human well-being and economic stability. The proposed MSc in Learning for Sustainability seeks to understand and contribute to the way education addresses these issues, within national and global contexts.

The development of this MSc programme is also driven by recent changes in Scottish schooling policy. The report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on 'One Planet Schools' submitted its 'Learning for Sustainability' report in December 2012, and recently the Scottish Government accepted all 31 of the recommendations. Among these were the declarations that 'All learners should have an entitlement to learning for sustainability...' and that 'outdoor learning should be a regular, progressive curriculum-led experience for all learners'<sup>1</sup>. This report strongly supports the General Teaching Council for Scotland's new Revised Professional Standards for Scottish Teachers, which include 'Learning for Sustainability' in the elements that define initial, in-service and leading

teachers<sup>2</sup>. This will be a requirement for all registered teachers in Scotland as of September, 2013.

The University of Edinburgh has recently taken a key role in the development of a UN Recognised Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development for Scotland<sup>3</sup>. The Centre will be located at, and administered and led by staff at the University. It will have strong collaborative links with other Scottish Universities, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), third sector organisations within Scotland, and internationally. The MSc Learning for Sustainability will of course both benefit from and support learning for sustainability through such links, and there will be opportunities for innovative research-led teaching, collaborative partnerships and professional networks that a UN Centre of Expertise offers.

The rationale for this new MSc includes two additional items. First, the Donaldson Review of Teacher Education 'recommendation 44' advocates that each newly qualified teacher has a 'Masters account' opened for them; and second, the Scottish Funding Council has recently announced recurrent provision of 20 fully-funded MSc places in Outdoor Learning and Sustainability Education at the Moray House School of Education, starting in September 2013.

## 10. Educational Aims of Programme

The MSc in Learning for Sustainability aims to introduce students to the main issues, theories, debates and research methods in the field of Learning for Sustainability. The multi-disciplinary nature of this programme will challenge students to explore the socio-political, economic and environmental dimensions in the various sub-disciplines of global learning, citizenship education, outdoor learning, environmental education and in education for sustainability.

The programme offers participants opportunities to interact with a wide range of other professionals working in the fields of education and sustainability, thereby deepening their networks, knowledge and critical skills. These resources can then be applied in their own institutions and settings.

The main educational aims associated with the MSc in Learning for Sustainability are:

- a) Students will be able to demonstrate a critical understanding of the key contemporary concepts, theories, and debates currently influencing Learning for Sustainability.
- b) Students will be able to reflect upon, critically analyse, and interpret their own experiences, working practices or professional activities in light of these key concepts, theories and debates.
- c) Students will critically examine a range of indoor and outdoor pedagogical approaches to Learning for Sustainability.

- d) Students will be able to critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking on Learning for Sustainability.
- e) Students will be able to critically analyse and conduct research in an area of interest relevant to their own interests, experiences or practice, and engage with processes of extending the academic and practical boundaries of the discipline.
- f) Students will interpret, evaluate, and meaningfully engage with complex ethical and/or professional issues, and make informed judgments on topics not yet addressed by current professional codes or practices.

## 11. Programme Outcomes

Graduates of the University of Edinburgh will have had opportunity to develop and strengthen their approaches to knowledge and learning, to their own development and goals, and to the world and environments around them – approaches which distinguish them from others in their lives and work. By the end of the programme, students will have achieved learning outcomes in the following areas:

*four full-page tables follow*

## 11 a) Research and Enquiry

| Graduates of this programme will:  | When and Where?   | Teaching & Learning   | Assessment   |
|--|---|---|--|
| be able to identify, define and analyse problems and identify or create processes to solve them  | Throughout the programme, specifically Ecosystems for Educators and Education of Environmental Citizenship                        | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, group working, self-study              | Coursework, Collaborative Project, Dissertation            |
| be able to exercise critical judgment in creating new understanding  | Throughout the programme  | Lectures , discussion, seminar contributions, self-study                            | Coursework   |
| be ready to ask key questions and exercise rational enquiry  | Throughout the programme, specifically Education for Environmental Citizenship  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, discussion groups, self-study.         | Coursework, Focused Discussion, Dissertation               |
| have acquired an advanced understanding of the criteria defining a good literature review  | Sources of Knowledge and Planning Research  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study                             | Coursework<br>Dissertation                                 |
| be able to critically assess existing understanding and the limitations of their own knowledge and recognise the need to regularly challenge all knowledge | Throughout the programme – we believe all courses on the programme should challenge students to do this                           | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study and professional reflection | Coursework, reading, reflective assignments                |
| search for, evaluate and use information to develop their knowledge and understanding  | Throughout the programme  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study                             | Coursework, Dissertation                                   |
| have an informed respect for the principles, methods, standards, values and boundaries of their discipline(s) and the capacity to question these           | Throughout the programme  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study                             | Coursework   |
| understand economic, legal, social, cultural and environmental issues in the use of information  | Throughout the programme, specifically in Introduction to Learning for Sustainability and Education for Environmental Citizenship | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study                             | Coursework, reading and literature review, peer discussion |
| recognise the importance of reflecting on their learning experiences and be aware of their own learning style  | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study                             | Coursework   |

