

QFWG/3/Madrid. 28 September 2006

Notes from 3rd meeting of the Qualifications Frameworks Working Group 19 September 2006. Madrid. (The meeting followed directly on from the 4th Regional (SW Europe) meeting 18-19 September 2006).

Present: Mogens Berg -Chair (Denmark); Nadezda Uzelac -NU (the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”); Marlies Leegwater -ML (Netherlands); Laureano González-Vega - LGV (Spain); Seán O’Foghlú - SO/ Bryan Maguire -BM (Ireland); David Bottomley- DB / Gerard Madill –GM (Scotland); Daithi Mac Sithigh -DMS (ESIB) and Louis Ripley –LR (Secretariat - notes).

Apologies: Eva Gönczi (Hungary); Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia); Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe); Vadim Kasevitch (Russian Federation); Anita Lehikoinen (Finland).

1. Agenda
(Annex -draft Agenda)

There were no comments and the Agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes from the last meeting 26 February 2006 Budapest
(Annex -minutes from the past meeting)

There were several comments on the minutes which will be amended, resent to the group and posted on the Bologna Process website.

3. BFUG-Board meeting 1 September 2006
(Annex -Chair’s letter of 23 August to the Board “Self Certification of national qualifications frameworks”)

Some doubts had recently been raised on whether Ministers at Bergen had actually agreed that self certification procedure had been adopted. The Chair reiterated that this was the case and referred to the discussion at BFUGB13 Helsinki where the Board stated:

“The Board supported the view that Ministers had agreed the self certification criteria and procedures as part of their overall endorsement of the report on the qualifications framework. There was no need to refer the matter to the full BFUG.” (Minutes of BFUGB13 Agenda item 3.14).

In discussion the following points were made:

- Whilst the internal organisation of the self certification process should be the responsibility of the country concerned – it might be better if the coordination of the process was centralised. However, if this were to be the case it would be subject to a decision by BFUG.
- BFUG could supervise self certification, perhaps with the Council of Europe carrying out checks.

It was agreed that:

On the basis of the discussion at BFUGB13 at Helsinki on 1 September, self certification would proceed as previously agreed.

4. Pilot projects on self certification of national qualifications frameworks (Annex Irish and Scottish reports)

Irish report - general

There would be a workshop on the Irish report by mid October to agree the draft and until that time the document should not be treated as final. (For conclusions, see page 6 of the draft report).

On the role of international experts SO felt that it was not appropriate to isolate their contribution although they added value to the exercise.

In discussion the following points were made:

- It was difficult to say if the format of the reports were what had originally been envisaged as this exercise had not been done before. There was general agreement that the draft was clear, concise and well described. NU said that she was working with the Irish model.
- **Criterion 2** – It was reported that providing an appropriate description of the typical arrangements for progression had been the most time consuming part of the exercise (page 9). Progression was further expanded upon in the Appendixes (pages 23-25 & 29-30) which should be read in conjunction with the main part of the report.
- The Chair asked if, for the benefit of the lay person, a small explanation might be added to the main body of the report explaining the differences in outcomes, particularly around the differences in Ordinary Bachelor Degree and the Honours Bachelor Degree.
- Scotland reported that they had a similar situation to Ireland in that some Honours Degree outcomes could arguably be placed in the second cycle, but it was a question of balance in managing this.
- Stakeholders who were not involved in the teaching process would find some of these progressions somewhat abstract and difficult to understand, for example NARICs had expressed concerns about understanding progression.
- It was agreed that if possible it might be helpful to involve labour market representatives at some point in the consultation process.
- A further benefit from the experiences of the pilots would be that countries setting up their frameworks would be able to consider the self certification process in conjunction with developing their framework.

