THE INTRODUCTION OF A UNIFIED SYSTEM OF POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

(Award Reference Number: R000238420)

FULL REPORT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

BACKGROUND

Since 1999 the Higher Still reform has introduced a ‘unified curriculum and assessment system’ to cover all types of learning, at all levels up to higher education, and for all ages beyond 16, in Scottish schools and colleges. It has replaced ‘academic’ SCE qualifications (Highers and CSYS) and ‘vocational’ NC modules with New National Qualifications (NNQs), whose design rules for curriculum, assessment and certification are a hybrid of the former SCE and NC models.¹ The building blocks of the new system are 40-hour National Units which may be taken as separate units or combined into 160-hour National Courses. Each unit is internally assessed; to pass a course a student must complete three component units and pass an external assessment, whose results are graded. Programmes of courses and units which meet specified criteria, including core skills, lead to Scottish Group Awards (SGAs), but these are optional.

NNQs are available at seven levels: Access 1 to 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher. The Access and Intermediate levels are new but articulate with levels of Standard Grades, the courses taken from age 14 to 16; Higher and Advanced Higher correspond to the former SCE Higher and CSYS respectively. Higher Still promised ‘opportunity for all’, and especially for 16 year olds with middle or low Standard Grade attainments who stayed on at school, by enabling them to enter the system at the new Intermediate and Access levels and to progress vertically or horizontally thereafter. Under the old system these students often chose Highers, at which their success rates were poor, rather than NC modules which were available at more ‘appropriate’ levels but lacked status and offered poor progression prospects. We have described the NNQ model as a ‘climbing frame’ - a progression framework with flexible entry and exit points and flexible progression within the system (WP8).²

From 1996-1998 the ESRC-funded Unified Learning Project (ULP) compared the emerging plans for Higher Still with other UK and European developments (such as Curriculum 2000 and the WelshBac) which reflected the same trend towards more ‘unified’ post-16 education and training systems. The ULP developed a conceptual framework to analyse contrasting strategies for ‘unification’. In terms of this framework Higher Still was distinctive because:

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¹ See Appendix 2 for a glossary of acronyms.
² WP1, WP2 etc refer to Working Papers listed in Appendix 1.
it aimed to bring academic and vocational tracks into a unified system, rather than a linked system in which tracks remain separate but are brought closer together;

- it focused on unifying the system architecture (curriculum structure, progression pathways, assessment and certification arrangements) rather than (say) curricular integration or institutional reform;

- it aimed to introduce a flexible or open model, with minimal prescription of content, volume or level of study (WP1).

NNQs have not replaced SVQs, designed mainly for workplace learning; nor do they cover higher and professional education. These are included in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, launched in 2001, which aims to cover all Scottish qualifications and to provide a ‘national language’ for describing learning, based on 12 levels and a measure of volume.

The ULP analysed the developing proposals for Higher Still but it did not observe their implementation. Policies continue to develop during the process of implementation, and they rarely work exactly as the initial blueprints expect them to. A flexible unified system potentially gives considerable discretion to schools and colleges to shape the emerging system by selecting what units and courses to offer and deciding how to package them for students. A flexible unified system may also be vulnerable to pressures towards division and hierarchy which arise from education’s roles of social selection and social reproduction. Our research on earlier initiatives, such as the Action Plan which introduced NC modules, suggested that the ‘intrinsic logic’ of a unifying reform might be weaker than the divisive ‘institutional logic’ in which it was embedded. The IUS project therefore sought to study Higher Still in practice.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To analyse the process of introducing a unified system of post-compulsory education in Scotland during the first three years of Higher Still; to build on the insights and conceptual framework of the Unified Learning Project, which analysed strategy and policy development at national level, by following this into the implementation phase and studying processes at institutional and other levels.

2. To identify distinctive features of the policy process of introducing a unified system.

3. To analyse the role played by schools and colleges in shaping the reform, and to compare this with the role of institutions in shaping reforms of the post-compulsory curriculum in England; and to monitor the changing roles and relationships of schools and colleges.
4. To explore issues in the boundaries of a unified system, and the role of a qualifications framework in addressing these issues, by studying the development of the SCQF and comparing it with similar frameworks elsewhere in the UK.

5. To engage with and reinforce the learning process of policy development and implementation, by providing an independent analytical perspective on current developments.

We have met all these objectives, albeit with changes of emphasis and with several analyses still in progress. The following sections explain how.

METHODS

Our methods included:

• Surveys of all secondary schools in Scotland in 2000-01 and 2002-03, to observe changing institutional policies, practices and perceptions of Higher Still. We extended our original plans to include special schools as well as comprehensive and independent schools. The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland gave its support and help in administering the survey. The response rates (70% and 63% respectively) were good in view of the large number of official evaluations of NNQs; our independence as ESRC-funded researchers and our broad, long-term perspective appeared to encourage a high response.

• Parallel surveys of FE colleges, conducted jointly with the Scottish Further Education Unit, which achieved response rates of 85% in 2000-01 and 74% in 2002-03.

• A survey of local authorities, in 2000-01. This was less successful than the school and college surveys, as a survey proved too blunt an instrument to collect data not already in the public domain. We did not repeat the survey (as planned) in 2002-03.

• Case studies of four schools and two colleges, chosen to represent different social and geographical contexts. We visited each institution in 2001-02 and in 2002-03, on each occasion conducting about 6-8 interviews with senior managers, guidance staff and teachers in selected subjects. A fifth school served as a pilot.

• Analyses of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) data on all NQ candidates during the first three years of Higher Still. This has proved a rich source of data, but it was also our biggest challenge. Our initial analyses were delayed by the ‘exams debacle’ of 2000 and the data took longer to set up than we had anticipated.

• Interviews with 17 key informants and stakeholders in Higher Still and the SCQF.
• Participation and observation at consultation seminars, meetings of Higher Still coordinators, and other events.

• Analyses of documentary evidence, including official reports and submissions to the Inquiry into *Lifelong Learning* of the Scottish Parliament’s Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee.

Our research design proved its worth and in many respects (such as the high survey response) was very successful. However there were delays in accessing and analysing the SQA data; the process of setting up surveys and case studies was time-consuming even when there was a willingness to help. We also underestimated the additional time required for analysis arising from our decision to collect data at successive time points to observe the progress of implementation. Compounded by the bereavement and illness of a member of the project team, this means that some of our analyses are still less complete than we would have liked, especially the analyses of SQA data, although we plan to complete these in the coming months.

**RESULTS**

**The change process**

NNQs were phased in from 1999, starting with existing Highers courses as these required least change. The introduction of NNQs did not run smoothly. Implementation had already been staggered in particular subjects to avert a threatened teacher boycott. In August 2000 the first batch of results was affected by the ‘exams debacle’, when many results were inaccurate or delayed. This provoked a crisis of confidence in Scottish education and revealed widespread discontent with Higher Still, especially its assessment regime, and with the way it was introduced. The title of our first *CES Briefing* reflects the climate: *What happened to the consensus on Higher Still?* The crisis provoked two inquiries by Scottish Parliamentary Committees, a reorganisation of the policy leadership, the withdrawal of the Inspectorate’s policy-making role, and several official reviews of the implementation of NNQs and of their assessment arrangements.

Our conceptual framework helped us to explain why the exams debacle provoked such a crisis (WP2). The introduction of a flexible unified system involves conflict because it imposes common design rules (eg for assessment) across a diverse system. It requires a centrally coordinated development process and participants who lack a system-wide perspective tend to be disenfranchised. Moreover, the leadership had failed to articulate and win support for a clear rationale for a unified system which might have provided the basis for resolving conflicts. Consequently the crisis exposed resentment over what was seen as a heavy-handed and arbitrary style of leadership. Our own analysis draws attention to the
horizontal as well as vertical conflicts over a unified system and to the leadership’s weakness which prevented it from articulating a clear vision and rationale for the reform.

Despite this crisis our surveys and case studies revealed continued support for the aims of Higher Still, even if - due partly to the failure to spell out the rationale and strategy - specific measures had less support (WP3, WP4). There was most support for the goal of ‘opportunity for all’, of extending access and progression through what we have called the climbing frame. By 2003 the subject and assessment reviews had taken the heat out of the assessment issue, and teachers and lecturers had gained familiarity and confidence in working the new system (WP12). Our respondents reported more progress towards the aims of Higher Still and felt more positive about it (WP11). Nevertheless, a recurrent theme of our research has been the need for a shared vision and strategic leadership if a unified system is to remain unified. It cannot be left to run itself or to be shaped solely by the disaggregated decisions of students, institutions and end-users (WP4, WP9).

School and college differences: not a unified system?

NNQ design rules were a hybrid of the former SCE and NC models, used mainly in schools and colleges respectively. The different perspectives of schools and colleges were evident during the development of Higher Still, and they remained significant during implementation (WP3, WP11, WP14). Colleges supported a broader view of the aims of Higher Still, and they attached more importance to such goals as promoting core skills and raising the status of vocational education.

In two respects NNQs did not constitute a unified system: their coverage of FE was only partial and schools and colleges differed in the use that they made of them. By 2003 schools had substantially completed the implementation of Higher Still in S5 and S6 (the post-compulsory stages). Implementation in colleges was slower and more variable. Only about half the colleges were close to full implementation, and colleges used NNQs to adapt existing provision rather than replace it. Instead of bringing existing qualifications into a unified system, Higher Still had merely added another set of qualifications to the repertoire. Moreover, schools and colleges used NNQs in different ways. School provision of NNQs was based largely on National Courses, while full-time college programmes were based largely on National Units not grouped into courses. Since only courses were externally assessed this breached the Higher Still principle that all programmes should have a combination of external and internal assessment (WP11, WP14).

College managers blamed this situation on the inadequate investment in courses in the subjects of most interest to FE, together with inflexibilities caused by the assessment regime, the preference of some employers for existing qualifications and the ‘academic’ bias of some NNQs. They felt that schools’ interests had had priority. The failure of SGAs was particularly significant. It had been hoped that colleges would use nationally-recognised SGAs to replace their existing college-designed programmes; SGAs were based mainly on National Courses so this would have brought colleges’ NNQ provision closer to the model in schools. This did
not happen. Most colleges offered a mere handful of SGAs and continued to base full-time provision on college-designed programmes of units. Few schools offered any SGAs at all. The low take-up of SGAs reflected their perceived lack of currency with higher education and employers, the lack of National Course provision in some vocational areas and design problems which made SGAs unsuitable for colleges’ main client groups (WP12, WP14).

In summary, the institutional logics of schools and colleges proved to be very different, and caused them to implement Higher Still to different degrees and in different ways. Colleges had more freedom, but they were also subject to market pressures in a way that was not true of schools. Some college managers expressed disappointment with Higher Still, and transferred their hopes for it to the SCQF.

Nevertheless, common currency of the unified system encouraged a substantial increase in collaboration between schools and colleges. This took the form of increased opportunities for school students to take courses at college, joint planning to improve articulation and joint delivery of courses.

**Opportunity for all?**

The main achievement of Higher Still, in the views of school and college staff, was to extend ‘opportunity for all’ by providing access to mainstream qualifications at several levels connected by a single progression framework. As a result schools implemented the new Intermediate levels more quickly than expected. Our analyses of SQA data showed that students entering S5 with middle and low Standard Grade attainments attempted more courses at ‘appropriate’ levels and increased their total volume of SQA-certificated study. The new levels introduced by Higher Still were seen to have higher standing than the provision they replaced and they provided a more worthwhile learning experience. They were part of a common framework, had more rigorous assessment and offered better progression opportunities (WP12, WP13, WP14).

An acknowledged success of Higher Still has been the inclusion of students with special needs, especially of a cognitive nature, within the mainstream curriculum and qualifications system. Staff in special and mainstream schools and in colleges thought Higher Still had succeeded in giving students with special needs access to the national curriculum at an appropriate level, the opportunity of national certification of their learning and better progression possibilities than had been available previously. Higher Still was perceived to have made a major contribution towards inclusion and social equity.

The new NQ levels enhanced access but some other features of NQs seemed to restrict it. Colleges found that the annual diet of external assessments, the more rigorous arrangements for internal assessment and the increased duration of courses made it hard to offer NNQs, and especially National Courses, through part-time or flexible modes (WP3). Colleges found ways to avoid these problems or to minimise their impact, but they remained an issue.
The climbing frame metaphor assumes that if everyone starts at the appropriate level they should all have a similar chance of climbing one bar up the frame. This has not been the case with NNQs. Students with middle and low Standard Grade attainments had lower success rates in NNQs despite taking them at more appropriate levels (WP6, WP14). Moreover, students who took Intermediate 2 instead of Higher, and progressed to a Higher in the following year, still had a lower success rate at Higher than those who progressed directly from Standard Grade (WP13).

Attainment and progression in colleges are less dependent on prior attainment levels than in schools. This may reflect colleges’ ‘second chance’ ethos, the absence of external assessment from most college programmes, or the weaker grip of the selective function of education on colleges.

Progression issues
Higher Still has encouraged staff and students to become more progression-minded. Nevertheless constructing a progression climbing frame is less straightforward than the metaphor suggests (WP12, 17). We identified issues concerning:

- The design of the frame: for example, how far apart should the horizontal bars (the NQ levels) be set in order to provide a manageable gradient of difficulty without excessive repetition, to cater for the diverse students who use the system, and to articulate with external requirements such as university entrance? How can the curriculum be designed to cater for students following different progression routes within the unified system? How can a single framework cover subjects with different epistemologies and learning sequences?

- Logistics and resources: especially staffing, which became an increasing constraint as institutions sought to provide the increased range of levels and subjects. ‘Multi-level’ teaching placed heavy demands on teachers. Collaboration between schools was less effective than collaboration with colleges. Open learning could help more able and mature students but it was not seen as the main solution.

- Views of students’ capabilities: many school staff felt that students reached a plateau and there was a limit to the number of levels through which they could progress; college staff tended to have a more open view of students’ capabilities.

- The nature and purpose of horizontal progression.

Nevertheless, the attractions of the ‘climbing frame’ encouraged schools to extend it to 14-16 year olds. Most schools used NNQs to replace Standard Grades in specific subjects and/or levels, although in most schools only a few subjects were affected (WP9). Their reasons included improved content, better progression opportunities and the ability to construct more flexible pathways, for example to allow earlier progression to Highers. However the spread
of NNQs in S3 and S4 (the 14-16 stage) raised issues. It typically required additional resources, especially if the intention was to make the curriculum or the pace of study more flexible (and therefore more differentiated), or to offer progression opportunities which assumed that relevant provision were available in S5 (WP9). Some schools feared the implications of a ‘mixed economy’ of Standard Grades and NNQs that might develop if individual schools went their own way, and they looked to local and national government for a lead.

**Academic and vocational education**

Higher Still abolished formal distinctions between academic and vocational learning but it did not achieve parity of esteem. This would have been unrealistic given the importance of educational selection, especially selection for HE, for determining the status of subjects. Subjects that raised their status, such as home economics, typically did so by becoming more theoretical in content and gaining recognition for university entrance. S5 students with high Standard Grade attainments continued to take fewer vocational courses than lower-attaining students. On average S5 students very slightly increased their choice of ‘vocational’ subjects, except the lowest-attaining students who took slightly more ‘academic’ subjects than before as these were now available at levels below Higher. In S3 and S4 NNQs were used mainly in ‘academic’ subjects. Schools which introduced vocational options as part of the government’s ‘curriculum flexibility’ agenda tended to use other qualifications such as part-SVQs.

One approach to integrating academic and vocational learning is to give a central place to generic or core skills. Higher Still aimed to increase competence in the five core skills of communication, numeracy, IT, problem-solving and working with others. They were ‘embedded’ in conventional subjects where appropriate, but discrete core skills units were also available. Colleges already took core skills seriously, and took advantage of the flexible NNQ model which allowed different modes of delivery ranging from the discrete to the wholly embedded. Hardly any schools offered discrete core skills units. Qualifications certificates included students’ core skills profiles, but when core skills were embedded this profile was merely inferred from the subjects that had been passed. This led to confusion, a lack of credibility and a lack of ownership and understanding of core skills or of the need to acquire them.

**The role of institutions**

Schools and colleges helped to shape the emerging unified system by calling for changes in its design rules, notably the streamlining of assessment that began in 2001. They also shaped it through decisions at the institutional level. Many of the trends described above – the rapid development of Intermediate courses, the demise of SGAs, the use of NNQs for 14-16 year olds and the growth of school-college collaboration – reflect such decisions. This did not, of course, mean that institutions had unlimited discretion in implementing NNQs. They were influenced by a variety of factors including government policies and priorities, the composition of the student cohort, the anticipated needs of end-users and timetabling and resource issues, especially staffing. Many decisions lay at departmental or subject level:
headteachers and principals lacked the subject knowledge to challenge heads of departments or sections and impose a strong institutional policy on them (WP11, WP12).

