



Recognition of young people's achievements in outdoor learning activities

Final Report *Outdoor Connections* Research Programme

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ABBREVIATIONS

DoE	The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
JMA	John Muir Award
NC	Natural Connections
NQ	National Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SNQF	Scottish National Qualifications Framework
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority

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Contractor: Outdoor and Environmental Education Section, University of Edinburgh

BACKGROUND

The *Outdoor Connections* Research Programme commissioned this report, which looks at 'Recognition of young people's achievements in outdoor learning activities' (Tender Reference No: 05-365).

This report is based on the following research questions:

- To what extent do commonly undertaken SQA awards recognise young people's achievements through participation in outdoor learning experiences?
- In what ways are young people's achievements through participation in planned, outdoor learning experiences, recognised through selected other awards?
- To what extent do such planned experiences meet the proposed "purposes of the curriculum" (Scottish Executive, 2004: 12)?
- What commitment, and by what age groups, is needed to participate in and achieve through these experiences?

In the remainder of this report we define some terms, discuss the methods used, report on the result of our analysis, and raise some points of discussion.

DEFINITIONS

We take outdoor experience here to refer to learning activity beyond the school grounds in predominantly non-built environments (including urban parkland).

The title of the report discusses "recognition" of achievement, and we use this terms interchangeably with ideas of "accreditation" or "certification".

"Young people" are envisaged to be those up to the age of 18 years, although some of the awards we discuss are open to older people.

For rhetorical convenience we refer to SQA awards (with ideas of "traditional" recognition and accreditation) and non-SQA awards in this report. However we should note that it is differences in the nature of what such awards recognise that is relevant, rather than differences in the awarding institutions. Indeed, the SQA is at the forefront of developing new kinds of awards and their prospective role in this is acknowledged in *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2006: 20).

Parts of this report are based on SQA documents which were published before the use of the name "Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework" (SCQF). These documents refer to the previous Scottish National Qualifications Framework (SNQF), and this earlier terminology is used in this report. The difference does not have a substantive effect on the report.

1 METHODS

For the first part of this report, we summarise a trawl of Scottish Qualification Authority awards that was undertaken in 2005 for the report “Teachers’ Approaches and Attitudes to Engaging with the Natural Heritage Through the Curriculum” (Scottish Natural Heritage, *in press*), undertaken on the instructions of Scottish Natural Heritage (and Outdoor Connections partner). The scope of this trawl is described below. Arrangements were examined in detail for reference to outdoor, and especially “field study” (as opposed to “adventurous activity”), experience, in keeping with the terms of that project. However, for the purposes of this report we judge the reported outcomes of the trawl to be comprehensive. We are not aware of other SQA awards that recognise outdoor experience. (Physical Education is discussed below. While it can involve outdoor experience it does not do so necessarily).

The second part of the report discusses *the websites of* several non-SQA accrediting bodies. These are:

- Natural Connections (<http://www.naturalconnections.info>)
- John Muir Award (<http://www.jmt.org/award/>)
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award (<http://www.theaward.org/>)
- ASDAN (<http://www.asdan.org.uk/>)
- Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards (<http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>)

These organisations were selected by Outdoor Connections.

We discuss the methods used in more detail at the beginning of the second part of the report because we think the attempted analysis is as revealing for Outdoor Connections as its results. For the present purposes we aimed to analyse how these Awards related to future curricular arrangements. Methodologically we undertook a non-quantitative content analysis of the relevant programme’s web pages. We used the four capacities shown in the “purposes of the curriculum” in *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004: 12), as a conceptual frame, augmented by codes relating to “who has to do what to participate”. This frame is the equivalent to a “start-list” in the terms of Miles and Huberman (1994: 58)). The coding frame is shown in Table1.

As agreed with Learning and Teaching Scotland we did not attempt to contact any of the organisations for further information and our analysis is based purely on the website information. The analysis and outcomes of the project are, therefore, in part dependent on the organisation’s publication policies. We felt able to make useful claims about The Duke of Edinburgh’s, John Muir and Natural Connections’ Award schemes based on this information, all of which explicitly discuss outdoor experiences. The ASDAN, Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards are more general in nature. Although they might well involve outdoor experience, the level of detail available offered on the websites was not sufficient for us to analyse these in the same way. However the organisations behind these awards have potential as partners in any effort to recognise young people’s achievements.

A Curriculum For Excellence

Codes

SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

- > enthusiasm and motivation for learning
- > determination to reach high standards of achievement
- > openness to new thinking and ideas
- > use literacy, communication and numeracy skills

- > use technology for learning
- > think creatively and independently

- > learn independently and as part of a group

- > make reasoned evaluations
- > link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations

S_LRN_ENT
S_ACH_DET
S_OPEN
S_USE_LIT
S_USE_COMM
S_USE_NUM
S_LRN_TECH
S_THNK_CREAT
S_THNK_IND
S_LRN_IND
S_LRN_GRP
S_EVAL
S_BRIDGE

CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS

- > self respect
- > a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing

- > secure values and beliefs
- > ambition
- > relate to others and manage themselves

- > pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
- > be self aware
- > develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world
- > live as independently as they can
- > assess risk and take informed decisions
- > achieve success in different areas of activity

C_SLFRSPT
C_SENSPHYS
C_SENSEMENT
C_SECUREVB
C_AMB
C_RELATE
C_SLFMGMT
C_PURSHLTH
C_SLFAWARE
C_BELIEFS
C_LVIND
C_INFDEC
C_ACHSUCC

RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

- > respect for others
- > commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life
- > develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it
- > understand different beliefs and cultures
- > make informed choices and decisions
- > evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues

- > develop informed, ethical views of complex issues

R_RSPTOTHER
R_COMMIT

R_KUWRLD
R_KUSCOT
R_KUCULT
R_INFDEC
R_EVAL_ENV
R_EVAL_SCITEC
R_VIEWCOMP

EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

- > an enterprising attitude
- > resilience
- > self-reliance
- > communicate in different ways and in different settings
- > work in partnership and in teams
- > take the initiative and lead

- > apply critical thinking in new contexts
- > create and develop
- > solve problems

E_ENTATT
E_RESIL
E_SLFREL
E_COMM
E_WRKGRP
E_INIT
E_LEAD
E_BRIDGE
E_CREATE
E_SOLVE

ADDITIONAL CODES

- Who can participate
- What commitment must participants make
- How many participants are there

A_WHO
A_COMMIT
A_NUM

Table 1 Coding frame used for analysis of parts of the websites of non-SQA award bodies. The first column shows the four capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004: 12) and the second column the codes used in the analysis (that are only of interest here where one of the dimensions of a capacity has been subdivided for coding).

