

QUALITY ASSURANCE MODEL FOR SCQFP APPROVED CREDIT RATING BODIES

SECTION 1 Overview of Quality Assurance Model



Quality Assurance Model for SCQFP Approved Credit Rating Bodies

*This Quality Assurance Model (QAM) applies specifically to those SCQFP Approved CRBs
but for ease of reading the term Credit Rating Body or CRB will be used in this document*

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Section 1

Overview of Quality Assurance Model

Introduction

Credit Rating Bodies (CRBs) in Scotland include all Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Scotland's Colleges and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) as well as a number of other bodies which have met the criteria included in this model and have gone through a rigorous approval process conducted by the SCQF Partnership (SCQFP). These bodies are known as SCQFP Approved CRBs and come from a wide range of sectors.

HEIs and SQA are subject to specific alternative quality assurance arrangements agreed by the SCQFP Board and are separate to this model. Colleges are subject to a sector specific review process conducted by the SCQFP which is detailed separately. However, all CRBs including HEIs, Colleges and SQA should adhere to the Principles within the SCQF Handbook and also the processes contained in Section 7 of this document.

This Quality Assurance Model (QAM) applies specifically to those SCQFP Approved CRBs mentioned above but for ease of reading the term Credit Rating Body or CRB will be used in this document.

The QAM guidance is divided into 9 sections:

- Section 1 Overview of Quality Assurance Model
- Section 2 Quality Assurance Model - Criteria
- Section 3 Approval
- Section 4 Annual Monitoring
- Section 5 Periodic Review
- Section 6 Third Party Credit Rating
- Section 7 Removal of Credit Rating Authority and ceasing Credit Rating and
- Section 8 Appeals
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- Section 10 Ceasing Credit Rating Flowcharts

Rigour of the Quality Assurance Model

The Quality Assurance Model sets out the criteria which must be adhered to in order to ensure approval and review are transparent and robust. It is essential that the on-going quality assurance arrangements are rigorous in order to maintain partners' and stakeholders' confidence in the SCQF as Scotland's Lifelong Learning Framework.

The SCQFP has designed rigorous quality assurance processes for awarding credit rating authority to appropriate bodies. In order to demonstrate the rigour of these processes to stakeholders the SCQFP will:

- Operate the QAM under the governance of the SCQFP Quality Committee and SCQFP Board
- Ensure that the QAM is subject to regular review

As part of our existing processes, reviews have taken place in 2011, 2014 and in 2019. Each of these reviews has taken views from Quality Committee members, CRBs, and External Reviewers.

The model consists of three distinct processes:

- Approval
- Annual Monitoring
- Periodic Review

Each of these processes is underpinned by a set of criteria. These Criteria are:

Criterion 1 Body of Good Standing

Criterion 2 Robust Quality Assurance System

Criterion 3 Capacity and Commitment

Criterion 4 Third Party Credit Rating (where applicable)

In addition, the SCQF Handbook details a set of 25 high level principles which CRBs are asked to adhere to once approved. These principles apply to all CRBs and not only those approved directly by the SCQFP.

Applications for **Approval** to become a CRB take around 9 to 12 months to fully complete the process and consist of:

- An expression of interest
- An informal discussion with an Officer of SCQFP
- The completion of an approval submission document with accompanying evidence which includes evidence of a trial run of the proposed credit rating process
- A Review Team pre review online meeting
- An online review meeting with the organisation by a Review Team
- A formal report
- Scrutiny of the report by the SCQFP Quality Committee and SCQFP Board
- Letter of outcome from the Chair of the SCQFP Board
- A right of appeal

Possible outcomes:

- Approved
- Approved with conditions¹
- Not Approved²

Once approved, the CRB is then subject to annual monitoring and periodic review.

Annual monitoring takes place each year and involves:

- The completion of a submission document with accompanying evidence
- An online review meeting with the organisation by a Review Team ³
- A short action based report
- Scrutiny of the report by the SCQFP Quality Committee
- Letter of outcome from the Chair of the SCQFP Quality Committee
- A right of appeal

Possible Outcomes:

CRB is allowed to continue credit rating

CRB is allowed to continue to credit rate with conditions

CRB is suspended from credit rating

The process for removal of credit rating authority is initiated

Periodic Review takes place every 4 years following approval and involves:

- The completion of a submission document with accompanying evidence
- An online review meeting with the organisation by a review team
- A formal report
- Scrutiny of the report by the SCQFP Quality Committee and SCQFP Board
- Letter of outcome from the Chair of the SCQFP Board
- A right of appeal

Possible outcomes:

- CRB can continue as a CRB
- CRB can continue as a CRB with conditions
- CRB is suspended from credit rating
- The process for removal of credit rating authority is initiated

The SCQFP Board reserves the right to reinstate an annual physical visit to the organisation for any CRB. This decision will be made using a risk based approach and may not necessarily indicate a poor outcome at the periodic review.

¹ CRB cannot start to credit rate until conditions are met

² After unsuccessful application, the organisation will receive feedback from SCQFP and will be allowed to resubmit on one further occasion

³ Note that the format of the annual monitoring will be decided on a risk based approach and may result in a desk based monitoring activity with no need for an online review meeting with the CRB. However, all CRBs will receive an online review meeting for the first annual monitoring activity post approval.

Third party credit rating

On approval, a CRB is given the authority to credit rate provision which is owned by itself. If it wishes to credit rate provision owned by a third party, then it must go through a further approval activity and the CRB will need to demonstrate that it meets Criterion 4. CRBs will normally have to have been actively credit rating for at least 1 year post approval before an application for third party approval will be considered. The SCQFP has agreed a definition of third party credit rating and this is included in Section 6.