The role of institutions in shaping the unified system did not necessarily result in institutional diversity, especially among comprehensive schools which remained faithful to the comprehensive ethos in implementing NNQs. Most comprehensive schools offered a wide range of courses at Higher, Intermediate 2 and (to a lesser extent) Intermediate 1. Schools did not, as had been feared, become more stratified, with some providing mainly Higher and Advanced Higher courses and others mainly Intermediate courses. Schools which offered more Advanced Highers tended also to offer more Intermediates.

Independent schools, by contrast, had different priorities from comprehensive schools in implementing NNQs. They introduced fewer Intermediate courses and they attached less importance to linking academic and vocational education.

**The boundaries of a unified system**

When we designed our project Higher Still was still outward looking. The issue was whether the unified system could expand to include other types of learning, in particular work-based provision certificated by SVQs. Such concerns now seem remote, when the issue has become the failure of Higher Still to cover its original target sectors (WP14). Higher Still’s uneven implementation in colleges has marginalised it as a lifelong learning policy, and much of the discourse of unification has transferred to the SCQF. In terms of our conceptual framework the SCQF is a linked system, with much looser design rules (eg for assessment) than Higher Still’s unified system (or indeed than other national qualifications frameworks). It can therefore more easily accommodate diverse types of learning, and it represents an alternative approach to unification. Instead of trying to include SVQs within the tightly-specified unified system of NNQs, the SCQF provides a larger but looser framework into which NNQs, SVQs and all other qualifications including university degrees can be placed. NNQs have thus become a sub-framework of the SCQF. It may not matter that they have not achieved full coverage within FE, if the goals of unification can be achieved by the SCQF.

The SCQF has been successful in accommodating a wide range of qualifications, especially at higher education level (WP7). Nevertheless it is still at an early stage of implementation and it is too soon to observe its impact in practice. It has been led by higher education and the SQA, the ‘owners’ of the main qualifications within it, and its approach has been based on pragmatism and partnership. It has accepted rather than challenged the social relations and hierarchies on which the use and recognition of qualifications may depend. This pragmatism may be threatened by the need to impose quality criteria which could, for example, lead it to reject qualifications owned by powerful industrial or professional bodies. Similarly, the partnership may be threatened by the conflicting views of stakeholders (especially universities and colleges) of what full implementation means of the SCQF means: is this achieved when all qualifications have been placed in the Framework, or only when it is being widely used, for example to support credit transfer?
ACTIVITIES AND IMPACTS

Scotland
We presented interim findings at consultation seminars in September 2001 and September 2002. Each was held under Chatham House rules and was attended by about forty invited practitioners, policy-makers and stakeholders. A third seminar had been scheduled for autumn 2003 but the timing was inappropriate in relation to our work on the final analyses and reporting. We will launch our findings at a seminar on 11 March 2004.

We organised a seminar on Qualifications Frameworks in Edinburgh in January 2003, attended by about sixty people. In addition to our work on the SCQF there were contributions from Gary Granville on Ireland and Michael Young on international developments; Mike Coles of the QCA acted as discussant.

We participated in the ADES/ASC/HMI investigation of Higher Still assessment, set up following the exams crisis in 2000. We gave written evidence to the consultation on NQ assessment, and written and oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament Committee’s Inquiry into Lifelong Learning, in both cases drawing on the IUS research. We were invited to discuss our findings with senior policy-makers in the Scottish Executive and the SQA and we have submitted our recent analyses to the Executive’s Review of the 3-18 curriculum. Raffe was invited onto the SQA’s Qualifications Committee in 2003 and Howieson has presented findings to meetings at the SQA and SFEU.

There is a tension between our need for critical detachment - especially in a project analysing policy processes - and our involvement in some of the developments we were studying. In handling this tension we were supported by our consultant, Professor Michael Young, and a small Advisory Committee of Scottish-based academics chaired by Janet Draper (Edinburgh) and including Professors John Fairley (Strathclyde), Jim Gallacher (Glasgow Caledonian), Walter Humes (Strathclyde), Pamela Munn (Edinburgh) and Gillian Raab (Napier). Although not in our original proposal, the Committee gave valuable advice throughout the project and helped us to maintain critical distance from our subject.