2 ANALYSIS OF SCOTTISH QUALIFICATION AUTHORITY AWARDS

The awards that schools typically use to recognise the achievement of most Scottish school students are part of the Scottish National Qualifications Framework (SNQF)*. Courses for such awards certainly provide opportunities for out-of-doors experiences but rarely, if ever, *prescribe* such experiences.

2.1 Qualifications for 14-18 year-olds

Students of this age range (and above) study within the Scottish National Qualifications Framework (SNQF). Since “age-stage” restrictions have been removed, some younger children will also take SNQF qualifications from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA, 2004a, p. 6). Currently available in this framework are Standard Grades, Higher Still and Scottish Vocational Qualifications. Standard Grades are the main qualifications for 14-16 year olds but may give way to equivalent Higher Still courses (particularly Intermediate 2) or other courses. Higher Still is a series of qualifications of increasing attainment, from Access 1, 2 and 3, to Intermediate 1 and 2, to Higher and Advanced Higher. Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are undertaken in the workplace (or in workplace conditions at a training centre or college). Students aged 14-18 are most likely to have access only to SVQ Levels 1-3. Levels 4 and 5 are broadly equivalent to Higher National Diploma and Masters level courses (SQA, 2004b, p. 7).

Secondary school students have some choice about what they can study after (and increasingly before) the age of 14 and are likely to study a number of Standard Grades, Access or Intermediate subjects before school leaving age (at 16 years old). Those who stay on might then study a range of Intermediate 1 and 2 courses as preparation for Higher or Advanced Higher study, or go directly on to Higher courses, or both. Courses are made up of units, and some courses offer a choice of optional units. There are over 150 National Qualification subjects (SQA, 2004a) and more than 700 Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SQA, 2004b) that might concern secondary school age students. The combinations of courses that might have been studied by a student between the ages of 14 (or younger) and 18 are therefore potentially very complex (SQA, 2004c). Data concerning numbers of candidates for different qualifications, especially by age, are not routinely published.

2.2 Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)

SVQs are not discussed in detail in this study. There were over 900 SVQs available in November 2004 (SQA, 2004b, p. 20 & 23). Two of the 11 categories of courses are particularly relevant: “001- Tending Animals, Plants and Land”; and “002 - Extracting and Providing Natural Resources”. Out of the available SVQs, none of the 10 most popular courses (measured either by numbers of students registering or completing in 2003) are from these two categories, and none of the 10 most popular are likely to involve outdoor education about the natural heritage (SQA, 2004b, p. 21). However, SVQs may be relevant to outdoor experience. Some vocational qualifications, based in real or simulated working environments, will involve outdoor learning experiences. In such vocational qualifications, it is likely that this experience is integral to the course or even the employment of the students.

2.3 National Qualifications

National Qualifications (NQ) in secondary schools drive curricular division into timetabled disciplines. While the set of NQ courses offered by a secondary school cannot be seen as the totality of the school's intended curriculum, in the way the more comprehensive 5-14 National Guidelines might be, there is less opportunity to re-arrange outcomes for cross-curricular activity than in the 5-14 Guidelines.

* See section on Definitions

Most courses do not claim any direct connection to outdoor learning. Those that claim explicit concern with either outdoor learning, or the natural heritage in general, are discussed briefly.

From Access 2 **Physical Education** upwards (SQA, 1999g; 2004n, p. 18), there is an emphasis on variety of activity and practical-experiential learning and it is anticipated that some of the time available for the course might be used for “special events/visits” (e.g. SQA, 1999g, p. 5). “Outdoor pursuits” is in the range of activities that candidates might participate in during the PE courses (e.g. SQA, 1999g, p. 8; 2004a, p. 341) and in the Standard Grade arrangements “[o]utdoor pursuits comprise those activities which take place in the natural environment”. Such activities may include hill-walking, orienteering, climbing or skiing, for example (SQA, 2004o, p. 11 & 12), but the use of outdoor pursuits is not mandatory and depends on teacher/lecturer and candidates’ interests and expertise (SQA, 1999g, p. 10; 2000e, p. 12; 2004p, p. 23; 2004n, p. 24).

“**Geography** teachers have long recognised the stimulus to learning provided by practical activities, including fieldwork investigations and out-of-classroom activities.” (SQA, 2000a, p. 7 – emphasis added). This combination of field technique skills and related content represents the greatest curricular opportunity for studying out-of-doors. Here we look at skills but it is the blend with content that matters.

Standard Grade Geographical skills are as important as knowledge and understanding. As with Biology (below), the notion of the “collection” and “gathering” of data receives consideration in Standard Grade (SQA, 2000a, p. 10-11). Indeed, field sketching and measuring (rivers, weather) are specified techniques (SQA, 2000a, p. 23). From **Intermediate 1 to Higher** level (SQA, 2004d, p. 4; 2004e, p. 4; 2004f, p. 4) the skills of Geography do not explicitly include the notions of collecting or gathering data as in Standard Grade (although there is a notion of collecting “Geographical phenomena” (e.g. SQA 2004f, p. 11)). “The techniques may be taught through actual fieldwork, or simulated fieldwork in the classroom” (SQA, 2004d, p. 6; 2004l, p. 6) and the assessment criteria do not imply experience of field activity (SQA, 2004d, p. 12; 2004e, p. 12; 2004f, p. 21-22) although, at Higher level, the kinds of presentation and interpretation techniques involved (such as presenting river data) could be based on field-collected data. Overall, fieldwork is not as clearly implied as it appears to be in Standard Grade. It is encouraged neutrally at Intermediate 1 and 2 (SQA, 2004d, p. 14; 2004e, p. 14; 2004f, p. 19) and more strongly at Higher and **Advanced Higher** level:

“It is not mandatory, but highly desirable, that candidates undertake fieldwork, collectively or independently, to apply the selected methods and techniques identified in the Unit content. Where centres undertake this, teachers or lecturers in charge should ensure that any fieldwork undertaken is carried out under conditions which comply with health and safety, field studies and risk assessment policies required by their employers.” (SQA, 2004f, p. 29; 2004g, p. 17).

