

Information Notes Series 2:

Externality for CRBs

Note 2.1

Externality at programme level

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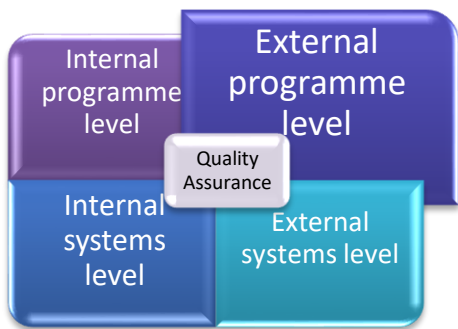
Externality for CRBs

Externality at programme level

This information note supplements the principles and guidance within the SCQF Handbook. SCQFP Approved CRBs should also refer to the SCQF Quality Assurance Model (QAM). Both documents are listed in the 'Useful links' below.

This note is the first of two notes about Externality for CRBs one discussing externality at programme level and one discussing externality at systems level.





There are internal and external aspects to the quality assurance arrangements noted in the SCQF Handbook and in the Quality Assurance Model for SCQFP Approved Credit Rating Bodies. This note attempts to further explain the external aspects of quality assurance (commonly referred to as 'externality') and to provide some guidance around the types of activities that might be put in place by CRBs to meet the principles.

In the SCQF Handbook externality is included in:

Principle 9

Credit Rating Bodies must establish rigorous and appropriate systems for credit rating, including systems of internal and external quality assurance and arrangements for retention of evidence confirming decisions on level and credit.

It is also included at principles 14 and 15 in relation to working with third parties:

Principle 14

Credit Rating Bodies must ensure that Third Party organisations submit information, and documented evidence of, their assessment processes, including arrangements relating to the internal and external quality assurance of assessment decisions.

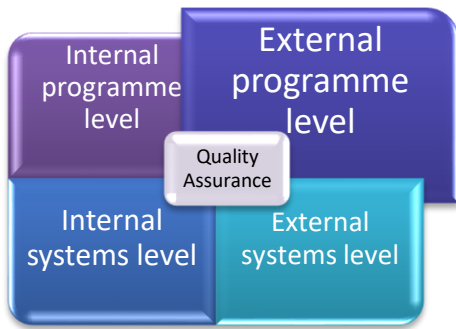
Principle 15

The Credit Rating Body must ensure that the Third Party provides details of auditing/quality assurance of their systems including appropriate externality.

It is important that, as a CRB, you understand what externality means for you in terms of setting up the quality assurance system around your credit rating activities. In addition, if you offer, or are planning to offer, a third party credit rating service, it is important you are clear what you will accept from a third party in terms of what they have in place to demonstrate externality.

There is no prescribed model for quality assurance, so what externality looks like for a CRB will differ depending on your organisation's existing systems and structures, the sector you may be in, the types of programmes that you might offer, as well as the other awarding bodies and quality assurance bodies that you may work with.

This note aims to give you some areas to consider when you are thinking about the external element in your processes at programme level.



Externality at programme level

Most CRBs will be very familiar with externality at programme level within their organisation. You might work with a number of other awarding or professional bodies that provide those external checks. However, if you are applying to become a CRB or you are a CRB new to credit rating then you may not have such systems in place for those programmes you will credit rate that are not currently scrutinised by an external body, and you will need to put these in place.

This is mainly about the lifecycle of your programmes and the assessment decisions and credit rating decisions. Internally, you may already have checks and balances at different stages of that lifecycle, including everything you do from design through credit rating approval, delivery to certification. These checks and balances could include, for example, monitoring of delivery and assessment, internal verification of assessment decisions, annual reviews of programme delivery, or learner feedback.

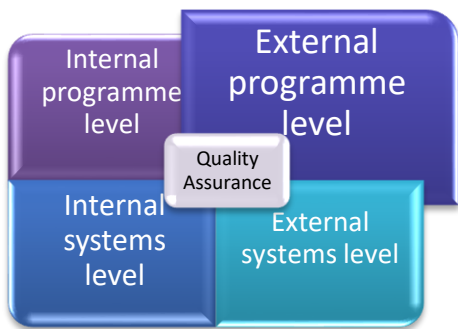
When it comes to looking at externality at programme level - the easiest way to think about this is to ask where you involve an external view or judgement in the lifecycle of your programmes.

Many of you will have included an external view or judgement at various points, such as:

- External input on approval and validation panels (you may have differently titled panels/committees) such as employers, sector bodies, professional bodies
- An external view of assessment decisions (this is sometimes referred to as external verification or may be part of an external examiner system)
- An external person on credit rating panels
- External representatives on programme review panels such as employers, sector body representatives, professional body representatives

It will be important to ensure that any external person on these committees or providing comment on your programmes has the necessary subject/sector expertise. If they are to be involved in credit rating panels or commenting on levels and credit values then they should also have a good working knowledge of SCQF, its principles and level descriptors. You may need to provide some training in this area.

If you work for a large organisation, potentially the external view at some points could be provided by someone who is still within your organisation if those individuals are not involved in the development or delivery of the programme in any way. However, this can be tricky and must be carefully managed to ensure that they are providing true externality and they are not involved in any aspect of the delivery or internal quality assurance of the programmes. You will also need to ensure they have the necessary subject expertise and if they are to be on a credit rating panel the necessary experience and training in credit rating and using the SCQF.



For some CRBs, it may be possible to form a partnership with another CRB to provide this external input however it will be important to decide whether the staff in the other CRB have the necessary subject expertise to provide this scrutiny although they may well have knowledge of the SCQF.

It is also very important that this externality is recorded within your processes and that the role of any external person is clearly outlined. There may be different external roles in different organisations depending on your processes and governance structures and indeed there may be different external roles already contributing to your systems. You may have one approach or a mix of approaches that make up your overall externality at programme level.

Useful links	
SCQF Quality Assurance Model	QAM-full-updated-June-2025.pdf
SCQF Handbook	handbook.pdf
SCQF Level Descriptors	SCQF Level Descriptors - Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SCQF Credit Points Explained	credit-point-explained-march-2017-web.pdf
Naming Qualifications and Programmes for the SCQF	naming-qualifications-guide-a4-final-web-may-2023.pdf
Credit Rating Criteria Explained	criteria-explained-final-web-oct-2017.pdf
SCQFP workshops	SCQF Partnership workshops
SCQFP Brand Guidelines	scqf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/SCQF-Brand-Guidelines-2024-FINAL.pdf
Additional Notes in this series	Resources for Credit Rating Bodies - Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework