Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Business, Management and Administration

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A subject-based aspect report by Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council on provision in Scotland's Colleges

Transforming lives through learning

Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

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1. Introduction

The Education Scotland publication, *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges*, *updated August 2013,* specifies that Education Scotland will produce a number of subject aspect reports each year. These reports complement in a subject-specific context the generic evaluations of learning and teaching in Education Scotland's external review reports of colleges. Colleges should act on the recommendations contained in these reports. College inspectors will monitor action towards implementation of these recommendations as part of their normal dialogue with colleges, and will wish to discuss issues arising from subject aspect reports during annual engagement visits.

In preparing this report, reviewers visited a sample of four colleges, detailed in Appendix 1. They also drew on the findings of published Education Scotland external reviews of colleges, and examined other relevant publications and reports. They consulted and held focus groups with key stakeholders, including the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), employers, professional bodies, universities and the College Development Network.

A primary purpose of this report is to evaluate the progress made by colleges and stakeholders on the recommendations within the HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) subject-based aspect report on Business, Management and Administration (BMA) published in 2010. These were:

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) should:

- work with colleges and HEIs to improve methods of tracking the longer-term career progression of college graduates.

Scotland's Colleges should:

- strongly encourage the further development of a thriving *Business Subject Network* incorporating staff teaching in all BMA disciplines in colleges;
- support the *Business Subject Network* by providing opportunities for subject-related CPD, including activity aimed at enhancing the quality of learning and teaching, and assessment approaches; and
- assemble a compendium of peer review and lesson observation processes currently in use in the sector to collate and disseminate examples of good practice.

Colleges should:

- ensure that pre-entry guidance, particularly for FE programmes, is comprehensive in informing learners about the scope and nature of BMA disciplines;
- improve their learning and teaching approaches to involve learners more actively in planning and managing their own learning;
- ensure that learning and teaching approaches are stimulating and thought-provoking, and help develop deep understanding of key concepts and current practice;

- harness and further develop ICT resources to enhance learning, teaching and learner support;
- ensure that feedback on learner progress always supports the learning process consistently and effectively; and
- ensure that staff in the different BMA disciplines explore learning, teaching and assessment practice with each other, more widely within and across colleges and with HEI partners, to identify and adopt best practice.

HMIE should:

- continue to monitor progress made in terms of the above recommendations through their annual engagements with colleges, and disseminate information on key improvements as they emerge across the sector.

This report evaluates college programmes within a wide range of disciplines subsumed within the BMA area. The disciplines covered are:

- business and finance;
- economics;
- law;
- management;
- public administration;
- international business studies;
- enterprise; management skills;
- management planning and control systems;
- human resource management;
- financial management/accounting;
- financial services;
- office skills;
- typing/shorthand/secretarial skills;
- marketing and public relations.

In undertaking the fieldwork for this subject aspect task, particular emphasis is given to the general areas of Accounting, Business, Administration and Management, because colleges offer most BMA programmes in these areas. Retail, Sales and Distribution, and Information Technology (in its technical aspects) are not covered in this report. Colleges offer programmes covered by this report in a variety of modes at levels 4 to 11 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) the report only evaluates provision up to SCQF level 8.

2.   Methodology

Education Scotland reviewers visited each college in the sample of four, twice between October 2013 and February 2014. Reviewers observed learning and teaching and discussed with staff and learners issues relating to: strategic planning of provision; programme planning; planning and delivery of learning and teaching; developing the wider learning experience; learner engagement, employer and stakeholder engagement; equality and diversity; outcomes and impact of learning; enhancement through self-evaluation and review; and progress on recommendations from the 2010 BMA report. The views of a wide range of external stakeholders were obtained through face-to-face focus groups and telephone interviews. The report evaluates current practice and identifies important areas for further development amongst practitioners. It also identifies, through a number of case studies, practice worthy of dissemination and sets out recommendations for improvement.

The report examines the progress made by colleges on the recommendations made in the 2010 BMA report, where these remain relevant. The report also explores how well programme staff have responded to developments in education over the past four years. In particular, this report considers how well BMA provision:

- meets the needs of industry;
- prepares learners for employment;
- encourages learners to engage in their own learning; and
- helps individuals to develop a wide range of skills for learning, life and work.

3. Key strengths and areas for development

Business, Management and Administration provision in Scotland's colleges is characterised by many strengths:

- Colleges offer a wide range of appropriate programmes across all BMA disciplines. These programmes are offered from SCQF level 4 through to SCQF level 8 and above, mainly at HNC or HND level, but in some instances at degree level.

- Colleges and programme teams are engaged in effective and meaningful partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. This informs provision of BMA programmes at a local level and meets the needs of learners for employment and progression to further learning. Progression and articulation routes are planned well to support learners in developing the skills for progression and making appropriate choices.

- The effective working relationships between SQA, staff in Scotland's colleges, many professional bodies and employers continues to offer a range of Higher National awards that enjoys a strong reputation among all stakeholders.

- A few colleges and programme teams have made good progress in engaging with employers to design or evaluate programmes. An increasing number of employers are supporting learning by offering real projects, internships, work experience and placements, acting as mentors on programmes and through delivery of learning.

- All colleges have improved pre-entry guidance for BMA programmes to support learners in making appropriate choices and being placed on the right programmes at the right levels.

- Almost all staff are well qualified in one or more of the BMA disciplines, either academically or through membership of a wide range of professional bodies. Where staff engage in national network opportunities there is a greater sharing of practice which challenges the assumptions of traditional delivery and affords the opportunity to develop and enhance practice. Regionalisation and the merger of colleges, SQA and the recently re-established subject network at CDN have supported staff in the sharing of practice.

