



University for the Common Good

Guidance for External Organisations on Credit Rating at Glasgow Caledonian University

June 2019

All about Credit Rating

1. What is Credit Rating?

Credit rating is the process undertaken by Glasgow Caledonian University for recognising programmes of learning, offered by you as an external organisation. The process takes place using the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework¹ (SCQF) guidelines and assesses the level and volume of credit attributable to the programmes concerned. A brief explanation of the history and purpose of SCQF is included below.

Credit rating has a number of purposes: from the University's point of view and we hope yours. We believe it helps develop partnership between our university and external organisations by focusing on learning, an area of common commitment. Also from your point of view, it may enhance the attractiveness of the learning you are offering to your learners.

Here are some of the benefits for employers identified by the SCQF Partnership:

- Your employees can plan their learning and gain more skills which will help them in their job.
- They will also receive recognition for what they have achieved.
- You will be able to plan and develop your training and development programmes.
- You can help employees achieve their potential and move on to work at a higher level.
- Your employees will feel encouraged to develop their skills, which will improve morale and loyalty to your organisation.
- Your employees will be better qualified and more productive.
- You can offer your employees recognised qualifications that meet the needs of your organisation.
- You are able to provide recognition for smaller pieces of learning of 10 hours or more.
- You can help relate your learning programmes to nationally recognised qualifications.
- If you support your employees and help them develop their skills, this will encourage them to stay with your organisation.
- You are able to show your customers that your learning programmes are nationally recognised.
- You can align your learning and training programmes with other frameworks across the UK and Europe.”

2. The Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

In 2001 the SCQF was established by a partnership of national bodies - The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) through its Scottish office, The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and Universities Scotland, supported by the Scottish Government.

The general aims of the SCQF are to:

- Assist people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential.

¹ <https://scqf.org.uk/>

- Enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

In November 2006 the SCQF Partnership was established as a company limited by guarantee to manage the Framework. The company became a charity registered in Scotland in March 2007. Its members are:

- the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
- Colleges Scotland;
- the Scottish Qualifications Authority; and
- Universities Scotland.

In addition to providing a map of qualifications and how these relate to each other, SCQF also provides a set of level descriptors. These describe the knowledge, skills and understanding required at each of the 12 levels in the SCQF from access to doctorate level study and are used to allocate a level and number of credit points to every qualification and learning programme on the Framework.

It is therefore possible to credit rate a range of learning to the SCQF and make a judgement as to the level and credit points that should be allocated. SCQF works on the principle that 10 notional hours of learning time equals one credit point. Based on this it is possible to make a judgement as to how much credit it should be given for a programme of learning based on the likely time required by the average learner to undertake that learning.

3. Branding

Once your programme is credit rated onto the SCQF, you will be required to use the GCU logo and SCQF logos on certificates distributed to successful candidates.

Your learning programmes will also be added to the SCQF database of credit rated learning allowing access to information on the range of credit rated provision you offer.

4. Getting in touch

If you are interested in having provision credit rated, please get in touch with GCU. Credit Rating Services are facilitated through the Department of Academic Quality and Development (AQD) within the Directorate of Learning and Student Experience. The Department will direct you to the most relevant academic unit within the University to commence the credit rating process.

Please contact creditrating@gcu.ac.uk.

Alternatively you may wish to complete the application form attached as appendix 1. This should then be submitted to the above email address.

5. Taking it Forward

A member of staff from AQD will be in touch to have an early discussion on issues such as the minimum amount of credit that can be offered and the processes, timescales, costs and level of documentation involved in the process, based on the application form. Should you wish to progress you will be invited to submit information as detailed in appendix 2.

The key information required is the nature and purpose of the organisation, for example is it public, private or not for profit; the kind of learning that the organisation is engaged in and for what purpose, and critically the quality of this learning. That will require information on who delivers, the resources used in support and what quality assurance processes are in place.

All of this is covered in the attached application form.

Based on this information the Department of AQD will identify at least one academic expert in the area concerned from across the University and one member of staff experienced in the credit rating process to make an initial assessment of the case for credit rating. Depending on the nature and size of the organisation and nature and range of the learning being considered, it may be necessary to expand the credit rating team.

Perhaps you may not only be seeking credit rating, but advice and support in how to develop the necessary infrastructure to offer provision that can be credit rated. In this case the processes, timescales, costs and level of documentation may be different from that required for credit rating purposes only.

Approval Process

Stage 1

Once the Credit Rating team has received the information described above there will be a formal contractual agreement drawn up addressing the scope and timescales of the exercise. The nature and range of the learning being considered, will have an impact on the cost of the exercise.

It should be noted here that GCU will not credit rate the provision of any external organisation where GCU does not have a member of staff with the relevant knowledge and experience to make the necessary judgments on the nature of the provision.

Once a formal contract has been agreed, stage 2 of the process will begin.

Stage 2

The Credit Rating Team will use the matrix as set out in Appendix 2 to consider the quality system in your organisation in relation to delivery and support materials. Depending on the nature of your organisation and the support you need, this could involve scrutinising learning materials. It is of course possible that some organisations would not wish this and in these cases indirect evidence is another source of information.

Some organisations have in the past asked for support in relation to effective methods of delivery, and assessment and GCU will be happy to provide this.

Stage 3

There needs to be an assessment of how your organisation carries out the internal and external quality assurance of the learning programme.

There is a detailed audit tool set out as Appendix 3. The purpose of this audit is to assess whether your organisation has the necessary quality assurance policy and procedures in place to ensure a high quality learning experience. It may be at this stage that you will want advice and support in addressing gaps that might be identified.