## 11b) Personal and Intellectual Autonomy

| Graduates of this programme will:  | When and Where?  | Teaching & Learning   | Assessment   |
|--|--|---|--|
| be open to new ideas, methods and ways of thinking   | Throughout the programme, specifically Experiential Education  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, reflective evaluation, self-study  | Coursework,  |
| be creative and imaginative thinkers   | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability and Ecosystems for Educators  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework   |
| be able to identify processes and strategies for learning  | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability, Outdoor Learning, and Experiential Education   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study, pedagogical evaluation, field study, experiential learning and research, professional reflection | Coursework, group and peer assessment                        |
| be independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning, and are committed to continuous reflection, self-evaluation and self-improvement | Throughout the programme – we believe that all courses on this programme challenge students to do this. Introduction to Learning for Sustainability has a specific focus on professional reflection and self-evaluation. | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, professional reflection, self-study  | Coursework<br>Dissertation                                   |
| be able to make decisions on the basis of rigorous and independent thought, taking into account ethical and professional issues                          | Throughout the programme, specifically Education for Environmental Citizenship, Ecosystems for Educators and Introduction to Learning for Sustainability   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework<br>Dissertation                                   |
| be able to use collaboration and debate effectively to test, modify and strengthen their own views   | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability, Education for Environmental Citizenship and Ecosystems for Educators   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, collaborative project work, discussion groups, professional reflection and self-study                        | Coursework, group projects, peer assessment and Dissertation |
| be intellectually curious and able to sustain intellectual interest  | Throughout the programme   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework<br>Dissertation                                   |
| be able to respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts   | Throughout the programme   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework<br>Dissertation                                   |
| have a personal vision and goals and be able to work towards these in a sustainable way  | Throughout the programme   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework<br>Dissertation                                   |

### 11c) Graduate Attributes: Communication

| Graduates of this programme will:   | When and Where?  | Teaching & Learning   | Assessment                 |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| make effective use of oral, written and visual means to critique, negotiate, create and communicate understanding | Throughout the programme, specifically Education for Environmental Citizenship,  | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework<br>Dissertation |
| use communication as a tool for collaborating and relating to others  | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability, Education for Environmental Citizenship and Ecosystems for Educators | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, reflective assignments, collaborative project work, self-study, field work                     | Coursework<br>Dissertation |
| further their own learning through effective use of the full range of communication approaches                    | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, on-line discussion groups, webinars, oral presentations, reflective assignments and self-study | Coursework                 |
| recognise the benefits of communicating with those beyond their immediate environments                            | Throughout the programme, Introduction to Learning for Sustainability, Education for Environmental Citizenship and Ecosystems for Educators              | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, collaborative project work, evaluative pedagogical tasks, self-study, field work               | Coursework                 |
| be able to critically analyse their own professional practice   | Throughout the programme, specifically Introduction to Learning for Sustainability and Education for Environmental Citizenship                           | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, reflective assignments, self-study   | Coursework                 |
| use effective communication to articulate their skills as identified through self-reflection                      | Throughout the programme, Introduction to Learning for Sustainability, Education for Environmental Citizenship and Ecosystems for Educators              | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, reflective assignments and professional reflection, self-study                                 | Coursework                 |