- Most learners participate well in classroom discussions and there is often good teamwork, peer learning and evaluation with learners helping each other to enhance their knowledge and understanding. In most programmes, learners develop high aspirations, make good use of their own work experience, where this exists, and develop problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- A wide range of formative assessment activities are used by programme teams to good effect. Arrangements for summative assessment are systematic and rigorous, overall.

- Learner success in FE and HE programmes has improved since the 2010 Aspect review, and nationally now sits at or just below the national sector performance levels for all subject areas.

- All colleges have made significant progress in the processes of self-evaluation and internal review of their programmes and a culture of enhancement is well embedded. Learner engagement in the self-evaluation and internal review process is facilitated well through class representatives in most colleges.

In parallel with the above strengths, we noted several areas for development relating to learner participation, learning and teaching approaches, and assessment which should be addressed to improve the experience for many learners.

- There is a considerable variation in programme performance across colleges and a continuing need to identify the factors influencing withdrawal, attainment and achievement.

- Access to online learning opportunities which support a range of learning styles is not always available to learners which affects their engagement and motivation.

- While most colleges are making good progress in embedding elements of the wider curriculum[1], planning across programmes is not always effective in identifying opportunities or responsibility for its delivery.

- While learning and teaching approaches have improved since 2010, there continues to be an over-reliance on traditional, teacher-led approaches, and these impact adversely on the learner experience. The approaches used in FE programmes continue to need particular attention.

To address the areas in need of improvement, BMA staff would benefit from help given by college managers and key stakeholders in the following areas:

- Many colleges have in place mechanisms for collecting and analysing progression and destination statistics of their learners and use the data well to inform future provision. However this remains underdeveloped and in many cases informal.

- Colleges report an increasing number of learners leaving FE courses in BMA disciplines and entering traditionally non-subject related employment where an increasing number of employers recognise the potential to progress to supervisory positions or onto SVQ and Modern Apprenticeships. However credit transfer between courses at FE, HE and degree-level into SVQs and Apprenticeships is not robust or well developed and in most cases learners have to start the journey anew.

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[1] The wider curriculum refers to the collective responsibility of programme teams to deliver essential skills, equality and diversity, capacities of curriculum for excellence, sustainability, employability, health and wellbeing, citizenship etc.

4.   Background and context

Research for this report has been carried out within the context of the Government Economic Strategy of 2011 which identifies Financial and Business Services as one of the areas offering particular opportunities for growth. The sector is characterised by industry leadership, public partnerships, ambition and direction setting. The sector provides considerable employment and growth opportunities. The Scottish Government states that it is vital that businesses across Scotland are provided with the necessary support and skills base in order to succeed.

The Scottish Government report *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the recovery and increasing sustainable economic growth*, published in 2010[2] suggests that Scotland's economic recovery must be led by businesses. The report recognises that businesses need workers with the right mix and level of skills so that they can compete at home and abroad. There is a particular focus on high-level skills within the report. The development of employees with the appropriate skills must be responsive to the needs of employers, whilst employers themselves must be encouraged and supported to invest in and better use these skills. The Skills Investment Plan[3] (SIP) supports delivery of the Scottish Government's Economic and Skills Strategy and takes forward the skills component of the refreshed Strategy for the Financial Services Industry in Scotland. The development of the SIP has been sector-led and facilitated by SDS. The SIP sets out a clear statement of the sector's skills needs, highlights the skills priorities that need to be addressed and supports the sector's future growth ambitions. It also provides a framework for aligning public and private sector investment to meet these needs.

The 2010 BMA report identified that organisations look to BMA disciplines to support the achievement of:

- small business growth which is a key component of future success;
- employers investing more in training and skills development for their workforce;
- teamwork and partnerships which are crucial if Scotland is to succeed; and
- development of leaders and managers.

This landscape for economic development remains a clear focus in 2014. However, this is now set against a changing educational landscape which has a strong focus on employability, especially for young people from the age of 16 to 19 years. The Scottish Government's post-16 reform programme articulated in its report *Putting Learners at the Centre*[4] '*improve life chances for young people, support economic growth and increase the number of jobs. We want to do this in an efficient way that meets the needs of learners and businesses.*'

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[2] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/10/04125111/7
[3] http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/936042/financial_services_sip-nov13.pdf
[4] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/357943/0120971.pdf

The four main ways identified to achieve this are:

- articulating employer and economic need;
- opportunities for All with the aim of ensuring '*a place in learning or training to every 16–19 year old who is not currently in a job, in learning or in training*';
- employability Fund programmes; and
- better alignment of Scotland's employability services.

The interim report from the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce[5] contains 12 recommendations, following extensive consultations with leading figures in education and business. Its very clear focus on the development of relevant and flexible skills in young people has resulted in changes to the profile of the learner cohort in many colleges, with an increased proportion of learners within the 16-19 age group.

The Scottish Government's post-16 reform programme has also resulted in significant changes within the landscape of Scotland's colleges. Colleges are now organised into thirteen regions, and several college mergers have taken place over the past two years, reducing the number of institutions from 41 to 26. Since 2012, colleges have drafted Regional Outcome Agreements with the Scottish Funding Council which set out what colleges will deliver in return for funding. These agreements have as a key target: '*to provide learners with the right learning in the right place*' and '*to contribute to meeting the national guarantees for young people, meeting the demands of the region and where appropriate the nation*'.

The development of *Curriculum for Excellence* and the S*enior Phase*[6] has raised expectations about vocational education and training which has implications for colleges in developing effective partnerships with schools in order to provide relevant and meaningful learning opportunities. New and revised national qualifications at SCQF levels 1 to 7, including in business and administration, are being developed within Curriculum for Excellence by SQA.

These external factors have had a clear impact on the work of Scotland's colleges, including BMA programmes. The wider curriculum has a particular emphasis on the development of a range of skills for learning, life and work. This demands an enhanced set of approaches and skills within programme delivery and stakeholders will look to BMA disciplines to contribute to economic recovery. Through raising the skill sets of learners, colleges can help to shape a future workforce which makes a sustained and positive contribution to a fast changing, globally-oriented business landscape in Scotland.

