



Supporting credit rating within universities – Strathclyde University: S@S Accelerate Challenge



Background to the University

Strathclyde University is a leading, international, technological University located in the heart of Glasgow. Its commitment to useful learning guides its research, learning and teaching and the way it works with businesses and organisations. It is inspired by its founding mission to make a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world.

Background to the Project

Whilst universities are experienced in credit rating undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, many are less experienced when it comes to credit rating other provision. To support universities in this area, the SCQF Partnership agreed to support the sector in identifying two programmes that could be credit rated.

The project's three main aims were:

- to help overcome any perceived barriers to credit rating non-mainstream provision within universities;
- to expand the types of credit rated programmes within universities in Scotland; and, most importantly,
- to build capacity of staff trained to credit rate non-mainstream provision within the HE sector.

The Learning Programme

S@S Accelerate is a one-week summer programme for secondary pupils entering S5 or S6, developed and delivered by the Widening Access Team in collaboration with the four Strathclyde faculties. It aims to supply participants, many from areas of traditionally low participation in Higher Education, with a targeted focus on their chosen area of academic study, allowing them to find out about university study and the career options open to them.

The programme features 10 subject areas for pupils to choose from: Law, Education, Chemistry, Languages, Physics, Product Design, Electronic and Electrical Engineering, Psychology, Business and Enterprise, Computer Science.

Four of the Accelerate Challenges - Chemistry, Psychology, Business and Enterprise and Product Design - were successfully credit rated at SCQF level 7 with 5 credit points.

Benefits of the project

The Accelerate programme began in 2009 with 150 pupils attending. Since then, 1,729 pupils have participated in the programme with an impressive year-on-year increase in numbers. In 2016, 258 pupils attended the programme. Having the programme formally recognised on the SCQF has created a range of benefits for all stakeholders in the programme including participating pupils, the programme itself and the wider University of Strathclyde.

In general, the credit-rating of the Accelerate challenges means that they will carry more 'weight'. This will encourage pupils to include the programme in their applications to University, as well as to FE and employment, and in their portfolios of attainment and wider achievement in the senior phase. It also means that pupils' work on the programme carries more recognition within Strathclyde and in other institutions. Recognition on the SCQF also helps to ensure successful alignment of the Accelerate Challenges with other access and outreach programmes at Strathclyde University. This will provide a sustained learner journey through secondary school, into HE and beyond for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The formal processes involved in credit rating created a need for greater liaison and collaboration with staff from the relevant departments which in turn has given the content of the programmes and their assessment an academic consistency and rigour. Staff within the Widening Access Team have gained experience and built capacity to assist others in credit rating access and non-mainstream activities.

Did you face any challenges during the project?

One issue faced at the outset was that the Accelerate Challenge is not one programme but 10 within a wider umbrella programme. It was considered that credit rating 10 programmes at one time would be unmanageable and so four challenges were selected. These were chosen in order to give initial representation to each of the four Strathclyde faculties and because their content was deemed to be definitely at a level equivalent to first year University work (SCQF level 7).

Do you have any future plans to credit rate?

We will look to credit rate four more challenges in the future. The financial backing that the SCQF Partnership provided allowed some time for Widening Access staff to dedicate to the credit rating process which was very valuable.

For more detail on the SCQF and the benefits of having your learning programmes credit rated, visit <http://www.scqf.org.uk/Resources/> to read the Would You Credit It? leaflet.