Stage 4

Based on the information available from stages two and three, the team will have to make a considered judgement in relation to the level and quantity of credit applicable to each episode of learning or to a programme as a whole.

If the credit sought is at SCQF level 8 or above GCU quality policy requires an external expert or examiner to be involved in scrutinising and endorsing the decisions of the credit rating team. The external examiner would normally be the external examiner for that level of programme in that subject discipline already engaged by GCU. Where this is not possible, the external expert would need to be someone capable of undertaking that role in relation to that subject area and may have to be contracted for that purpose.

There are essentially three possible judgements the assessment team may reach:

- To credit rate the learning at a specified level and volume of credit for the number of years set out in the SCQF guidance.

- To suggest that further development is required in relation to parts or all of the learning presented and the relevant infrastructure.
- To reject the request for credit rating whilst providing reasons for this along with feedback and suggestions

Stage 5

The decision of the team will be presented to the relevant School Board for ratification. This is part of the formal quality process and the Board has the power to raise issues either in relation to the process or the decisions or both.

The decision and rationale of the School Board will be communicated in writing to your organisation by the Credit Rating Team Lead.

The University Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee will receive the outcomes of the credit rating process and decision for noting.

After the Decision

Following a successful credit rating exercise, the Credit Rating Team Lead, in addition to relaying the decision of the School Board to you should also make available the following information in writing:

1. That you must notify GCU in writing in advance of the introduction of any changes to the credit-rated programme or episodes of learning, if these changes may affect the SCQF level or volume of credit.
2. That you must submit a brief annual report to the School Board describing the progress of the programme since the initial credit rating or last annual report.
3. That at the end of the period of credit rating (usually 5 years), you may apply for re-credit rating. Should you wish to do so, you will have to submit an assessment of the programme or learning and specifically highlight any desired changes.

The Department of AQD will ensure that the credit rated programme(s) are uploaded onto the SCQF database which allows organisations to search for programmes that have been credit rated by other bodies.

The Department of AQD will also ensure that a formal Notification, bearing the University's logo, setting out the details of the credit rated programme will be issued to the organisation concerned.

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Brief description of the organisation including nature and purpose, for example whether it is a public, private or not for profit company and its mission (documents may be appended to explain these).

Brief outline of the Learning or Training Policy, if the organisation has one (if it is formal it may be attached to the relevant documentation). If it is not formally stated it needs to be described.

What learning programmes or learning units does the organisation provide?

ABOUT THE LEARNING TO BE CREDITED

Describe the overall programme aims and objectives of the programme:

How is the programme delivered e.g. face to face, on-line, blended learning?

Describe your Learning and Teaching Strategy:

Describe your Assessment Strategy:

Describe the length and structure of the programme:

Are there any entry requirements to the programme?:

What are the typical student numbers?:

What are your completion and achievement statistics?:

What are your quality assurance arrangements (e.g. internal and external verification)?:

Your assessment of the volume and level of credit (if feasible):

Has any other organisation credit rated this provision?

Appendix 2

The purpose of this document is to help get an overview of where provision is in relation to SCQF levels at module or learning episode level. It requires the Credit Rating Team to assess what form of evidence they think is best suited to make the necessary judgement in relation to credit rating.

Name of module or learning episode:

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	Documents What do we need to see?	Interviews Who do we need to talk to?
Teaching/training material		
Delivery (Direct)		
Delivery (Online)		
Learning Outcomes		
Assessment		
Verification systems		

Appendix 3

Audit tool for assessing an external organisation in relation to SCQF criteria for Credit Rating

Learning Outcomes and Opportunities

1.	That there are defined aims and objectives of the learning opportunities, including a statement of possible articulation and progression arrangements (in other words whether the programmes can help get you into other programmes and help career development)	<i>In these boxes please note to what extent the organisation meets this standard and where the relevant evidence can be sourced.</i>
2.	That there is a clearly defined set of outcomes for the programme as a whole and each of its constituent parts	
3.	That there is a clear statement of the coherence of the outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the programme (in other words whether it fits well together)	
4.	That there is a description of the learning process including the notional hours of learning (what a typical learner could be expected to cover) activity that supports the achievement of the defined outcomes.	
5.	That there is an indication of how the learning opportunities will be sustained and enhanced as a result of monitoring and evaluation (how you review and improve the learning)	

Assessment

1.	That there are valid and reliable methods of assessment and involving appropriate levels of externality (for example having an external assessor)	
2.	That the assessment criteria and processes are appropriate to the defined learning outcomes (the assessment aligns with the learning outcomes)	
3.	That the assessment arrangements guard against plagiarism, cheating and fraud	
4.	That there are effective procedures for approving, supervising and reviewing assessment strategies and assessment (responsibilities and roles are clear)	
5.	That there are clear criteria for marking assessments particularly for distinguishing a pass/fail	
6.	That the arrangements for re-examination or re-assessment are clear	
7.	That the appropriateness, effectiveness and rigour of any system of Recognition of Prior Learning is clearly outlined.	

	(you show what the criteria for awarding RPL are)	
8.	That there are methods of proper and secure recording of learner achievement including the issuing of formal records, transcripts or certificates	
9.	That there are arrangements for appropriate external evaluations to be made regarding the assessment of outcomes including the evaluation both of the validity of the judgements made and of the appropriateness of the assessment instrument(s) in relation to the specified outcomes (this would be a function of an external assessor)	
10.	That current policy on the appointment of externals is appropriate in relation to clarity of duties, roles and competence.	
11.	That there is a system for periodic reporting from external assessors with a view to ensuring that the assessment processes and criteria have been applied consistently and achievements appropriately recorded (typically this is annual)	