



# SFC Guidance

## Colleges as SCQF credit-rating bodies: updated guidance

Issue date: 19 March 2018

Reference: SFC/GD/01/2018

Summary: To inform colleges of changes to quality assurance procedures and approaches for the credit-rating of college provision.

FAO: Principals of Scotland's colleges

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## Colleges as SCQF credit-rating bodies: updated guidance

### Introduction

1. This guidance provides all Scottish colleges with updated information regarding changes to quality assurance procedures and approaches for the credit-rating of college provision.

### Background

2. In January 2007 SFC issued a circular on the SCQF credit-rating of provision and the intended steps for credit rating ([Circular SFC/05/2007: Colleges as SCQF credit-rating bodies](#)). The circular informed all colleges in Scotland that they were entitled, without the need for any approval process, to credit rate provision on the same basis as other Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Credit Rating Bodies.
3. The circular asked colleges to put appropriate procedures for the quality assurance of credit rating in place, liaising with then HMIE (now Education Scotland) and the SCQF Partnership. These procedures and approaches to quality assurance would continue to be reviewed by Education Scotland, in accordance with the SCQF Guidelines as part of periodic review on behalf of SFC. Any credit rating activity which the college had conducted would form part of the evidence base for Education Scotland review.
4. Since 2007 much has changed in the college sector and the arrangements for assuring and improving the quality of provision and services have evolved significantly.
5. SFC Regional Outcome Agreements now clearly set out the expectation for colleges to provide credit rated provision in order to support learners with smoother transition and progression pathways. There is growth in the sector both in credit rating colleges own programmes and the credit rating of programmes owned by third parties either for commercial reasons or to extend partnership working.
6. The revised approach to assuring and improving quality in the college sector focusses firmly on the experiences and outcomes for learners. The responsibility for quality assurance rests with individual colleges as do the associated procedures and arrangements. As in previous arrangements, any activity carried out on a commercial basis in colleges - and attracting no public funding - remains outwith the scope of Education Scotland's review and evaluation activities.

## **New approach to quality assurance, monitoring and support**

7. Because of the risk to individual colleges and to the reputation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, as a result of the lack of ongoing monitoring and support, the Board of the SCQF Partnership requested a review of the 2007 guidance with a view to identifying an approach that was both pragmatic and proportionate. It was agreed that any solution to monitoring credit rating activity in colleges must be allied with providing capacity building and business development where helpful.
8. SFC has agreed with the SCQF Partnership and Education Scotland that the role of supporting, monitoring and reviewing Colleges' work on credit-rating should pass from Education Scotland to the SCQF Partnership with effect from 1 April 2018.

### ***How this new approach will operate***

9. The SCQF Partnership has confirmed that in order to undertake this new role in a way that supports colleges and fits with the SCQF principles and guidelines, a pilot will run from April 2018 until October 2019. This pilot will involve a visit to all colleges which are actively credit rating, or are planning to do so within the AY2018-19. For those not currently credit rating, SCQF will conduct telephone discussions to understand if additional capacity building would be useful.
10. This work will be reinforced with an agreed approach to self- evaluation by colleges and followed up by SCQFP. As part of the pilot, SCQF Partnership will gather views on the most appropriate way for colleges to self-report, including any actions implemented, on their credit rating activity going forward. One approach which has been considered is outlined below:
  - Within the revisions to *How Good Is Our College (HGIOC)*<sup>1</sup>, the quality arrangements for colleges can now include a requirement for colleges, which are active CRBs, to report on SCQF credit rating activity within annual evaluation and enhancement processes. This should include colleges' own provision and any third party provision.
  - Colleges will be asked by SCQF Partnership and SFC to evaluate credit rating arrangements using SCQF Partnership devised criteria as part of the process outlined above.
  - College evaluation and enhancement reports pertaining to SCQF will be shared with SCQF Partnership, ES and SFC.
  - ES will continue to monitor and evaluate the quality of the learner experience for learners on credit rated programmes as part of current arrangements for assuring and improving quality.

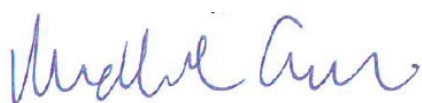
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<sup>1</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/How%20good%20is%20our%20college?>

- A monitoring group of the three organisations will meet each year to review college self-evaluation outcomes and associated actions plans for improvement. The group will then draw on this to plan co-ordinated and targeted capacity building as well as informing how SCQF Partnership will use the information to develop a targeted approach to individual colleges. This targeted approach could include both further scrutiny of credit rating processes, and where necessary, the provision of appropriate support.
  - SCQF Partnership would confirm a cycle for these events to the sector as a whole in agreement with SFC and ES.
11. SCQFP, ES and SFC are clear any new process should not create an unnecessary administrative burden for the colleges. Therefore SCQF Partnership will discuss the approach with individual colleges during the first round of visits, with the CDN Quality Network Steering Group, and with the Principals' Forum, to ensure a proportionate approach that meets colleges' internal and external reporting requirements can be reached by October 2019.

#### **Further information**

12. If you would like further information on these new approach, please contact Aileen Ponton, Chief Executive of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (phone: 0141 225 2922; email: [a.ponton@scqf.org.uk](mailto:a.ponton@scqf.org.uk)). For further information on quality assurance in colleges, please contact Alison Cook, SFC Assistant Director for Quality (phone: 0131 313 6685; email: [acook@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:acook@sfc.ac.uk)) or on SFC's role in supporting and promoting the SCQFP, please contact Anna Thomson, SFC Senior Policy/Analysis Officer – Access (phone: 0131 313 6605; email: [athomson@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:athomson@sfc.ac.uk)).



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