## 11 d) Graduate Attributes: Personal effectiveness

| Graduates of this programme will:  | When and Where?  | Teaching & Learning   | Assessment |
|--|--|---|------------|
| appreciate and use talents constructively  | Throughout the programme   | Discussions, seminar contribution, self-study, groupwork  | Coursework |
| be able to create and harness opportunities  | Throughout the programme   | Discussions, seminar contribution, fieldwork, groupwork   | Coursework |
| be able to manage risk while initiating and managing change  | Throughout the programme, specifically Outdoor Learning, Ecosystems for Educators and Experiential Education                             | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study, fieldwork, field technique, risk assessments, journey plans.   | Coursework |
| be responsive to their changing surroundings, being both flexible and proactive  | Throughout the programme, most specifically in Outdoor Learning, Ecosystems for Educators and Experiential Education                     | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, fieldwork, field technique, risk assessments, journey plans, reflective assignments  | Coursework |
| have the confidence to make decisions based on their understandings and their personal and intellectual autonomy   | Throughout the programme   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study, groupwork, professional reflection   | Coursework |
| be able to flexibly transfer their knowledge, learning, skills and abilities from one context to another   | Throughout the programme   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study, groupwork  | Coursework |
| understand social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities and issues  | Throughout the programme   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, self-study   | Coursework |
| be able to work effectively with others, capitalising on their different thinking, experience and skills   | Throughout the programme , Outdoor Learning, Ecosystems for Educators and Experiential Education   | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, groupwork, collaborative project work, peer assessment, reflective assignments   | Coursework |
| work with, manage, and lead others in ways that value their diversity and equality and that encourage their contribution to the organisation and the wider community | Throughout the programme, Outdoor Learning, Ecosystems for Educators, Experiential Education and Education for Environmental Citizenship | Lectures, discussions, seminar contribution, groupwork, on-line discussion groups, webinars, oral presentations, reflective assignments and self-study, peer assessment and feedback, field work. | Coursework |

Adapted from University of Edinburgh Employability Strategy Group Graduate Attributes and Indicative Interpretation (v6.7)

## 12. Programme Structure and Features

The MSc in Learning for Sustainability is delivered at SCQF level 11. The programme comprises a total of 180 credit points. All students are required to take the same seven courses, and the dissertation. An overview of the course structure is shown on the next page.

The majority of the programme is offered on campus, with two of the seven courses offered as on-line / blended learning. One of the on-line courses (The Sources of Knowledge) is an existing, validated course, and the other (Introduction to Learning for Sustainability) is being developed in partnership with WWF Scotland and with expertise from within the school of education (Hamish MacLeod) and Amy Woodgate (UofE Distance Education Initiative). The latter course is the only one that is entirely new. The remaining two courses draw very heavily from existing courses in the current Postgraduate Outdoor Education suite. They have been re-conceptualised in such a manner that they can be taught locally (as opposed to on the Isle of Rum or in the Cairngorms, as they currently are).

The components that make up the programme contribute to the University's widening participation scheme by offering a number of pathways, intermediate qualifications, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses. There are three possible exit points: Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits), Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits), and MSc (180 credits).

### 12a) Courses

| Postgraduate Certificate Courses            | Method           | Masters Credits | Status                      |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Introduction to Learning for Sustainability | Blended learning | 20              | Being written               |
| Ecosystems for Educators                    | Campus / field   | 20              | Revision of existing course |
| Outdoor Learning                            | Campus/ field    | 20              | Current (level 10)          |

| Postgraduate Diploma Courses<br>(all of the above plus the following) | Method         | Masters Credits | Status                      |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Education for Environmental Citizenship                               | Campus / field | 20              | Current                     |
| Environmental Philosophy and City-based Outdoor Learning              | Campus / field | 20              | Revision of existing course |

|                          |                  |    |                    |
|--------------------------|------------------|----|--------------------|
| Experiential Education   | Campus / field   | 10 | Recently validated |
| The Sources of Knowledge | Blended learning | 10 | Current            |

| MSc Courses<br>(all of the above plus the following) | Method           | Masters Credits | Status  |
|--|------------------|-----------------|---------|
| Planning Research                                    | Campus / field   | 10              | Current |
| Dissertation   | Student research | 50              | Current |

The programme is well-aligned with the University’s Strategic Plan, as it emphasises Sustainability, Education, Citizenship, and Social Values and Responsibility. These themes are directly addressed in the curricular content of four of the seven courses in the programme (Education for Environmental Citizenship, Introduction to Learning for Sustainability, Ecosystems for Educators, and Environmental Philosophy and City-based Outdoor Education), and all are examined within the context of education and through the lens of ‘teaching and learning for sustainable change’.

This programme goes some way to achieving the University’s strategic aims of internationalisation, partnership working and social responsibility. Since the development of this new programme is largely driven by recent changes in Scottish educational policy, and coincides with the placement of the prestigious UN Recognised Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development for Scotland in the University, the development of this programme is timely. It responds to a growing recognition nationally and within the University that issues of sustainability and citizenship need to be supported and addressed by educators in all sectors, and reflected in the University’s programmes and courses. Offering an MSc in Learning for Sustainability is, in itself, a socially responsible initiative.