Biology is available at Standard Grade and Access 3 upwards in the Higher Still framework. There are field skills involved in Biology but these are not as pervasive as in Geography (above) because a smaller part of the content of Biology implies field study. Content and skills are not separated in the following discussion. Moreover, more recent syllabuses (the Higher Still framework) appear to include less field-related content. Therefore Standard Grade offers the greatest curricular opportunity at present.

There is an apparent presumption of outdoor experience in **Standard Grade** Biology, although it is not explicitly required. Two of the seven topics at Standard Grade (SQA, 2000b, p. 7) lend themselves to field study: “The Biosphere”; and “The World of Plants”. Only in the Biosphere topic is outdoor investigation directly encouraged. It is intended that

its sub-topic on “Investigating an Ecosystem” “should take the form of a practical investigation of an ecosystem” and the sub-topic “How it Works” is designed to draw on this experience (SQA, 2000b, p. 17-18). While there are obvious relationships to the “The World of Plants”, in “Animal Survival” (and other) topics, which might be exploited by teachers in field situations, the emphasis in the documentation is on laboratory investigation (SQA, 2000b, p. 21-30). In terms of assessment, the ability to use techniques, including in fieldwork (such as “using sampling techniques applicable to ecosystems”), is essential (SQA, 2000b, p. 58). However, these can be simulated, or need not extend beyond the school grounds, and conducting a complete field investigation for assessment purposes is not required.

In **Access 3 and Intermediate 1** Biology (SQA, 2002a, 2002b) the units amount to a vocational and applied approach (SQA, 2002b, p. 4). There is little need for outdoor learning and the documentation neither encourages nor discourages it.

The units at **Intermediate 2** (SQA, 2002c, p. 2) (Living Cells; Environmental Biology and Genetics; Animal Physiology) and **Higher** (SQA, 2002d, p. 2) (Cell Biology; Genetics and Adaptation; Control and Regulation) tell their own story with respect to outdoor learning. Although “Environmental Biology and Genetics”, for example, includes the study of ecosystems (SQA, 2002c, p. 14-15) and candidates might “use a case study of a local or tropical ecosystem...” (SQA, 2002c, p. 49), there are no “learning activities” that involve field study in either Intermediate 2 or Higher. “Fieldwork can also provide an opportunity for practical work, using first-hand experience of an ecosystem to develop knowledge and understanding and problem solving” (SQA, 2002c, p. 32; 2002d, p. 39) but this advice is not mandatory. There are examination questions concerning simulations of field-based work. However, whatever teachers and centres might choose to do in the interests of their students, the idea of fieldwork is neither encouraged nor discouraged by these syllabuses. This is in contrast to Standard Grade (SQA, 2000b) and Advanced Higher (SQA, 2004h).

Advanced Higher Biology (SQA, 2004h) has three mandatory units (Cell and Molecular Biology; Environmental Biology; Biology Investigation) and a choice of one of three optional units (Biotechnology; Animal Behaviour; Physiology, Health and Exercise). Advanced Higher Biology documentation mentions the possibility of fieldwork (SQA, 2004h, p. 57) but the “Biology Investigation” need not be field-based. However, the mandatory “Environmental Biology” unit has an emphasis on ecosystems and “... it is recommended that local ecosystems should be studied to provide fieldwork experience...” (SQA, 2004h, p. 20). Suggested learning activities include investigations of leaf or seaweed strand litter samples, species diversity on different swards, invertebrate life in field and hedgerow, making BOD and indicator species measurements (SQA, 2004h, p. 22, 24, 28 & 29). The optional “Animal Behaviour” unit also includes possibly field-based activities (e.g. SQA, 2004h, p. 42), although there is a greater emphasis on watching filmed material. These emphases are not prescribed, but they are intended to be indicative.

Geology is unambiguously the study of the natural heritage. Geology (SQA, 2004a, p. 197) is offered at Access 3 (SQA, 1999a), Intermediate 1 (SQA, 2004i), Intermediate 2 (SQA, 2004j) and Higher levels (SQA, 2004k). Fieldwork is encouraged at Access 3 and Intermediate 1 (perhaps more so in the latter) but is not mandatory (SQA, 2004i, p. 18; 1999a, p. 15). Fieldwork is a compulsory part of the Higher course, where two out of the four units (“Minerals and Rocks” and “Earth Physics, Structural Geology and Plate Tectonics”) explicitly demand field study, a fieldwork report is part of the external assessment of the course, and some advice on the conduct of field studies is given (SQA, 2004k, p. 4, 31, 34). Field reporting is also essential for Intermediate 2, however the use of fieldwork simulation is allowed here (SQA, 2004j, p. 17).