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[5] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/09/7161/0
[6] http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/285296/0086666.pdf

Colleges therefore need to have a strong focus on the following themes:

- Developing wider skills for life, learning and work which include entre- and intrapreneurial[7] skills;
- Partnerships with employers and key stakeholders which ensure the relevance of skills development;
- Clear and accessible pathways for future learning; and
- Developing a good foundation in general business skills augmented by a significant knowledge base in specialist disciplines.

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[7] Entrepreneurial Skills – the necessary skills required to start, organise and manage an enterprise successfully. Intrapreneurial skills are the entrepreneurial skills applied whilst working in an organisation.

5.   Programmes in Business, Management and Administration

Almost all colleges offered programmes within BMA disciplines in session 2013-14. Approximately two thirds of this provision is at higher education (HE) level (SCQF level 7 and above). A few colleges deliver HE programmes at degree level. Further education (FE) programmes are delivered at SCQF level 4-6. Where SCQF level 4 programmes have been introduced within BMA disciplines, these are primarily intended to help learners develop general learning skills and to support them to make appropriate career choices. In some cases this has been supported through the introduction of SDS Employability Fund programmes[8]. All programmes at FE level include the development of essential and employability skills. Since the BMA review in 2010, the number of school-college partnership programmes in business, administration and financial services delivered to young people in S3 and above has reduced.

Most FE provision uses a range of SQA units for delivery and in some cases uses a SQA National Group Award[9]. Programmes are generally designed to develop a range of skills and competencies in BMA disciplines to support progression into HE provision or to employment. Colleges report that an increasing number of learners who have studied on FE programmes in BMA disciplines enter traditionally non subject-related employment. The knowledge and understanding of business disciplines gained helps them to progress to supervisory positions or onto SVQs and Modern Apprenticeship programmes. This particularly applies to learners who have studied accounting and administration.

Since 2010, several SQA HNC and HND qualifications in BMA disciplines have been revised in partnership with employers, sector skills councils and key stakeholders from colleges and universities. These awards offer a range of core and optional units which provides the necessary flexibility to design programmes relevant to both the local business environment and also to articulation routes to further study. They continue to have high value for employers and in supporting transition to university. However, some learners in the sample believe that employers now look for a degree-level qualification, where previously they looked for an HNC/D level. Most colleges have well-developed articulation routes with a range of universities to study at degree level and in many cases deliver degree programmes in partnership with local universities. A pilot enhancement programme (of which BMA is part) between FE and HEI partners aims to align assessment processes to support articulation and transition into university[10].

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[8] http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/employability-fund/

[9] National Group Awards comprise a minimum of 12 units, all of which must be attained to achieve the full award. Each award has the specific aim of relating to a subject or occupational area at SCQF levels 2-6

[10] Piloting will take place in session 2013-2014. This SFC-funded project is managed by SQA working in partnership with colleges, regional articulation hubs, UHI, the OU and other stakeholders from our HN Key Partners Group. The project will investigate four categories of 'enhancements', including the content, assessment and structure of HN Qualifications and supporting guidance.

Case Study: City of Glasgow College

'We mean Business' – NC Business Entrepreneurs

The NC Business Entrepreneurs initiative has been set up to challenge directly a history of poor retention, attainment and engagement within the full-time NC Business programme at SCQF level 5. The curriculum in this programme provides an holistic learning experience combining the NC Group Award in Business, a Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Leadership award, twelve weeks internship with the Asia Scotland Institute and twelve weeks of entrepreneurial business start-up support.

The entrepreneurial element includes a project in which learners are introduced to Finance Directors from Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays Bank. They are provided with an active online business environment in which learners develop and market clothing products. Learners use core learning that they had previously undertaken to support them to work with external business partners, which includes *Entrepreneurial Spark*, *Bridge to Business* and their volunteer staff mentors. In this way they are able to design, initiate and conclude a successful not-for-profit SME venture.

Face-to-face engagement with internship mentors from Asia Scotland Institute, and senior banking staff creates in learners an aspirational and inspirational model which suppports confidence and self belief. The revised curriculum content delivers core skills, and high-quality academic and sector-based skills. This has led to improved programme performance and improved transition to level 7 programmes across a range of relevant academic disciplines.

Some colleges offer programmes accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and CMI. These are traditionally accessed by learners in employment who wish to progress in their careers. Employers greatly value colleges' flexibility in developing bespoke and short or part-time programmes to meet specific individual or company needs. Where delivery is collaborative or project-based it often supports an action-based learning approach with a strong element of real-life project work. The benefit to learners and employers of engaging in this type of delivery enhances the expertise of learners, the capacity of businesses and the expertise of teaching staff.

Since 2010, all colleges have improved their pre-entry guidance for BMA programmes. This has supported learners effectively to make appropriate choices, and for staff to place learners on the right programmes, at the right levels. However, many learners access FE BMA programmes with no clear aspiration for BMA-related employment, but rather see them as a general programme of study to support access into a range of employment. In most cases colleges have set appropriate pre-entry requirements for SCQF level 5/6 programmes. Most level 4 programmes require no prior qualifications and are designed to develop a broad range of learning skills and prepare learners for progression. It is recognised by colleges which offer level 4 programmes that many learners entering at this level are those furthest away

from the job market and require specialised intervention to help them engage with learning effectively.

Entry to HNC/HND programmes continues to require pre-entry qualifications in the form of Highers (or equivalent), previous experience or progression from a level 5/6 programme. Increasing numbers of learners are progressing from FE to HE within colleges and from there on to degree-level programmes. Many colleges have introduced units at level 6 (and in a few cases level 7) to FE programmes to prepare learners better for transition to HE. However, low attainment in many HNC programmes indicates that more work is required to support transition from lower level programmes.