The programme team views diversity as a positive strength in learning and welcomes the University’s recent Accessible Learning Policy and Practice (2011) statement which commits itself to ‘creating a dynamic, accessible and inclusive learning and teaching environment and culture’. Because of the policy drivers outlined in the rationale, the target market for this programme is wide and varied, and is expected to comprise the following:

- Practising teachers in Scotland
- Education professionals, policy-makers, informal, environmental, outdoor and community educators and activists from within the rest of the UK

- Education professionals, policy-makers, informal, environmental, outdoor and community educators and activists from around the world
- Education professionals and policy-makers from Non-Governmental Organisations NGOs and third sector organisations

The programme team believes that this diverse student market will generate rich, positive learning experiences for our student groups and create positive relationships with partners in NGOs, education and industry through future alumni networks.

## 12b) Teaching and Learning Methods and Strategies

Our Teaching, Learning and Assessment Framework is based on sound pedagogical principles. These are aligned with the College of Humanities and Social Science's Learning and Teaching Strategy, which aims to provide the richest academic experiences for our students.

The programme is taught using a varied range of teaching approaches, which include lectures and tutorials, on-line learning and field-work, and is supplemented with discussion, debate, independent reflection, study and research, as well as collaborative group working activities and assessments. All of these methods encourage active participation, evaluation of pedagogical practices, and real-world academic enquiry.

While a proportion of the contact time will be in direct teaching, emphasis will also be placed upon student peers as a professional learning resource. Where appropriate, external experts will also contribute to the classroom experience. This is particularly relevant in two of the new courses: Introduction to Learning for Sustainability and Ecosystems for Educators. Students will be expected to keep abreast of key theoretical and methodological concepts underpinning learning approaches to Sustainability, and be aware of the philosophical perspectives framing debates about values, participation and active citizenship, through the research literature.

Students are expected to attend all classes, prepare for classes with the provided reading and prepare for individual and group presentations and formative assignments.

## 12c) Assessment Methods and Strategies

The courses on this programme incorporate a range of formal assessment practices including reports, essays, reviews, comparative case studies, oral presentations and model lessons. All of the courses also provide opportunities for informal assessment including peer assessment, oral feedback and formative feedback.

Across the programme, an effort was made to follow established good practices in assessment:

- assessments are linked to learning outcomes
- students have involvement in the choice of topic, where appropriate
- a range of innovative assessment practices are used (formal oral and written assignments, collaborative assessments and peer assessment)
- the specific assessment criteria are made explicit
- all assessments are designed to have a built-in developmental effect

The specifics of the assessments are provided in the course descriptors. The standards required for a pass are derived from, and are consistent with, those of the Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme. Care will be taken to ensure that students understand and engage with the requirements for SCQF Level 11.

## 12d) Timetable

Generally speaking, part-time students can take courses in any order. However, it is recommended to take *The Sources of Knowledge* and *Introduction to Learning for Sustainability* early on. The *Dissertation* is not timetabled.

| September   | October   | November  | December  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Outdoor Learning<br>(two weekends)                              | Sources of Knowledge<br>(Blended, online or face to face, five weeks) | Education for Environmental Citizenship<br>(two weekends) | Experiential Education<br>(one weekend residential) |
| Introduction to Learning for Sustainability (BL, semester long) |   |   |   |

| January | February   | March  | April                                      |
|---------|--|--|--|
|         | Environmental Philosophy and City-based Outdoor Learning<br>(two weekends) | Planning Research<br>(Blended, online or face to face) | Ecosystems for Educators<br>(two weekends) |

### 13. Career Opportunities

This programme will attract a wide range of students and education professionals including practicing primary and secondary school teachers and those working in an educational capacity in organisations in the field of sustainability, environment and citizenship. As issues of sustainability and global change become an urgent priority on political agendas, the role of education and professionals operating in these sectors are increasingly sought-after. The programme offers a unique professional development opportunity for those new to this sector and for practicing professionals. Graduate teachers from this programme will be uniquely placed to support and implement the new standards required of registered teachers in Scotland, and to play a part in the important role of enhancing positive cultural, attitudinal and behavioural change in sustainability and citizenship education through their professional practice.