Land and Environment courses include mostly Intermediate 2 level courses on industry-related areas of horticulture, husbandry and practice. However there are investigative and interpretive units concerning “the Natural Environment” at Intermediate 2 and Higher level. All of these involve practical assignments and project-based work. Many will pertain to the natural heritage and be studied in and around it. **Managing Environmental Resources** is available at Access 2 and 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher levels. Access 2 and 3 levels (SQA, 2002e 4; SQA, 1999b, p. 3) revolve around practical approaches to the planning, developing, monitoring and maintaining an “environmental area”. The suggested contexts imply a greater likelihood of indoor options (e.g. bottle gardens or greenhouses) for the planning and developing units, and more likelihood of outdoor options (e.g. centre grounds, community garden, tree nurseries or wildlife areas) for monitoring and maintenance (SQA 2002e, p. 23-25; 1999b, p. 3), but there are no prescriptions. The emphasis on planning, seeding/planting, propagating and managing and monitoring of “environmental areas” in these courses suggests not only the possible study of the natural heritage by way of preparation, but the subsequent non-involvement with it or, alternatively, intervention in it. The intended focuses at Intermediate 1 and 2 are on practical interaction with local environmental contexts, fieldwork and investigation (SQA, 2002f,g, p. 4). At Higher Level and Advanced Higher levels (SQA, 2002h,i, p. 4) there is an additional shift of emphasis to wider (e.g. national / international) contexts and more abstract concepts such as “sustainable development”. The suggested learning activities include a lot of “visits” and practical engagement with local environments (SQA, 2002f,g, p. 5-11; 2002h, p. 5-12; 2002i, p. 6-13). While these are not mandatory, it is suggested that practical investigative activity is a way of developing the knowledge of practical and theoretical matters that will be tested by written examination (SQA, 2002f, p. 13) which may include simulated field activity (SQA, 2002g, p. 12).

There are **General Science** courses available (as alternatives to the individual study of Chemistry, Physics and Biology) at Standard Grade and Access 2 Levels (SQA, 2000c, 2003). The Biology unit of the Access course strongly implies outdoor study of the natural heritage, with suggested activities such as testing the acidity of soils in different environments, carrying out plant surveys, investigating seed wind-dispersal, analysing water from polluted and non-polluted environments, and testing acidity in different parts of a stream (SQA, 2003, p. 12, 13). The Chemistry unit mentions the “water cycle in nature” (SQA, 2003, p. 27) but this does not imply outdoor study. The Standard Grade Science topic, “A Study of Environments” is the most pertinent (of four) and includes ideas of energy from the sun being used by plants, food webs and chains, interdependence, habitats and species populations, pollution, adapting the environment to human needs, and conservation (SQA, 2000c, p. 32-34). The techniques prescribed give some encouragement to go outdoors. For example, “Preferably the technique should be carried out on samples the candidates have collected.” (SQA, 2000c, p. 41).

The Access, Standard Grade and Intermediate **Chemistry** courses consider the biodegradability of litter, ores in the earth’s crust, the effect of acid rain on rocks and lake water, water levels and amounts of organic material in soils, the effects of the use of pesticides and fertilizers and natural predators, the effects of nitrates in water and the nitrogen cycle, oil pollution, photosynthesis and animal energy use (SQA, 2000d, p. 51, 68, 82, 84, 88-89, 93; 2002j, p. 17, 25 & 30, 39 & 41; 2004l, p. 14-16, 25 & 26, 28-30; 2004m, p. 24, 31 & 32, 35). However the suggested activities for all these contexts tend to involve databases, reading or designing public information material, audio-visual resources (video/CD-Rom), and laboratory experiment/demonstration. Approaches to learning and teaching (e.g. SQA 2000d; 8-11; 2004l, p. 39; 2004m, p. 37-39; 2002j, p. 31) recognise the importance of the *relevance* of Chemistry, for example to the natural heritage, but do not advocate outdoor study of it. At Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher levels (SQA 2004m, 2002j, 2002l) there is proportionately less emphasis on the kinds of natural heritage links identified above, and therefore even less opportunity for its outdoor study.

Higher Still **Personal, Social and Health Education** (PSE) is available from Access 2 to Higher levels. It is recognised that activities taking place outside the normal educational context are important (e.g. SQA, 1999c, p. 4). At Access 3 and above (SQA, 1999d, 1999c, 1999e, 1999f) the “Social Awareness and Development” unit of PSE suggests an optional residential experience or work in a local / distant community but this need not involve outdoor experience of the natural heritage.

All available **Art and Design** courses ask that there is content pertaining to the themes of the “human, manufactured and natural environment” of pupils’ lives (SQA, 1987, p. 7, 1999h, p. 3, 1999i, p. 4, 1999j, p. 5, 1999k, p. 5, 1999l, p. 5, 2001a, p. 5, 2001b, p. 5). Paper II of both Intermediate 2 and Higher include optional questions relating to the natural environment (SQA, 1999k, p. 8, 1999l, p. 8), and Expressive Activity at Intermediate, Higher and optional Advanced Higher levels might include a study of landscape (e.g. SQA, 1999l, p. 15, 2001a, p. 23, 2001b, p. 14). Design Activity at various levels expects candidates to take account of “environmental factors” (e.g. SQA, 1987, 12, p. 1999j, p. 22, 2001a, p. 16). None of this amounts to mandatory outdoor study of the natural heritage or even strong encouragement of it.

3 A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

Reform of the curriculum for 3-18 year-olds is currently underway following the recommendations of The Curriculum Review Group. It is driven by the principles of *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004). This high level material does not specifically mention education out-of-doors. How these general aims are articulated within the school environment will be determined by the subsequent process of interpretation, which is now under way and will last several years. Curriculum development progress can be monitored at: <http://www.acurriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/>.

The “Science Rationale” (Scottish Executive, 2006: 29) is the only instance of additional published detail at the time of writing. This is mostly rubric, which has emphases on “first-hand experiences” and “real life contexts” that might be taken as encouraging by anyone hopeful of more field study, but is no more than that. There are some encouraging “illustrations of proposed outcomes”, such as “I can make observation over time in my local environment...”, which are strongly suggestive of field study, and *Outdoor Connections* might usefully lobby for this to be made more forcefully (for example, by advocating that these illustrations become concrete, that “simulations” of local environment are not legitimised as alternatives, and that the “local environment” might extend beyond the school grounds). The pattern of avoiding anything that might be interpreted as a prescription of outdoor study identified above should be directly challenged in the case of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, which currently continues the trend. That *A Curriculum for Excellence* is intended to be *less* prescriptive than the existing curriculum should not be allowed to be used as a reason to allow avoidance of the outdoors. The intended sense of “less prescription” concerns detailed learning outcomes, not pedagogical contexts, and is underpinned by an intended increase in the range of pedagogical approaches, so that *A Curriculum for Excellence* can mandate outdoor activity end excursion without loss of philosophical coherence.