Whilst there has been improvement in marketing of programmes and guidance for learners BMA programmes this still presents a challenge to colleges. Many pre-entry learners remain unsure of their career options and choices. The exceptions to this are in the areas of accounting and administration where learners are more aware of what career options are available and can plan appropriate learning journeys through FE and HE levels.

Planning for progression

Almost all BMA programmes have clearly defined pathways to employment or advanced study levels. Most Employability Fund programmes and locally-devised level 4 programmes prepare learners well for further learning. Where work experience elements are included, these support learners to better understand the work environment.

However, in those colleges where level 6 units are not used to good effect to support transition from level 5 programmes, learners struggle when they move on to level 7 study, this was common in all colleges sampled. This report has identified a significant increase in the numbers of learners progressing to degree-level study from college programmes. All colleges have in place arrangements for transition to HND programmes at SCQF level 8 either within their own college or in partnership with other colleges. A few college HEI partnerships allow learners to progress to degree level within their own college, with college staff being responsible for delivery of the year three (SCQF level 9) degree curriculum.

Colleges use local intelligence well to influence programme content and ensure that, as far as possible, the skills range developed within the programme meets the requirements of their local businesses. SQA awards are flexible in accommodating optional units, particularly at HNC/D level to meet this need. Many colleges are using SQA National Group Awards whilst others are using locally-devised programmes comprising clusters of NQ units. A few colleges ensure that they build in Professional Development Awards (PDA) into locally-devised programmes which aim to meet specific local employer needs. This supports learners who leave programmes early to achieve certification for the coursework they have completed.

Articulation arrangements with HEIs are well established in most colleges. They are supported by the development of unit options which match the requirements of the university and to support learner transition. Other arrangements are reliant on

informal college HEI links in individual discipline areas. Most colleges are using SQA HN awards effectively to design programmes which build in flexible progression opportunities for learners. Learners completing an HNC programme which includes relevant options stipulated by HEIs, can usually gain direct entry into year two of HEI degree programmes. In most instances, learners achieving an HND gain direct entry into year three of an HEI degree programme. There continues to be insufficient information, however, on the extent to which BMA learners who move on from colleges to HEIs achieve success on degree programmes. However, there is strong anecdotal evidence to confirm that many do well.

Many colleges have in place improved mechanisms for collecting and analysing learner progression and destination statistics. A few use the data well to inform future provision. However this remains largely underdeveloped and in many cases anecdotal. Colleges recognise that they need to work more effectively with external agencies and partners to track this and to identify the longer-term career progression.

Planning for employability

The Scottish Funding Council[11] defines employability as *'a combination of knowledge, skills and attributes (attitudes and values) which result in capable people who will be effective in their chosen occupation - as employees, employers and entrepreneurs'.* With an increasing focus on developing skills for learning, life and work to improve the life chances of learners and support the economic development of Scotland, employability and its delivery within BMA programmes is particularly important.

Many of the characteristics of effective BMA education remain consistent with the 2010 report findings*, 'that irrespective of the type and level of BMA provision on offer, where it is located, and what educational background the learners come from, there are certain characteristics of nearly all effective BMA education that are crucial to learner success:*

- *the development and application of essential skills is fundamental to learner progress;*
- *learners need to acquire a knowledge base in order to gain a meaningful understanding of what the various BMA-related occupations, vocations and professions have to offer. The development of this knowledge base can and should go hand-in-hand with practical work where appropriate; and*
- *only through skills development and the acquisition of knowledge and understanding can BMA learners appreciate the relevance of what they are learning, feel motivated to learn independently and in groups, and make meaningful progress towards attaining their goals which may include leadership, management and motivation of others.'*

However, since 2009 there is an increased expectation around employability and therefore programme design remains critical in ensuring learners are supported to achieve '*skills for life, skills for learning and skills for work'*, irrespective of the type or

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[11] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/FundingOutcomes/Skills/LearningtoWork/LearningtoWork.aspx

level of programme on offer. Most colleges are making good progress in designing programmes which embed elements of this wider curriculum. These elements include involving employers, developing employability and essential skills, incorporating the capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, promoting equality and diversity, widening access to learners and providing individualised learning opportunities. Many are also building in activities which aim to develop those intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial understanding and skills so important to Scotland's future.

Case Study: West Lothian College

Employer Engagement

The college has robust links with local employers facilitated through partnerships with West Lothian Council, West Lothian Chamber of Commerce and the West Lothian Business Gateway. An external relation-mapping document sets out the key contacts for each partner organisation and the nature of the relationship for each. There are two particularly effective partnership projects underway.

In the first example, the Business and Management teaching staff team currently work with a wide range of employers to provide real-life learning opportunities. Learners have benefited from guest speakers on programmes and many have been recruited to undertake real-life advertising and PR campaigns. Many major external events are now wholly run by events management learners who use the practical projects to achieve programme assessments. Learners are engaged with many external employers and develop key and essential skills during these events.

In the second example, college staff are currently working in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to offer mentoring opportunities to local business people. The aim is to offer business support for aspiring business managers, develop an understanding of business needs and provide local business people with an insight into the services the college can offer them. The college utilises this partnership to support employer engagement across the college generally and to seek feedback from employers on industry standards, relevance of qualifications, and employability skills. This has resulted in very helpful support for college programme development. For example, the Chief Executive Officer from the West Lothian Chamber sat on this year's programme approvals panel to help to inform the decision-making process. This injection of business expertise into programme design is helping the college to ensure the relevance of programme content and delivery approaches.

Most BMA programme teams and colleges have well-established and comprehensive approaches to delivering the skills required for learners to enter industry and commerce. They have established a good understanding of industry needs and use a range of qualifications that are recognised and valued by employers. Colleges support learners well in the development of interview techniques, CV writing and career guidance.