UK
We had several meetings with Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours of the London Institute of Education to compare our work with their IoE/Nuffield study of Curriculum 2000. Differences in the research methodologies and in the reforms themselves made detailed empirical comparisons inappropriate, but a more thematic comparison proved very fruitful (WP8). It also identified practical lessons for future ‘unifying’ reforms, including future 14-19 reforms in England, concerning:

- the policy process (how to minimise conflicts inherent in unifying reform)
- models of unification (eg issues raised in the ‘climbing frame’ model)
- special needs (implications of including them in a unified system)
- core/key skills (alternative approaches to delivery).
We have presented our Anglo-Scottish comparisons to research and policy audiences in Edinburgh and London.

Our research has fed directly into English policy-making through Raffe’s membership of the Tomlinson Working Group on 14-19 Education and Howieson’s membership of its Associate Network. In its first progress report the Tomlinson group announced its intention to develop a model combining the best elements of a ‘Baccalaureate’ model and the ‘climbing frame’ model exemplified by Higher Still. Raffe helped to set up the Nuffield Foundation’s Annual Review of 14-19 Education (led by Professor Richard Pring), and he wrote its feasibility and scoping study. The impact of the IUS project is reflected in the Review’s emphasis on the processes of change.

Our work has been disseminated in Wales and Northern Ireland but we have not made detailed comparisons with their qualifications frameworks as originally planned. Our work on the SCQF highlighted the need to understand the underlying ‘political’ processes in the development of a qualifications framework; we did not have the resources to study these processes in Wales and Northern Ireland.

International
Although our original proposal for case studies in Sweden, Norway and New Zealand was excluded from the funding agreed by the ESRC, we have maintained a comparative frame of reference, especially for our work on the SCQF. WP7 on the SCQF was presented to a Commonwealth seminar in New Zealand; we have developed links with researchers in New Zealand and plan further comparative work in the future. We have links with South Africa, including those through our consultant Michael Young. The project provided conceptual and empirical starting points for a PhD on the South African National Qualification Framework by Jeff Mukora, supervised by Raffe. WP7 also fed into the current deliberations on a European VET Credit Framework, and became the subject of a discussion line on its web-based virtual community.

We participated in the COST Activity on Vocational Education; WP3 was written for one of the COST working groups and is included in one of its first publications. WP5 was prepared for an international symposium in Zurich on the Futures of Education, and it will be the basis for a presentation in Washington to education vice-ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean. We contributed to meetings in Paris and London to inform the OECD’s study of qualifications systems.

Ethical issues
We encountered two main sets of ethical issues, both typical of projects of this kind:

- the need to protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions; and
- the need to maintain objectivity and independence while being actively engaged with policy and practice.
We dealt with the first issue by removing any identifying details when presenting the data, sometimes at the expense of useful contextual information. Our Advisory Committee helped us to manage the second issue.

OUTPUTS

Our main written outputs have been in the form of IUS Working Papers. These are placed on the project web site (www.ed.ac.uk/ces/IUS/iusindex.htm), and some are published in journals or books. The current list is shown in Appendix 2.

We published a CES Briefing based on the project in 2001. A second CES Briefing will be based on this report. Other publications have appeared in Broadcast (SFEU journal), Education Reform 21, Holyrood Magazine, the TES Scotland and the Times Higher. Other written outputs include a paper for the Tomlinson Working Group on 14-19 Education and submissions to the Scottish Executive’s consultation on NQ assessment and the Scottish Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Lifelong Learning. The project’s analysis of ‘climbing frames’ formed the main feature on BBC-TV’s Newsnight Scotland in August 2003.