More generally, the intentions of *A Curriculum for Excellence* are to move to a more flexible and less prescriptive curriculum model with more choice for teachers and pupils (Scottish Executive, 2004, p. 10), including less prescribed material, increasing deregulation of when students may sit National Qualifications, the possible demise of Standard Grade in favour of the Higher Still framework (which would have specific implications for Biology, above) or some alternative, and much stronger emphases on pedagogical process and social and personal outcomes. Importantly for this report, all this includes recognition that schools are not able to do it all (Scottish Executive, 2006: 1) and that liaison with other institutions and bodies will be necessary.

Also of relevance to this report is the part-separation of the issue of qualifications from current development activity, which is focusing on the 3-15 year old age range initially, in order to “enable future changes to the 15 to 18 curriculum, including qualifications, to build upon the revised 3 to 15 curriculum” (Scottish Executive, 2006: 6).

Finally, an outcome of the process so far is the realisation that curricular aspects, such as health, that might be relevant to *Outdoor Connections*, can be built into the curricular framework (Scottish Executive, 2006: 8). We caution, however, that such messages have been reported by the Scottish Executive (2006) without evidence (other than dimensionless claims about the number of “centres” (undefined) that have enrolled on the register of interest, and the enthusiasm of the (presumably self-selected) participants in the process to date).

So all of this *could* mean greater scope for teachers to develop opportunities for outdoor activity, but we would advise that *Outdoor Connections* engage forcefully with the process to help ensure that it does. Otherwise such activity is less likely to be prescribed, allowing

teachers and institutions to determine their commitment to outdoor study on the basis of other factors.

4 ANALYSIS OF NON-SQA AWARDS

The main awards pursued by school-aged students are offered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and these are discussed above. Other institutions offer awards, often through “providers” such as schools, youth groups, local authorities or other institutions through which young people can participate. Recognition of achievement through planned outdoor experiences is offered by such awards. Moreover, the kinds of experience involved, and the structure of the recognising process, mean that such awards recognise a wider range of achievements. This section looks at the following awarding bodies in the context of the four capacities that make up the purposes of the curriculum as described in Scotland’s current curricular reform programme (Scottish Executive, 2004: 12), *A Curriculum for Excellence*, which was discussed in general terms above:

- Natural Connections (<http://www.naturalconnections.info>)
- John Muir Award (<http://www.jmt.org/award/>)
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award (<http://www.theaward.org/>)

- ASDAN (<http://www.asdan.org.uk/>)
- Dynamic Youth and Youth Achievement Awards (<http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>)

The list is split because the methodology used allowed us to make a more comprehensive analysis of the first three. We caution that the latter two might prove equally valuable in recognising young people’s achievement through planned outdoor experience, but we were unable to assess this potential in this study.

This part of the report has three sections, in ascending order of importance:

- A simplistic analysis of the first three awards against the four capacities identified in *A Curriculum for Excellence*
- Brief portraits of each award, in terms of the process of recognition, participants, the commitment required, and their relation to purposes of the curriculum
- A discussion of the issues raised by the attempted analysis

4.1 Simplistic analysis of three awards and four capacities

The raw results of our analysis are shown in Table 2. The first column shows the capacities described by *A Curriculum for Excellence*, the second shows the codes we used in the analysis. These are not intrinsically meaningful to the analysis and are presented only to show where we have divided a column 1 entry into sub-categories. The remaining columns show what we consider to be *the minimally inevitable outcomes experienced by a participant holding the award, as a result of outdoor experience.*

We use the phrase “minimally inevitable” to indicate a conservative interpretation. There are several reasons why other outcomes that are also achievable by participation in the awards might not be credited on this table:

- First, participants are often able to choose their particular route through a range of experiences that lead to the award, and only some of those routes will result in particular outcomes that relate to the four capacities. Table 2 only acknowledges outcomes that we think inevitable, regardless of route taken. In the case of the John Muir Award, for example, some of the four capacities are inevitably involved. Others are potentially involved. For example, the award is “*an opportunity to explore values and spirituality*”¹. The difference between the opportunities and outcomes in our analysis lies in the chosen approach to each of the challenges. To take another

¹ http://www.jmt.org/award/award/ethos_criteria.html, accessed May 2006 (our emphasis)

example, participants “might explore a place by walking, camping or canoeing. [sic] or just sitting and looking”². All such exploration must inevitably involve some of the dimensions of a “successful learner”, and might inevitably contribute to a “responsible citizen’s” “knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland’s place in it”. However, the differences in approaches to exploration mentioned above might have different impacts on an evaluation of the “confident individual’s” pursuit of a “healthy and active lifestyle”. Such differences are likely to be down to the individual, family or institution organising the award.

- Also, we have only been prepared to interpolate a short way from the explicit “text” of the websites, otherwise relying on its manifest meaning. For example, in the cases of “openness to new thinking and ideas” or “manage themselves” we could have argued that *all* essentially educational programmes for young people must address these capacities. Or we could have argued that such outcomes are implicit in certain circumstances, such as a group expedition. Or we could have argued that they are inevitably implied by other outcomes, such as “link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations” and “self reliance”. But we did not do this and none of the websites offered either *explicit* or *sufficiently strongly implicit* statements to such effects.

Similarly, we use the phrase “as a result of outdoor experience” because several of the awards will result in many other outcomes, regardless of the kind of experience involved. In particular, The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award expedition section (one of five) is the only aspect of the Award that is recorded on Table 2. Other sections (such as “service”) might well meet others of the capacities shown in the table.

The result of all this, and of different publication strategies by different institutions, is that Table 2 is very “broad brush” and comparisons between the three awards shown are of questionable value. It is the overall picture of such awards meeting the four capacities that is the Table’s useful message, and in particular the awards’ recognition of capacities that SQA awards are much less likely to recognise.