Colleges are not the main providers of SVQs and Modern Apprenticeships in the BMA areas. Where they do deliver these programmes, they are mostly managed through a central business development team. A few colleges have recognised that sometimes learners leave their programmes to take up employment. This offers an opportunity to engage these learners and employers in taking up a Modern Apprenticeship or undertaking SVQs. However the credit transfer between programmes at FE and HE levels is not sufficiently streamlined and in most cases learners have to start an SVQ from too low a level.

Careers guidance and the development of career management skills are important in supporting learners to make the right choices in their learning to support choice and advancement. Partnerships with SDS, the use of *My World of Work* and the development of career management skills can often be effective in helping learners to plan their learning pathways. Colleges recognise the need to ensure that programme pathways are sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of learners who may wish to progress into different areas of study.

In a few colleges, BMA programme teams have made good progress in engaging with employers to design programmes that engage learners in real-life experience in business. In these instances, businesses support learning by offering real projects, internships, work experience and placements, acting as mentors on programmes and delivery of topics and themes for learning. This is particularly evident in HN programmes. Where this occurs, learners report that they feel highly motivated and engaged and gain deep and meaningful understanding of their chosen career. They translate this easily into the subject areas and their learning acquires a new and refreshed relevance.

Case Study: City of Glasgow College

Introducing Workplace Skills

Business and Administration learners are introduced to employability skills through the inclusion of real and simulated work experience activities in two pilot programmes: the SDS-Funded NC Business and the Admin Skills Academy (Short Programme). The aim is to deliver outcomes for learners that support work readiness and progression.

A mix of business-focussed, project-based activities, internal and external work placements and the nomination of local business mentors from amongst the teaching staff in the School of Business & Enterprise led to both programmes delivering successful outcomes for learners. These included progression onto higher level study programmes, continuing work experience opportunities and success in securing jobs for some of those on the Admin Skills Academy programme.

Following review and evaluation, the decision was taken to incorporate many of the initiatives trialled into two full-time NC Business programmes from August 2013 and into two further Skills Academy short programmes in Business and Retail running from January 2014.

Staff will continue to review and assess the quality of the outcomes with a view to continuing to adjust the programme content and focus to meet the aims of progression and work readiness.

Case Study: Coatbridge College (pre-merger)

Developing Professional Skills in Accounting - Employability and the Credit Union

Learners on the HNC Accounting and NQ Business and Accounting programmes have been organising, managing and staffing a Credit Union Satellite Centre in Coatbridge College since May 2012. The aim of this initiative is to develop professional and employability skills, and embed these skills into the curriculum. The Credit Union is open to college learners and staff at lunchtimes on a fortnightly basis, and is supervised by a qualified member of staff from an external Credit Union at all times.

Following discussion by the NQ Business & Accounting team on matching employability skills with qualifications, the team carried out research in partnership with Coatbridge College's Student Services Advisor. The structure of the Credit Union Satellite Centre was then devised to ensure that it would be a learner-led initiative for financial sustainability across the student and staff body. This is part of the College's initiative to support financial sustainability among learners and staff.

Learners participate in training and can be vetted for 'Approved Person' status. They negotiate with fellow learners in relation to allocation of duties and contingency planning. Learners undertake the following roles and gain essential employability skills: bank teller; cash handling; Loan Board management; customer services and cash books. They learn the importance of client confidentiality and how to deal with client details. Within the fixed times of the Credit Union the learners manage their time well to accommodate the maximum number of clients. At each session, the learners who are staffing the Credit Union work as a team to provide the full range of services offered by the Credit Union. They understand and follow the correct procedures for recording cash transactions and other accounting procedures. Through negotiation with fellow learners they plan, manage and implement their staff rotas, supplies and duties.

The Credit Union is supporting learners to develop at a high level the skills and attributes required to work in a client-centred financial services environment. Financial sustainability for individuals is a major feature of the work of the Credit Union. The college is the only one in Scotland whose learners can be Loan Officers.

6.   Learning and teaching

The fast pace of change in both the global economy and the educational landscape in Scotland since 2010 is presenting considerable challenges to learning and teaching in BMA disciplines. The emphasis on employability alongside the development of skills for learning and for life is challenging colleges to be increasingly innovative in their approaches to programme delivery. Consequently, the expectations for enhancing the broader skill sets of learners beyond vocational competence have increased since 2010. This raises the expectation for delivery, which in turn impacts on approaches to learning and teaching. This results in an increased need to focus on innovation, creativity, personal efficacy and a broader understanding of how businesses grow and develop.

Programme team staff are also increasingly required to work in partnership with learners in order to develop learner skills in planning and managing their own learning. They also need to maintain their own skills and knowledge in their vocational specialism, while applying high-level professional approaches to learning and teaching. Teaching staff also need to know and understand the personal needs of their learners and work as a team with a network of specialists who can deliver on these additional support needs.

The BMA report of 2010 recommended that learning and teaching approaches should involve learners more actively in planning and managing their own learning, ensure that learning and teaching approaches are stimulating and thought provoking, and help develop deep understanding of key concepts and current practice. In all colleges within the fieldwork for this report, there are examples of excellence and innovation. However this standard is not consistently applied across all areas of programme delivery and consequently learner motivation and engagement is not always positive. In many classes, learning remains passive and overly-focused on unit content. Learners most enjoy learning where it has business relevance, where they have engagement with employers, and methodologies and approaches are varied and relevant to the tasks.

Individual lessons are mostly well structured with clear aims and objectives which develop key concepts and reflect current practice. However, aims and objectives are not always contextualised well within the overall aims of the subject. Consequently learners do not always make appropriate links with previously acquired knowledge. Where teaching staff use project or thematic-based learning opportunities built around real projects or contextualised to business, learners engage effectively. However, the range and variety of activities to support learning is sometimes limited and does not always engage and enthuse learners as well as it could.