Removal of Credit Rating Authority and Ceasing Credit Rating

Although it is unlikely that the SCQFP Board would need to remove a CRB's credit rating authority as every effort will be made to enable a CRB to continue through the monitoring and support provided by the SCQFP, there may be instances where it becomes necessary to remove credit rating authority or indeed a CRB may decide, for a range of reasons, to give up its CRB status.

A full set of procedures is available for this as well as when a CRB wishes to cease all or part of its credit rating activities including third party credit rating. This can be found in Section 7.

Further information

Further information and detail of the component parts of the QAM can be found in Section 2 -7 of this document.

In addition, any member of the SCQFP Executive Team can be contacted for an informal or general discussion and information is also available on the SCQF Website at www.scqf.org.uk

Responsibilities

After approval, the CRB will be allocated a named SCQFP Officer. This Officer will be the main contact for the CRB and will manage the annual monitoring activity and the first periodic review after which the CRB will be allocated a new Officer. This is to allow a continuity of approach and to avoid repetition of discussion during annual monitoring activity.

The CRB must provide a named contact for the organisation for the purposes of the annual monitoring and periodic review processes and for any general queries that may arise. In addition, the CRB must also provide a key contact for the SCQF database who will be responsible for ensuring that records of credit rated programmes are uploaded in a timely manner and kept up to date. (The organisation can also have additional staff with access to the Database to assist in this).

The SCQF Quality Committee is responsible for:

- Considering applications for approval as an SCQFP CRB, and proposing any conditions and recommendations based on the outcomes of its considerations of the approval team report to the SCQFP Board;
- Overseeing the self-assessment annual monitoring process of SCQFP CRB's and making the decision as to whether a CRB continues with its credit rating authority and agreeing any conditions and recommendations;
- Overseeing the periodic review process of SCQFP CRBs, and proposing any conditions and recommendations based on the outcomes of its considerations to the SCQFP Board;
- Considering any issues of quality assurance that have the potential to affect the integrity of the SCQF and make recommendations to the SCQFP Board;
- Considering any key themes arising from the operation of the QAM and make recommendations to the SCQFP Board on the need for any thematic reviews.

The SCQFP Board is responsible for:

- Considering applications for approval as an SCQFP CRB, and making the decision as to whether an organisation is given the authority as a CRB based on the recommendations from the SCQFP Quality Committee;
- Receiving Quality Committee recommendations from periodic review process of SCQFP Approved CRBs from the Quality Committee and making the decision as to whether a CRB can continue to credit rate;
- Considering any issues of quality assurance that have the potential to affect the integrity of the SCQF and making decisions to remove credit rating authority if required.

The Risk Matrix

The SCQFP operates a risk matrix and this will be used to ascertain the level of risk and the actions that will be taken. This will be used to:

- Make decisions as to whether a CRB receives a visit at annual monitoring;
- Identify actions arising out of scrutiny of annual and periodic reviews;
- Determine if a CRB needs to be asked to suspend new credit rating activity until identified actions are resolved;
- Determine if the authority to credit rate is to be removed.

In using this risk matrix, a CRB may demonstrate all or some of the indicators under each category and the SCQFP may take some or all of the potential actions listed under the outcomes. This will be dependent on the details of each individual case. In addition, at any time in the process, action or inaction by the CRB may result in the risk category changing e.g. a positive action may result in the category becoming lower or inaction may result in the category being escalated.

The Risk Matrix⁴

High – likely indicators	Medium – likely indicators	Low – likely indicators	Very Low – likely indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious concerns needing immediate action and resolution • Damage to, or serious risk to, the integrity of the SCQF • Impact on current learners • Systemic and recurring unresolved issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues requiring quick action and resolution • Potential damage to the integrity of the SCQF • Possible impact on current learners if not resolved • Some issues which may be systemic or recurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some issues requiring attention • Low or little risk of damage to the integrity of the SCQF • Low or little impact on current learners • Issues are resolved by the CRB when identified through external review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No or minimal concerns • No risk of damage to the integrity of the SCQF • No impact on current learners • CRB identified any issues and resolved through their internal review processes
High - likely outcomes at QC/Board	Medium – likely outcomes at QC/Board	Low – likely outcomes at QC/Board	Very Low – likely outcomes at QC/Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold placed on new credit rating activities • Visit to CRB by SCQFP CEO and Head of Service • SCQFP Quality Committee and Board Chairs alerted • Special meeting of SCQFP Quality Committee held • Next periodic review brought forward • Next annual monitoring will be a visit • Action Plan developed and put in place by CRB and approved by SCQFP • Any special measures agreed • Schedule of additional monitoring and support activities/meetings put in place • Potential removal of credit rating authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring visit to CRB by named SCQFP Officer or the bringing forward of the next periodic review • SCQFP Quality Committee Chair alerted • SCQFP Board Chair alerted • Action Plan developed and put in place by CRB and approved by SCQFP • Action plan monitored by SCQFP • Potential support arrangements put in place • Next annual monitoring may be a visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of issues by named SCQFP Officer • Action Plan developed by CRB • Actions followed up through normal QAM processes of annual and periodic review • Online meeting or desk activity at next annual monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further action • CRB will continue to be subject to annual monitoring and periodic review • Potential for a desk activity only at the next annual monitoring

⁴ This matrix will be used to identify the need for an annual monitoring visit as well as identifying actions post QC/Board. More details of this are included at Section 4 of the QAM