² <http://www.jmt.org/award/award/challenges.html>. accessed May 2006

<i>A Curriculum For Excellence</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>JMA</i>	<i>DoE</i>	<i>NC</i>
SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS				
> enthusiasm and motivation for learning	S_LRN_ENT	•	•	•
> determination to reach high standards of achievement	S_ACH_DET	•		•
> openness to new thinking and ideas	S_OPEN			
> use literacy, communication and numeracy skills	S_USE_LIT		•	•
	S_USE_COMM	•	•	•
	S_USE_NUM		•	•
> use technology for learning	S_LRN_TECH			
> think creatively and independently	S_THNK_CREAT			
	S_THNK_IND			
> learn independently and as part of a group	S_LRN_IND		•	•
	S_LRN_GRP			
> make reasoned evaluations	S_EVAL	•		•
> link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations	S_BRIDGE	•	•	•
CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS				
> self respect	C_SLFRSPT	•		•
> a sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing	C_SENSPHYS		•	
	C_SENSEMENT	•	•	•
> secure values and beliefs	C_SECUREVB			
> ambition	C_AMB	•	•	
> relate to others and manage themselves	C_RELATE	•	•	•
	C_SLFMGMT			
> pursue a healthy and active lifestyle	C_PURSHLTH		•	•
> be self aware	C_SLFAWARE		•	•
> develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world	C_BELIEFS	•		•
> live as independently as they can	C_LVIND		•	
> assess risk and take informed decisions	C_INFDEC			
> achieve success in different areas of activity	C_ACHSUCC	•	•	•
RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS				
> respect for others	R_RSPTOTHER		•	•
> commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life	R_COMMIT	•		•
> develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it	R_KUWRLDSCOT	•		•
> understand different beliefs and cultures	R_KUCULT			
> make informed choices and decisions	R_INFDEC	•	•	•
> evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues	R_EVAL_ENV			•
	R_EVAL_SCITEC			
> develop informed, ethical views of complex issues	R_VIEWCOMP			
EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS				
> an enterprising attitude	E_ENTATT		•	
> resilience	E_RESIL			•
> self-reliance	E_SLFREL		•	
> communicate in different ways and in different settings	E_COMM	•	•	•
> work in partnership and in teams	E_WRKGRP	•	•	•
> take the initiative and lead	E_INIT		•	•
	E_LEAD			
> apply critical thinking in new contexts	E_BRIDGE			
> create and develop	E_CREATE		•	•
> solve problems	E_SOLVE	•		•

Table 2 Our interpretation of the minimally inevitable outcomes experienced, as a result of outdoor experience, by a participant holding an award from [JMA] John Muir Award, [DoE] The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and [NC] Natural Connections, where the outcomes are from the four capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004: 12). For various reasons discussed in the text this table should be treated with great caution. Comparisons between awards are dubious in this analysis and the most secure interpretation of the table is the overall picture: that such awards meet many of the four capacities (including ones that SQA awards do not).

4.2 John Muir Award

“The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It encourages discovery and conservation in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration. The John Muir Award is an educational initiative of the John Muir Trust”³.

4.2.1 Recognition

The John Muir Award is designed to celebrate achievement for a wide range of activity and this is explicitly a matter of inclusion⁴. Participants apply to do an award, receive support to ensure that their intended activity meets the award criteria, and on completion can apply for a certificate. The scheme is structured but also highly adaptable. This openness of approach “acknowledges what organisations and individuals already do in terms of outdoor and environmental activity” and “celebrates what’s achieved”⁵.

4.2.2 Participants

The John Muir Award scheme is open to all, regardless of age, including individuals and families (through a self-guided scheme or summer residential programme) and organised groups (through partnerships with them). Behind this inclusive approach, though, the award’s stated aims⁶ suggest a wider agenda to transform societal attitudes towards the conservation of wild places (which is in keeping with the John Muir Trust’s mission⁷) through the educational experiences of young people in particular.

4.2.3 Commitment

There are three award levels requiring different levels of commitment from participants. The minimum commitments are⁸:

- “Introductory Level” – 5 hours over three months, or 4 residential days;
- “Intermediate level” – 30 hours over 6 months, or 8 residential days;
- “Advanced level” – 60 hours over 12 months, or 12 residential days.

4.2.4 Purposes of the Curriculum

The most pertinent evaluative level for the John Muir Award is the “four challenges”⁹ involved in the award, which are to “discover” a wild place, “explore” the wild place, “conserve” the wild place, and “share” the experience of the wild place. (It seems likely that the first two are inevitably in the outdoors and the second two could be).

It is worth noting that “Participation in an expedition or residential experience should be encouraged on at least one level of the Award”¹⁰, which suggests the possibility of a wider range of curricular purposes than those outlined in Table 2 being met if all three levels are attempted. In addition, the increasing commitment of each of the three levels may widen the range of activity and therefore the range of capacities developed by the award. Also, the handbook¹¹ outlines an underpinning “Heart, head, hand” model (p. 10) (see also Boardman, 1978, p. 224). This approach emphasises affective, physical and intellectual development

³ <http://www.jmt.org/award/>, accessed May 2006

⁴ <http://www.jmt.org/award/award/index.html>, accessed May 2006

⁵ <http://www.jmt.org/award/nutshell.html>, accessed May 2006

⁶ <http://www.jmt.org/award/award/index.html>, accessed May 2006

⁷ <http://www.jmt.org/>, accessed 24 May 2006

⁸ <http://www.jmt.org/award/award/levels.html>, accessed May 2006

⁹ <http://www.jmt.org/award/award/challenges.html>, accessed May 2006

¹⁰ http://www.jmt.org/award/award/ethos_criteria.html, accessed May 2006

¹¹ http://www.jmt.org/award/downloads/information_handbook.pdf, downloaded May 2006

(in that order) and, if integrated into all John Muir Award activity, seems likely to result in additional capacities.

4.3 The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

This section is based on the General Information pages and sub-pages of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award website – not the Scottish award office website – and on the Final Draft (11 December 2003) of the Expeditions section of the handbook¹². This latter point is important because the Award has four sections (five at Gold Level), of which the expedition is the only section that is necessarily an outdoor activity.