Presentations based on the project have been made to

- SFEU Meeting of Higher Still Coordinators, Stirling, May 2001 (Raffe)
- IUS Consultation Seminar, Edinburgh, September 2001 (Tinklin, Howieson, Raffe)
- Campaign Against Selection Conference, Belfast, September 2001 (Raffe)
- SERA, Dundee, September 2001 (Raffe)
- DfES Ministerial Strategy Hour, London, January 2002 (Raffe)
- Conference on Futures of Education, Zurich, April 2002 (Raffe)
- ECER Conference, Lisbon, September 2002 (Howieson)
- Briefing on Scottish Education for David Miliband MP, Bathgate, September 2002 (Raffe)
- IUS Consultation Seminar, Edinburgh, September 2002 (Tinklin, Howieson, Raffe)
- SQA Progression and Core Skills Advisory Group, November 2002 (Howieson)
- IUS Seminar on Qualification Frameworks, Edinburgh, January 2003 (Raffe)
- Commonwealth/NZQF seminar on Qualification Frameworks, Wellington, February 2003 (Raffe)
- SFEU New National Qualifications Seminar, June 2003 (Howieson)
- BERA, Edinburgh, September 2003 (Raffe)
- ECER, Hamburg, September 2003 (Closs and Howieson, Raffe)
- SQA, seminar for senior managers, Advisory Council and Qualifications Committee, September 2003 (Howieson)
- Nuffield Foundation seminar, London, October 2003 (Hodgson and Raffe)
- SERA, Perth, November 2003 (Closs)
FUTURE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Higher Still provides a unique opportunity to study the inclusion of special needs within a unified system.

We need to follow up our study of the creation of the SCQF to assess its impact in practice.

There is a need for more comparative research on the trend towards ‘unification’, both within the UK and overseas.

The unification process needs to be studied, not only as a ‘policy trajectory’, but also as a ‘policy sequence’. Higher Still and the SCQF are just two in a sequence of unifying reforms in Scotland, and can only be fully understood as part of this sequence. Apparently similar measures – such as the national qualifications frameworks of New Zealand, Scotland and South Africa – function differently in practice because they have a different place in each country’s sequence of unification policies.

David Raffe, Cathy Howieson and Teresa Tinklin, January 2004
APPENDIX 1: IUS WORKING PAPERS

Completed
WP1 Conceptual frameworks for studying the introduction of a unified system (Howieson, Raffe, Tinklin)
WP4 The emerging model of unified system in Scotland: evidence from the second year of Higher Still (Tinklin, Howieson, Raffe)
WP6 Patterns of presentations and achievements in the first year of Higher Still (Tinklin, Raffe, Howieson)
WP7 ‘Simplicity itself’: the creation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (Raffe: published in Journal of Education and Work and Scottish Educational Review)
WP9 The use of New National Qualifications in S3 and S4 in 2002-03 (Howieson, Raffe, Tinklin: submitted to Scottish Educational Review)
WP10 The inclusion of students with special needs within a unified curricular system (Howieson, Closs)
WP11 The normalisation of Higher Still: an analysis of surveys of schools and colleges over the first four years of Higher Still (Raffe, Howieson, Tinklin)

In preparation
WP12 Introducing a unified system: case studies of schools and colleges (Howieson, Tinklin, Raffe)
WP13 Analyses of SQA data on Higher Still for 1999-2002 (Tinklin, Provan, Howieson, Raffe)
WP14 The Higher Still model of a unified system in Scotland (Raffe, Howieson, Tinklin)
WP15 The introduction of a unified system of post-compulsory education in Scotland. Final report to ESRC (Raffe, Howieson, Tinklin)

Planned
WP16 Institutional perspectives on the introduction of a unified system.
WP17 The experience of an educational ‘climbing frame’ for access and progression.
WP18 The political economy of Higher Still.
## APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADES</td>
<td>Association of Directors of Education in Scotland</td>
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<td>ASC</td>
<td>Association of Scottish Colleges</td>
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<td>BERA</td>
<td>British Education Research Association</td>
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<td>COST</td>
<td>Co-operation on Science and Technology (EU programme)</td>
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<td>CSYS</td>
<td>Certificate of Sixth Year Studies</td>
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<td>ECER</td>
<td>European Conference on Educational Research</td>
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<td>HMIE</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Education</td>
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<td>IUS</td>
<td>Introducing a Unified System (project)</td>
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<td>NC</td>
<td>National Certificate</td>
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<td>NNQ</td>
<td>New National Qualification</td>
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<td>NQ</td>
<td>National Qualification</td>
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<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<td>QCA</td>
<td>Qualifications and Curriculum Authority</td>
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<td>SCE</td>
<td>Scottish Certificate of Education</td>
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<td>SCQF</td>
<td>Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>SGA</td>
<td>Scottish Group Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQA</td>
<td>Scottish Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVQ</td>
<td>Scottish Vocational Qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1, S2 …S6</td>
<td>Secondary 1, 2 … six (First, second, …sixth year of secondary school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ULP</td>
<td>Unified Learning Project</td>
</tr>
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