## 14. Other Items

### 14a) Financial Income

|                                 | Category         | Fees  | Student number       | Total fees    | Total fees minus Uni and School top slice |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------------|---------------|---|
| <b>Year 1</b><br><b>2014-15</b> | Overseas FT      | 15850 | 2                    | 31700         |   |
|                                 | EU FT            | 7800  | 3                    | 23400         |   |
|                                 | UK PT            | 1950  | 7                    | 13650         |   |
|                                 |                  |       | <b>Year 1 income</b> | <b>68750</b>  | <b>£ 29150</b>                            |
| <b>Year 2</b><br><b>2015-16</b> | Overseas FT      | 15850 | 4                    | 63400         |   |
|                                 | EU FT            | 7800  | 4                    | 31200         |   |
|                                 | UK PT            | 1950  | 8                    | 15600         |   |
|                                 | Continuing UK PT | 1950  | 7                    | 13550         |   |
|                                 |                  |       | <b>Year 2 income</b> | <b>123850</b> | <b>£ 52513</b>                            |
| <b>Year 3</b><br><b>2016-17</b> | Overseas FT      | 15850 | 5                    | 79250         |   |
|                                 | EU FT            | 7800  | 5                    | 39000         |   |
|                                 | UK PT            | 1950  | 10                   | 19500         |   |
|                                 | Continuing UK PT | 1950  | 15                   | 29250         |   |
|                                 |                  |       | <b>Year 3 income</b> | <b>167000</b> | <b>£ 70809</b>                            |
| <b>Year 4</b><br><b>2017-18</b> | Overseas FT      | 15850 | 5                    | 79250         |   |
|                                 | EU FT            | 7800  | 5                    | 39000         |   |
|                                 | UK PT            | 1950  | 10                   | 19500         |   |
|                                 | Continuing UK PT | 1950  | 25                   | 48750         |   |
|                                 |                  |       | <b>Year 4 income</b> | <b>186500</b> | <b>£ 79077</b>                            |
| <b>Year 5</b><br><b>2018-19</b> | Overseas FT      | 15850 | 5                    | 79250         |   |
|                                 | EU FT            | 7800  | 5                    | 39000         |   |
|                                 | UK PT            | 1950  | 10                   | 19500         |   |
|                                 | Continuing UK PT | 1950  | 28                   | 54600         |   |
|                                 |                  |       | <b>Year 5 income</b> | <b>192350</b> | <b>£ 81557</b>                            |

Table 4: Income projection

\*Income based on FT home / UE students paying £7,800 per year, FT overseas students paying £15,850, and PT students paying .25 total fees per year over four years.

\*\* "On the basis of a 20% top-slice, the proportion of the overall tuition fee paid by a student which is available to the School to pay for their teaching and assessment is 42.4%.... Put differently, the School receives 53% of the tuition fee, whereupon 80% of monies received are available to pay for teaching and assessment.  $100 \times 0.53 \times 0.80 = 42.4$ ."

(taken from p. 3 of the CPGSC Sustainability Report, Oct. 2011)

## 14b) Staffing

The dominant demand on resources will be teaching, assessment, and administration. As indicated above, apart from the 47% taken for the University's central budget, our costing has also factored in the advised 20% top slice of the remaining 53% for administration. It will be possible for the soon-to-be-appointed full-time 'Outdoor Learning' lecturer to absorb some of the planning and preparation for the MSc programme for delivery from September 2014, and some of the teaching and administrative load.

The staff members who will teach on the programme include Simon Beames, Pete Higgins, Robbie Nicol, Hamish Ross, and possibly the incoming lecturer.

Assuming that programme recruitment is strong, we intend to make a case to hire a more permanent staff member to be the programme director and principal tutor in the long term, and this should also be justified on basis of the 20 MSc places awarded to us under the Scottish Funding Council's 'Highly Skilled Workforce' scheme. These are recurrent from 2013 and represent an annual income to the University of £150k. Vice-Principal Sue Rigby has made arrangements to limit top-slicing of this income for the first year. Note that the above spreadsheet does not reflect this limited top slice in the first year.

Apart from basic marketing costs (approx. £2000), some start-up equipment and material will be needed, but this should not exceed £1000.

## 14c) Course evaluation and Quality Assurance

Each course will be evaluated through student evaluations. Each semester there will be a staff / student review for all of those involved in the programme. Every June there will be a Programme Committee Meeting, which will feature external advisors, class representatives, and teaching and administrative staff. Course organisers and the programme director will follow the usual University course / programme monitoring protocols.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE/OnePlanetSchools>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/about-gtcs/Consultations/consultation-revision-professional-standards.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://rcescotland.wordpress.com/>