4.3.1 Recognition

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award vision is "For The Duke of Edinburgh's Award to be universally recognised and widely adopted as the best programme for the personal development of young people."¹³ The Award is assessed by (currently 400¹⁴) "Operating Authorities", who are licensed by the Awards Office, and might include schools, councils and other institutions.

4.3.2 Participants

There are major statements of inclusion in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Aim and Goal¹⁵ but these are within the age group of 14-25 year olds. There are three levels of award, all of which must be completed before a participant's 25th birthday:

- Bronze (14 years and over)
- Silver (15 years and over)
- Gold (16 years and over)

At any one time, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award has approximately 225,000 participants¹⁶.

4.3.3 Commitment

It is anticipated that a Bronze Award might take place over 6-12 months, Silver 12-18 months and Gold 18-24 months. The various sections of the award demand certain commitments. The expeditions, which are of particular relevance here, must be:

- 2 days and 1 night (Bronze)
- 3 days and 2 nights (Silver)
- 4 days and 3 nights (Gold)

However, these are only for the "Qualifying Venture" and participants are also expected to be involved in practice expeditions in the outdoors.

4.3.4 Purposes of the Curriculum

Many of the purposes of the curriculum are likely to be met by participation in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which includes sections on¹⁷:

- Service (helping people in the community)
- Skills (covering almost any hobby, skill or interest)
- Physical Recreation (sport, dance and fitness)
- Expedition (training for, planning and completing a journey on foot or horseback, by boat or cycle)
- Residential Project (Gold Award only) (a purposeful enterprise with people not previously known to the participant)

For Table 2, however, our analysis focuses on the expedition. We note that this award cannot be achieved without the other (non-expedition) sections, so a wider range of

¹² <http://www.theaward.org/involved/downloads/EXPEDITIONS2004handbook.doc>, downloaded May 2006

¹³ <http://www.theaward.org/Adults/>, accessed May 2006

¹⁴ <http://www.theaward.org/Adults/index.php?id=1503&nid=1507>, accessed May 2006

¹⁵ <http://www.theaward.org/Adults/>, accessed May 2006

¹⁶ <http://www.theaward.org/Adults/index.php?id=1511&nid=1513>, accessed May 2006

¹⁷ <http://www.theaward.org/Adults/index.php?id=1503&nid=1507>, accessed May 2006

curricular purposes will be met by participants than is shown here. An expedition team must have between four and seven (or, in special cases, eight) participants. Table 2 shows what we think are the minimally inevitable outcomes from the expedition section of the award (which includes planning, training, preparation, practice expeditions and the qualifying venture).

4.4 Natural Connections

“Natural Connections is a new outdoor learning programme developed by the Countryside section of Fife Council Community Services. It balances six challenging and enjoyable outdoor experiences.”¹⁸

The six elements are: caring for nature (finding out about the natural world); working together (teamwork and group activities); adventure skills (outdoor adventure activities including navigation and travelling through the landscape); helping others (to enjoy the outdoors); and making connections (reflecting on the participant’s experience of the above).

4.4.1 Recognition

A certificate is available for the completion of each element and the “Natural Connections Award” is presented to those who gain all six certificates. There are three levels of award, which build upon each other, but it is not clear if or how different levels are recognised.

4.4.2 Participants

Participants are typically part of a group organised by a school or other institution who offer the programme¹⁹. There is no explicitly stated geographical or age limit and the following distinctions apply only to the commitment required:

“Natural Connections will be available to people from a wide range of age groups. Initially it will be available to people aged 11 and under and 12 and over. Commitment and enthusiasm are more important than proficiency.”²⁰

However it appropriate to assume that “young people” are the current target and, since the programme is developed by Fife Council Community Services, it is reasonable to assume that most awards are currently held by young Fifers.

4.4.3 Commitment

An award (at any of the three levels) requires:

- 30 hours commitment (5 hours per section) for those 11 years old and younger
- 60 hours commitment (10 hours per section) for those 12 year old and older

Additional commitment is also required for the reflective “making connections” section.

4.4.4 Purposes of the Curriculum

The entire programme has an outdoor focus, although the “making connections” section is reflective. Our interpretation of the minimally inevitable outcomes of participation, against the four capacities, is shown in Table 2.

¹⁸ <http://www.naturalconnections.info/index.html>, accessed May 2006

¹⁹ <http://www.naturalconnections.info/faq%27s.html>, accessed May 2006

²⁰ <http://www.naturalconnections.info/6%20elements.html>, accessed May 2006

ASDAN

ASDAN is a curriculum development and awarding body that focuses on personal and social development.

“ASDAN programmes and qualifications blend activity-based curriculum enrichment with a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of key skills and other personal and social skills, with emphasis on negotiation, co-operation and rewarding achievement.”²¹

4.4.5 Recognition

ASDAN awards are offered by 4,500 centres internationally (mostly schools and colleges)²² and there are 200 centres currently offering ASDAN qualifications and programmes in Scotland.²³

4.4.6 Participants

The awards focus largely on the 11-25 age group and most are strongly integrated with the Key Skills of the English and Welsh National Curriculum.

4.4.7 Purposes of the Curriculum

Because ASDAN curricula are numerous, encourage strong student centred-ness and negotiated learning, and are offered commercially available, this website study is not able to evaluate these against the purposes of the curriculum in Scotland. It is worth noting, however, that a short course is offered that might be particularly pertinent. This is:

“Adventure and Residential Award - 30 hour, 60 hours. Developed by ASDAN in conjunction with the [Youth Hostel Association](#) and [Skill Force](#). The course will provide opportunities to accredit a wide range of activities including day visits, outward-bound trips and foreign exchange visits”²⁴

The details of this award were not available to this study. ASDAN is more generally relevant to this report because it represents a model in which activity across and beyond school can be linked to a national qualifications framework in a manner that is recognised by, for example, employers and universities. The strength of the model relies, in part, on the existence of a core skills curricular framework that is nationally recognised. It may be possible for non-school award providers to use *A Curriculum for Excellence* as such a framework in developing provision for Scotland.