- **Criterion 5-** SO reported that HETAC had reviewed the standards and guidelines which had been agreed by ENQA. The Quality Assurance (QA) results were accessible via the links in the report.
- There was some discussion on whether standards and guidelines should be applied before self certification could be completed. It was generally agreed that taking standards and guidelines into account and making it part of the process, or the 'natural agenda' should be enough. A detailed analysis would be inappropriate and could impinge upon other processes.
- ML thought that it should be left to the individual country on what they wanted to say on Criterion 5.
- The Chair said that the wording around Criterion 5 may need to be revisited for the drafting of the report to BFUG.
- **Criterion 6 –** Alignment should be the final part of the process.
- **Verification of procedures (2)** - SO confirmed that QA bodies had been involved in the consultation process.
- **Appendix 1** - SO reported that this had been a complex section to write and it was important that criteria were separated even when there was an overlap. The result was feasible, efficient and easily understood.
- **Appendix 2 –** On whether progression had complicated criteria SO said that although there were progression routes these were really two separate issues and there was nothing in the Irish national framework that impeded progression through it. National frameworks needed to be separated from the overarching framework.
- DB said that progression routes were really for institutions to prescribe, rather than for qualifications frameworks and self certification.
- The emphasis on progression was more about impact analysis. Progression was more relevant than immediately apparent to self certification but need not necessarily be a barrier to it.

Scottish report - general

DB explained that the report was not yet final and was currently with the wider stakeholder group for comment. It perhaps needed to be recast for further consultation with a wider, non expert audience as well as professional input. (For conclusions, see page 2 Table 1 of the draft report).

International experts had played an important role particularly in terms of how external audiences might interpret the draft report.

The Chair asked, - in view of the number of links in the report -if this detracted from its 'self containment.' GM said that the links in the report were to additional useful information sources and were not essential to self certification. Some could be removed but to include this additional information in the text would double the size of the document.

In discussion the following points were made:

- It might be helpful to include 'SCQF' in the headings on page 2 and 22 and to add a comment on ECTS equivalent ratings where appropriate.
- The 'Background' section (pages 2-9) was quite lengthy and might be more appropriate in an annex. DB agreed that this section had been problematic, was quite lengthy and perhaps could be shortened.
- There was some discussion and mixed views on the layout of Table 1 particularly relating to whether the short cycle would be better if moved. It was observed that as the stages were not necessarily sequential this was not important.
- **Criterion 1** – DB thought that this section needed to be redrafted as the wording was incorrect. The national framework was not designated by the Ministry but is rather embedded in certain documentation. GM said that the statement was essentially true but the mechanics behind it were more complicated. Others thought the statement worked satisfactorily as a checking mechanism.
- **Criterion 2** – DB thought that some of the text from the Appendix might be appropriate for inclusion in this section.
- **Criterion 3** – In response to a query from the Chair on whether new types of qualifications would need to be cleared by institutions DB clarified that they would need to be cleared by the appropriate committee (e.g. SACCA).
- **Criterion 5** – The Chair asked if the report needed to be clearer in terms of standards and guidelines and asked how far it was necessary to go. GM said that the system was consistent with guidelines but the question was how this would be verified. ML felt that this needed to be explored.
- **Procedures** – It was agreed that the text in this section was sufficient.
- **Appendix 2** – DB clarified that Scotland had Level descriptors but these related to Lifelong Learning.

5. **Complementarities between the Bologna QF and EQF-LLL**
(Annex: Chair's letter of 10 June 2006 / Minutes from Board meeting 13 June 2006)

In discussion the following points were made:

- The Chair said that he would like to put his letter of the 10 June in the Working Group's report. Other members of the group agreed. ML- said that processes needed to be considered as well as content adding that the EC should have taken this as a starting point as the Bologna framework had been agreed.
- The Chair felt if this was to stay on the group's agenda, the letter should be included in both the interim and the final report and asked if the group needed to go further than discussing content to include processes, (see ToR).
- The interim report could include a reference that it was acceptable for the EC descriptors to be more general but there was a need for an overarching higher education framework. The references to Bologna were fine but it should be stressed that the EHEA framework was autonomous and not under EC control.
- There was some discussion around the wording for the report. One suggestion was "we are satisfied that this does not impinge upon the implementation of the Bologna framework." Other members of the group did not think this wording was quite right.
- DB thought that the wording in the interim report should describe the role of the Bologna framework and the role of the EQF and should show the difference in the purposes of the frameworks. The EQF descriptors were appropriate for their purposes.

