

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Third Party Credit Rating Policy



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Purpose of Policy

This Policy on Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Third Party Credit Rating ensures that the University provides Third Parties with a robust Credit Rating service that satisfies SCQF requirements.

Overview

This Policy outlines the University's approach to and procedure for SCQF Third Party Credit Rating.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

This policy applies to all subject areas and staff undertaking SCQF Third Party Credit Rating. It is overseen by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

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Document control

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Background

- The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland's national credit recognition and transfer system covering all levels of qualifications.
- The Framework uses two measures to position and compare Scottish qualifications and programmes of learning:
 - the 'Level' of the qualification or learning programme (difficulty);
 - and the number of 'Credit Points' awarded (length of time it takes to complete: one SCQF Credit Point represents an average of ten hours of learning time).
- 'Credit Rating' is the process of allocating an SCQF Level and Credit Points to a qualification or learning programme. SCQF Credit Rating can only be carried out by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies (CRB).
- All Higher Education Institutions were given authority to act as CRBs during the initial setting up of the Framework. As such, the University of Edinburgh is a CRB. It can Credit Rate both its own provision and that of other organisations in a process known as 'Third Party Credit Rating'.
- (Third Party Credit Rating differs from delivery of jointly awarded degree programmes or Accreditation: Credit Rating by the University does not constitute an award in the University's name.)
- The University carries out Third Party Credit Rating in accordance with the SCQF Principles laid out in the SCQF Handbook:

https://scqf.org.uk/media/1125/scqf_handbook_web_final_2015.pdf (see Section 6 in particular)

- Principles 12 to 19 are of particular relevance to Third Party Credit Rating:

Principle 12 - Credit Rating Bodies must assure themselves, as far as is practically possible, of the good standing and credibility of the Third Party organisation prior to any submission for credit rating.

Principle 13 - Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating Third Party submissions.

Principle 14 - Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that Third Party organisations submit information and documented evidence of their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to their internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions.

Principle 15 - The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing / quality assurance systems including appropriate externality.

Principle 16 - Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that the Third Party Organisation submits regular (eg. annual) reports of progress in the delivery of any credit rated qualifications / learning programmes and is aware that they must inform the CRB if any significant changes to these are made which may affect the SCQF level or credit points.

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Principle 17 - Credit Rating Bodies should agree an appropriate review date for the credit rated qualifications / learning programmes(s) with the Third Party organisation.

Principle 18 - Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for uploading the details of all Third Party qualifications / learning programmes which they have credit rated to the SCQF Database.

Principle 19 - Credit Rating Bodies are responsible for issuing the SCQF logo and Brand Guidelines to the Third Party organisation and ensuring that they are aware of the requirements for certification as outlined in Principle 10.

- The University's procedure for Third Party Credit Rating takes full account of Principles 12 to 19 as outlined below:

Procedure for Third Party Credit Rating

1. Lead School and Lead Contact

The School wishing to establish the Third Party Credit Rating agreement will have lead responsibility for initiating the arrangements (steps 2 to 7 below) and for ongoing management and review (steps 9 and 10). The School appoints a Lead Contact (who should not be the person responsible for the final Credit Rating decision) to be the principal link with the Third Party.

2. Due Diligence

The University performs due diligence to assure itself:

- of the good standing and credibility of the Third Party organisation requesting Credit Rating;
- that there will be no reputational risk to the University as a result of its association with the Third Party;
- that the provision has not already been Credit Rated by another body;
- and that it will be possible for the organisation to provide continuity of the provision in question for the period of the Third Party Credit Rating agreement.

The University also ensures that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) exists between the University Court and the Third Party. There are already MoUs in place for many institutions, but where this does not exist, the document is drafted and approved in advance of the Credit Rating being undertaken.

The University of Edinburgh only provides a Third Party Credit Rating service in cases where:

- there is alignment with University and subject area strategies;
- and a clear rationale can be provided for the relationship.

3. Memorandum of Agreement

A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) specific to the Credit Rating service to be provided is produced. This provides detailed information on the arrangements agreed with the Third Party

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organization, and is legally binding. The Director of Legal Services can advise the lead School regarding the formal arrangements for signing the MoA and provide a template.

The MoA covers a fixed period, agreed by the relevant School on a case by case basis, but which is no longer than 3 years.

4. Fees

Fees are detailed within the MoA and are for the period covered by the MoA. They are agreed on a case by case basis by the relevant School, and a clear rationale for the level of the fee is provided.

5. Credit Rating Panel

A Credit Rating Panel of University subject specialists is formed to consider documentation on the provision to be Credit Rated. The documentation is provided by the Third Party in formats and within timescales agreed with the Lead Contact.

The Panel:

- considers the suitability of the Third Party's assessment processes;
- assures itself of the appropriateness of the Third Party's internal quality assurance arrangements;
- ensures that the Third Party has appropriate external quality assurance arrangements in place. (Where this is not the case, the University may provide these as a separately negotiated service.)
- Credit Rates the provision in question by assigning it an SCQF Level and number of Credit Points.
- Submits a recommendation to the relevant School Board of Studies for approval.

6. Board of Studies

The relevant School Board of Studies is the approving body for Third Party Credit Rating. The Credit Rating Panel submits a recommendation to the Board for consideration and approval.

7. Senate Quality Assurance Committee

The Board of Studies' decision is reported to Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) to maintain institutional oversight of Third Party Credit Rating.

8. Recording Internally and on SCQF Database

SQAC informs Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP) of the Third Party Credit Rated provision. An internal record of the provision is generated, and GaSP also ensures that the provision is recorded within the SCQF Database.

9. Annual Reporting

The Third Party reports to the University annually as a minimum on progress in the delivery of the Credit Rated provision. The format of these reports is agreed in advance with the Lead

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Contact, and they are reviewed by the Credit Rating Panel. The findings of the Credit Rating Panel are included in the School Annual Quality Report.

(Ongoing development of the content of the provision is anticipated to ensure that it remains current and relevant. In the event that the annual report signals changes to the provision that are likely to impact on the assigned Credit Level or Points, the revised provision is submitted for further review and revalidation by the Credit Rating Panel. This incurs an additional charge that is agreed between the parties.)

10. Review

Third Party Credit Rating arrangements are reviewed ahead of the end of the period covered by the MoA. A new MoA is produced if the arrangement is to continue.

11. Conferment of Awards / Certification

The Third Party organisation is responsible for the conferment of awards and qualifications and for the production of certificates. Certificates carry the SCQF logo and details of the SCQF Level and Credit Points awarded, accompanied by appropriate wording indicating that the provision has been Credit Rated by the University. (The Third Party is responsible for ensuring that learners are aware that Credit Rating by the University does not constitute an award in the University's name.)

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