Case study: City of Glasgow College

My Law – My Day

My Law My Day is an initiative within the HND Legal Studies programme to address the barriers of a traditional theoretically-focussed curriculum which presents challenges for learner engagement, subject contextualisation, progression and retention. Learning is energised through participants assuming the role of 'Laws Advocate' where they are free to choose and 'contest' the validity of any legal theory contained within the curriculum. While learning retains high standards of academic merit this approach also provides a deep understanding of the law's impact on citizenship and employability. My Law My Day is an opportunity given for participation in an aspirational role. Learners carry out a deep analysis of a complex legal concept framed in legal language. They then convey through their own public testimony and in their own words, what this legal concept means within the fabric of their everyday lives. This makes it real and not simply a remote and disengaged academic concept. It brings learning to life. The role gives the learner a 'voice' expressing reflection through the expression and content of their advocacy. The event allows staff to gauge the impact and effectiveness of their teaching as they witness the learners contextualise their learning into their lives. In partnership with the curriculum, My Law My Day has informed, engaged and prepared learners with employability skills, academic progression and increased retention through increased participation and satisfaction.

In most colleges, staff have access to high-quality physical and technical and learning resources. They use these well to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. In most classes, learning is supported by well-prepared notes, handouts and nationally-devised materials which helps learners consolidate their learning and check understanding. In a few instances staff plan the use of up-to-date materials well using information and communications technology (ICT) or virtual learning environments (VLE). They use this to enhance and extend learning or support independent learning. In some instances this material is very well designed and makes learning stimulating and engaging. However, not all staff make good use of the ICT/VLE resources available to them and many are over reliant on traditional, teacher-led approaches. With an increased demand for flexibility and the development of independence in learning, access to online learning opportunities which support a range of learning styles is increasingly important. It is widely recognised by BMA programme teams that, where this learning opportunity is available, it develops independence in learning, affords a level of flexibility in delivery. Learners generally are motivated by the opportunity to extend and reflect on learning using ICT. However, this is underdeveloped in most colleges, with only a few using materials produced in-house or through materials purchased externally, for example MOOCs[12] to supplement and support the development of new approaches to learning and delivery. In this respect, the recommendations in the report of 2010 relating to harnessing of ICT resources to enhance learning, teaching and learner support have not yet been fully addressed.

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[12] Massive Open Online Course – http://www.moocs.co/

Many teaching staff use quizzes, peer evaluation, effective questioning, graffiti boards and formative assessment well to develop reflective practice in learners. In many classes, however, the development of skills in reflective practice by learners remains underdeveloped. Too many lessons are dominated by generalised questioning which does not afford the opportunity for learners to identify skills and knowledge gaps. This means that not all learners are involved in putting forward, defending or challenging views expressed by their peers or by staff. As in the 2010 report, most learners participate well in classroom discussions and there is often good teamwork and peer learning and evaluation, with learners helping each other to enhance their knowledge and understanding. In most programmes, learners develop high aspirations, make good use of their own work experience where this exists and develop good problem-solving and interpersonal skills. In the small number of classes where questioning is used well, learners develop a growing interest in and understanding of the subject area. They develop high-order thinking skills and deep understanding that goes beyond the basic information and knowledge required to attain the qualification.

In most BMA programme teams, staff plan lessons well to ensure that learners build on prior learning. Learners are increasingly informing planning of delivery and report a confidence in discussing lesson content and sequencing of units with teaching staff. However, though planning of the delivery of subject content is good across most programmes, it is not always effective in identifying opportunities for delivery of the wider curriculum, that is, which focus on developing the whole person with sufficiently flexible skills to flourish in the business world. In most cases units are integrated well where appropriate, enabling learners to make links across subjects, to consolidate and integrate learning, and make connections between the various subjects studied. In most colleges, core skills servicing teams play a greater role in the planning of delivery and in most cases essential/core skills are integrated or delivered in partnership with core skills teams. The numbers of European or international learners, or learners from alternative cultures, in BMA programmes is increasing and colleges could make more of opportunities to use intercultural experience to take learning beyond the Scottish dimension.

Almost all staff are well qualified in one or more of the BMA disciplines, either academically or through membership of a wide range of professional bodies. Many of them maintain outside business interests, have continuing links with their professional bodies, or carry out periodic consultancies and training activities for external clients. Where staff engage in national network opportunities to develop their teaching practice, there is a greater sharing of practice which challenges the assumptions of traditional delivery and affords the opportunity to develop and enhance practice. Regionalisation and the merger of colleges has brought staff together in curriculum areas, and most are beginning to share practice with each other. SQA involvement and the recently re-established subject network at the College Development Network (as recommended in the 2010 report), have also supported staff in the sharing of and development of new practice.

Most teaching staff who deliver programmes within BMA disciplines help learners to develop knowledge and understanding in line with current business practice, and legislative or professional competencies. Most teaching staff apply their subject knowledge and also their professional teaching skills well. They develop in learners

a good understanding of why particular approaches and practices in business are necessary and help to broaden the parameters in which learning takes place. Where this happens learners are comfortable in challenging theoretical assumptions or questioning the validity of aspects of current practice.

Assessment of learner progress is used to good effect in most colleges to recognise progress in learning, identify skills and knowledge gaps and set objectives and targets. Learners are motivated by good feedback and recognise its value in understanding future learning needs. This is provided in most colleges. Where it happens, learners develop the ability to learn independently and identify gaps in their knowledge. In most programmes summative assessment approaches are determined by the awarding bodies. Where teaching staff develop new approaches to delivery many are also developing imaginative formative assessment practices that complement and reinforce these new learning approaches. A wide range of formative assessment activities are used by BMA programme teams to good effect. When they are used with online quizzes and end-of-topic tests, learners develop confidence in their learning and further progress.