6. Workshops for member countries working to introduce NQF
(Annex: Programmes and participation lists from the workshops)

The Hague

ML – said that the Hague workshop had looked at the Programme rather than just the agenda. It had been viewed as important to promote understanding of the descriptors which were more complex than for the EQF.

Budapest

The Chair said that the workshop concentrated on the main themes and the presentation on the NQF had been useful. Professor Temesi had given a presentation on programme outcomes for universities.

Athens

This event had seemed a little less organised. The presentations had been

more basic. However, having a two day event had allowed more time for discussion.

Madrid

This had also been a successful event. The Chair gave his thanks to Laureano González-Vega for his, and the Spanish Ministry for their hard work kindness and hospitality in hosting the workshop. He also expressed his appreciation of the efforts of the other host countries.

It was agreed that:

The presentations from the workshops would be made available to all non-attendees and posted on the Bologna Process website adjacent to other papers from the events, including the reports from the events and attendee lists. As the Chair's presentation for The Hague had been a slightly different version to the one used at the later workshops this would be displayed with the information from The Hague event. ML said she would add email addresses to The Hague attendee lists.

7. Report from WG to BFUG (Annex: draft outline)

The Chair said that he needed to write an interim report for BFUG9 on 12-13 October and the final report would need to be completed by the end of the year to enable the group to report back to BFUGB14 in Berlin on 23 January. Therefore the next meeting would need to be by the beginning of December at the latest. A small drafting group would need to be set up so that a draft copy of the report would be ready in time for discussion at the next meeting.

In discussion the following points were made:

- ML commented that the group needed to consider who they were writing for and should try to avoid replicating the work of others. The Chair queried whether the purpose of the report was to provide guidance for other countries including on self certification or should it be intended for a wider audience. On the latter point ML thought that this would replicate other reports and was not the best approach.
- BM suggested the purpose of the report should be to refute the sceptics who did not think that self certification was an option and to provide reassurance to those seeking to implement self certification.
- Scotland's reflections on the SCQF and self certification might also be helpful. Although who the target audience would be needed to be considered.
- The Chair agreed that this could go in the report or perhaps as a separate document.

- The Chair referred to two items in the group's Terms of reference.
 - to provide assistance to other countries (which had been carried out through the regional workshops)
 - to develop the self certification process (the two reports to go in an annex to the final report)
- The Chair said that the Working Group's main priority was to enable national qualifications frameworks to fit with the overarching framework. Conversely the EC were unsure whether national frameworks were needed.
- It would be helpful if further ongoing support could be provided after the London Ministerial Summit, perhaps by organising a conference. However there may not be a QF working group after the London Conference and someone else might take this forward.
- The Chair thought that there should not be a working group after this period unless funding was made available and again expressed his appreciation at the support provided by the regional meeting host countries and the Council of Europe. GM said that the lack of funding put the EHEA framework at a disadvantage to the EQF. ML pointed out that the Bologna Process was funded indirectly by member states.

It was agreed that:

The content of the report should contain: a short summary of what the group had done; lessons learned; changes in criteria / procedures; summaries of the workshops; recommendations for further workshops and ongoing support for member countries.

There was an ongoing need to share experiences and provide support but it would be difficult to do this without funding.

8. Next meeting

After some discussion it was agreed that the first option for the next meeting would be Monday 27 November in Copenhagen, starting at 10am. This would mean that those attending would need to travel the day before.

The second option would be Monday 4 December with the same travel arrangements applying.

9. Any other business

ML reported that on 5 October there will be a Joint Quality Initiative meeting.