Arrangements for summative assessment remain systematic and rigorous overall. Almost all BMA staff are highly knowledgeable and experienced in carrying out assessments. Their awareness of assessment aims and practices is supported by work undertaken as external verifiers on programmes in other colleges, work undertaken on SQA national groups reviewing programmes in the various BMA areas, and the sharing of ideas and developments through the various Subject Network groups set up by SQA. These groups have supported staff in colleges in working together to develop assessment material for graded units within HN programmes and strategies for assessment of group awards. Extension of, and more consistent use of, existing networking arrangements is crucial. The sharing of practice will ensure that teaching staff delivering BMA programmes across all colleges accredit successful learners fairly and consistently, and develop learning approaches which will support the wider curriculum.

Case Study: West College Scotland

Development of essential skills

It is important for learners to have a structure to help them reflect upon and improve their essential skills. In West College Scotland, college staff built on initial work carried out with a local secondary school to develop a clear framework of ten essential skills under each of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence.

When learners, including those studying on BMA programmes, join the college, they are encouraged to sign on to a college-devised website which allows them to rate themselves initially in these 40 skill areas. This initial profile is accessed by the guidance/course tutor, and allows identification of the learner's baseline essential skills level and which ones they need to develop. Across the college and in guidance sessions, staff encourage learners to reflect on all learning tasks undertaken, to identify which skills they have demonstrated and to record these on their web recording tool. Handy pocket- sized diagrams of the skills and posters

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within classes help raise the profile of these skills and encourage learner reflection on how they are being developed.

Having a clear structure and mechanism helps the learners recognise the essential skills they are developing. It helps them to record and reflect upon the skills they offer a potential employer. It builds up a picture of their skills development over the year and also helps them to generate a CV automatically based on the web entries.

Although not yet fully embedded across the college, this model is effective in supporting most to understand and engage more fully with the skills they need for learning, work and life.

7.   Outcomes and impact

For the purposes of this report it is important to note that key performance indicators comprise of data that represents the 11 key subject areas within BMA instead of the 26 areas usually included. This was achieved by using 11 of the 26 super-classes (FES returns superclass II) that would usually be assigned to BMA. The motivation behind this was to look at these 11 areas that make up the majority of BMA enrolments, in more depth allowing for a greater understanding of the subject area. Further statistical breakdowns and a list of the 11 super-classes can be found in appendix 2.

BMA programme and support teams have been successful in deploying strategies to reduce the level of early withdrawal in both FE and HE programmes These figures for 2012-13 now sit at or just below the national sector level for programmes in all subject areas. Strategies have included improvements in pre-entry advice and guidance, well- developed induction programmes and interventions to identify the specific needs of individuals. Where these strategies have been successful most learners become settled and committed to their programme of study.

Further withdrawal from programmes continues to be influenced by the quality of programme delivery, personal motivation in overcoming challenges, personal and financial hurdles and employment. All these factors impact on the proportion of learners who stay on to complete their programmes of study. In 2012/13 full-time FE programmes saw a decrease in the numbers withdrawing at this stage while full-time HE programmes stayed at the same level.

Success in BMA programmes across Scotland has also improved since 2010 by 4% for both FTFE and FTHE programmes. These still sit below the national sector performance levels for all subject areas. Partial success has fallen during this period and is now in line with the sector average. The information in Table 1 (Appendix 2) continues to show:

- Most learners who enrol on college BMA programmes remain on them until after the 25% date.
- Most of these learners stay on to complete their programmes of study.
- The majority of learners who complete their programmes obtain the award for which they have studied.

However, as identified in the 2010 report, there continues to be considerable variation in retention and success across colleges. This means that a significant proportion of those who undertake BMA programmes do not obtain the relevant award.

Attainment of a named award remains the primary goal of learners and focus of delivery. However, many BMA programmes offer a range of achievements which benefit learners and address the skill set with the wider curriculum mentioned earlier. Almost all learners who remain on programmes gain essential skills, develop effective interpersonal skills, self-esteem, confidence and improved life chances and a wider awareness of society whilst making contributions to the development of citizenship skills. Most BMA programmes encourage participation in fundraising

events for charities, engagement in volunteering and a raised awareness of the needs of the third sector. Most colleges offer learners vocationally relevant additional awards in areas such as accounting, payroll, UFAS certification which enhances employment opportunities.

8.   Enhancement through self-evaluation and review

All colleges have made significant progress in the processes of self-evaluation and internal review of their programmes and a culture of enhancement is well embedded. These processes, which in most cases involve learners, have led to reflection and actions that have impacted well on BMA provision. In a few colleges there are good links with employers who support the BMA programmes in evaluating provision. Colleges have worked well with other colleges and HEIs to rationalise their provision whilst still maintaining and offering learner choice. As in 2010 many programme teams continue to focus mainly on making changes to programme delivery, for example with the re-sequencing of units or on changes to assessment approaches. In a few colleges this has moved to a more radical and holistic approach to programme planning and delivery that requires all staff to play their part in the delivery of the wider curriculum.

Many programme teams have in place effective arrangements for peer review, team teaching and other activities that help staff to reflect collectively on the effectiveness of provision and to plan improvement. However, there continues to be significant scope for staff across all BMA disciplines to promote a continuing dialogue around learning and teaching and assessment practice that would impact on the learner experience. There continues to be relatively little contact and interaction with HEI partners to take forward issues relating to learning and teaching as an extension to their productive working relationships regarding articulation.

Learner engagement in the self-evaluation and internal review process is facilitated well through class representatives. Almost all BMA staff welcome the engagement of learners and encourage them to question provision, suggest changes and evaluate levels of satisfaction. Learners in most instances feel they have a voice which is listened to by staff. Actions to effect change and improvement are undertaken within a culture of partnership of learners and teaching staff. However, there are a few examples of learners and staff not fully appreciating the value of learner engagement, and programme teams are insufficiently proactive in developing a culture of engagement with accountability and responsibility being taken by the whole team.

All programme teams are very aware of equality and diversity requirements. The increase in the number of learners from European Union (EU) and international countries gives a range of opportunity to broaden understanding of cultural and intercultural learning that supports the development of skills for a global economy. However in more than a few instances, programme teams do not plan thoroughly enough for promotion of equality and diversity within their curriculum delivery.

The need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is clearly identified as a driver for improvement. Most staff are well qualified in their subject and hold professional teaching qualifications either in the form of full teaching qualifications or Professional Development Awards (PDA). Most new staff are enrolled into these programmes early in their employment. However, new staff induction is still dominated by an introduction to college process, rather than a focus on delivery approaches and teaching methodologies. College-wide CPD is engaging staff effectively in subject and generic teaching approaches alongside legislative issues

and child protection. Subject specific CPD and updating of subject knowledge continues to be a challenge for colleges and staff, as identified in the 2010 report. More needs to be done to engage with BMA industries and professional bodies to maintain the currency of staff knowledge and skills and thus enhance the learner experience.

9.   Recommendations

The Scottish Funding Council should:

- Continue to work with colleges and external agencies to track progression effectively to identify the longer-term career progression of learners.

The College Development Network should:

- Build on the successful subject network model or other suitable delivery mechanisms to support a pro-active engagement with BMA providers in all colleges.

- Support the development of approaches that challenge traditional delivery and meet the demands of current business practice.

The Scottish Qualifications Agency should:

- Raise awareness, through the provision of guidance to centres, of the further development of credit transfer frameworks between programmes at FE and HE level into SVQs and Modern Apprenticeships.

Colleges should:

- Continue to evaluate and action improvement for learner success in BMA programmes.

- Ensure that pre-entry guidance better informs learners about career opportunities

- Develop methodologies and approaches to learning and teaching that have business relevance, engage in partnerships with employers and are varied and relevant.

- Further develop ICT resources to increase flexibility in delivery methodologies to engage learners and support the development of independence in and responsibility for learning.

- Plan across programmes to identify opportunity and responsibility for delivery of the wider curriculum, and equality and diversity issues.

- Continue to evaluate guidance, support, programme design and learning and teaching strategies, while reflecting on key issues raised in the relevant sections of this report.

- Extend the development of employability and career management to improve the life chances of learners and support the economic development of Scotland.

Education Scotland should:

- continue to monitor progress made in terms of the above recommendations through their annual engagements with colleges, and disseminate information on key improvements as they emerge across the sector.

Appendix 1

Colleges visited in the fieldwork for this report:

City of Glasgow College

Coatbridge College

West College Scotland

West Lothian College

Appendix 2

Subject: Business Management & Administration – Scotland Figures for 2009/10 to 2011/12 - It is important to note that key performance indicators for this BMA aspect report comprise of data that represents the 11 key subject areas within BMA instead of the 26 areas usually included. This was done by using 11 of the 26 super-classes (FES returns superclass II) that would usually be assigned to BMA. The motivation behind this was to look at these 11 areas that make up the majority of BMA enrolments in more depth allowing for a greater understanding of the subject area.

AA - Business/Finance (general)
AB - Management (general)
AC - Public Administration
AE - Enterprises
AF - Management Skills
AK - Financial Management/Accounting
AL - Financial Services
AY - Office Skills
AZ - Typing/Shorthand/Secretarial Skills
EB - Economics
EC - Law

2010/11	Initial enrolments (number)	Early withdrawal (percentage of initial enrolments)	Further withdrawal (percentage of initial enrolments)	Partial success (percentage of initial enrolments)	Success (percentage of initial enrolments)
Full Time FE	2868	13%	18%	12%	57%
Full Time HE	5187	8%	15%	12%	65%
Part Time FE	6331	3%	5%	10%	82%
Part Time HE	3369	4%	7%	16%	73%

2011/12	Initial enrolments (number)	Early withdrawal (percentage of initial enrolments)	Further withdrawal (percentage of initial enrolments)	Partial success (percentage of initial enrolments)	Success (percentage of initial enrolments)
Full Time FE	2587	11%	18%	10%	61%
Full Time HE	5180	8%	13%	12%	67%
Part Time FE	5747	3%	4%	9%	83%
Part Time HE	2694	5%	8%	15%	72%

2012/13	Initial enrolments (number)	Early withdrawal (percentage of initial enrolments)	Further withdrawal (percentage of initial enrolments)	Partial success (percentage of initial enrolments)	Success (percentage of initial enrolments)
Full Time FE	2599	13%	15%	11%	61%
Full Time HE	5160	7%	13%	11%	69%
Part Time FE	5044	2%	6%	9%	83%
Part Time HE	2421	5%	8%	14%	73%

Appendix 3

Glossary of terms

BMA   Business, Management and Administration
CPD   Continuing Professional Development
CMI   Chartered Management Institute
CV   Curriculum Vitae
EU   European Union
FE   Further Education
FT   Full-time
HE   Higher Education
HEA   Higher education Academy
HEI   Higher Education Institution
HN   Higher National
HNC   Higher National Certificate
HND   Higher National Diploma
ICT   Information and Communications Technology
ILM   Institute of Leadership and Management
NC   National Certificate
PDA   Professional Development Award
PT   Part-time
SCQF Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDS   Skills development Scotland
SFC   Scottish Funding Council
SQA   Scottish Qualifications Authority
SVQ   Scottish Vocational Qualification
TQ (FE) Teacher Qualification (Further Education)
VLE   Virtual learning environment

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