²¹ http://www.asdan.org.uk/national_status.php?osCsid=20aa9cc096fae4dc58dca25c65fc03ad, accessed May 2006

²² http://www.asdan.org.uk/national_status.php?osCsid=20aa9cc096fae4dc58dca25c65fc03ad, accessed May 2006

²³ <http://www.asdan.org.uk/scotland.php?osCsid=20aa9cc096fae4dc58dca25c65fc03ad>, accessed May 2006

²⁴ http://www.asdan.org.uk/short_courses.php?osCsid=20aa9cc096fae4dc58dca25c65fc03ad, accessed May 2006

4.5 Youth Achievement and Dynamic Youth Awards

Youth Achievement and Dynamic Youth Awards are designed to accredit and certificate existing youth activity, and are promoted by Youth Scotland, Scotland's youth club/group network.

4.5.1 Recognition

In the case of Youth Achievement awards²⁵, accreditation is by ASDAN (see above). Youth Groups must enter an Operating Agency in order to offer the Awards. There are currently 150 Youth Groups registered with 32 Operating Agencies, 22 of which are local authorities. Dynamic Youth Awards²⁶ are also run by Youth Groups and externally moderated by Youth Scotland²⁷.

4.5.2 Participants

Dynamic Youth Awards are for 10-14 year olds and Youth Achievement Awards are for 14+ year olds. There is an emphasis on inclusion that is most evident in the approach of accrediting existing activity and the emphasis on responsibility and personal journey, rather than specific skills for example. A major feature of both Awards is the provision of a structure that is used in peer assessment, with external moderation.

4.5.3 Commitment

No information pertaining to time commitment is available. The Dynamic Youth Award explicitly states that the Award in part recognises the time commitment involved.

4.5.4 Purposes of the Curriculum

From the limited information available, both Awards are likely to recognise important curricular capacities. However since neither award necessarily involves outdoor experience (although they might), and since only superficial information is offered on the websites, no further analysis is offered here.

²⁵ <http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/toolkits/displayer.asp?a=article&id=2&articleID=171§ionid=6>, accessed May 2006

²⁶ <http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/toolkits/displayer.asp?a=article&id=2&articleID=150§ionid=6>, accessed May 2006

²⁷ <http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>, accessed May 2006

5 DISCUSSION POINTS

Possible examples of differences between the traditional recognition arrangements (exemplified by the survey of SQA Awards above, and the other awards discussed above might include those in Table 3.

Traditional Recognition (e.g. Standard Grade Awards)	Wider Recognition (e.g. John Muir Awards, DoE Awards, Natural Connections Awards)
Outdoor activity not prescribed	Outdoor activity may be prescribed
Largely recognises successful learners and assumes other capacities follow	Directly recognises a wider range of capacities (see Table 2)
Largely involuntary participation	Voluntary participation
Group activity possible	Group activity inevitable
Central assessment of few, centrally designed challenges (programme of content and framework of recognition)	Peer/Devolved assessment of diverse, self-designed challenges (framework of recognition only)
Value-neutral content or value-content not assessed	Value commitment central

Table 3 Comparison of traditional and wider approaches to the recognition of achievement for discussion

We must note that the nature of traditional recognition is closely allied to the traditional purposes of schooling in society and the institutional form that such purposes take. These are not random and the use of wider approaches in national education, upon which this project is predicated, raises a number of issues. We open these up for discussion below but do not attempt to resolve them.

5.1 Prescription versus non-prescription of outdoor activity

In previous sections we noted that the traditional structures of recognition (SQA awards) do not prescribe outdoor experience and neither does *A Curriculum for Excellence*. To our minds, it seems unlikely that this is accidental and more likely that it reflects an acknowledgement of the difficulties that some or many schools would face if such experiences were prescribed. However it also seems likely to us that the non-SQA awards discussed above recognise a wider range of capacities, in terms of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, than SQA awards, which continue to focus on individual, “academic” work (or at least some notion of “articulating abstract learning”) for recognition. At least some of the difference may be associated with outdoor experience and we therefore recommend that *Outdoor Connections* strongly advocates the promotion of outdoor activity through the *A Curriculum for Excellence* reform programme.

5.2 Voluntary participation versus inclusion

An important aspect of these programmes is the extent to which participants are “willing volunteers”, perhaps more so than is the case for school qualifications. The John Muir and The Duke of Edinburgh Awards explicitly highlight the importance of this and we have reflected it in our suggestion that both awards *inevitably* recognise “enthusiasm and motivation for learning”, “determination to achieve high standards” and “ambition”, *by definition, through participation in and completion of the award*. It is less clear that possession of Standard Grades reflects these things. This works both ways, of course, and implies a belief that the young participants have indeed volunteered, rather than been cajoled.

However, voluntary participation raises a more important issue – that of inclusion. Schools are mandated to be inclusive – in some respects it is one of their ultimate goals – as well as to discriminate (such discrimination can be interpreted in terms of individual children fulfilling their individual potential or in terms of serving society’s perceived need for division of labour). Elaborate levels of attainment and wide ranges of award choice have been constructed by the SQA in order to allow recognition of different kinds of achievement and maintain the central notion of inclusion in Scotland’s schools. Non-SQA institutions, such as the awarding bodies discussed above, are not required to resolve such tensions in their efforts to recognise achievement. Arguably, the team-based nature of many of their activities (see below), the devolving of assessment to a variety of operating agencies and other bodies (including schools) and/or the use of personal reflection and peer assessment with external moderation – all of which differentiate such awards from SQA awards – reflect the fact that these institutions have developed their offerings without the complex constraints that bind schools and national examining bodies. Such organisations are strongly in favour of inclusion (at least within the age groups they serve) but do not reach as wide a range of self-excluders as national schooling does. Arguably, if their awards remain voluntary, then they never will, almost by definition. According to the further progress and proposals of *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2006: 11):

“Many of these activities are voluntary for learners and have traditionally been organised as ‘extra-curricular’ opportunities. However, they play a major part in creating opportunities for individual growth, progress and achievement and we need to consider how they can be made available to all learners.”

If, however, to ensure inclusion, all young people’s outdoor experiences are to be recognised, perhaps through the kinds of programmes discussed here but within the sort of inclusive institutional and legal framework that schooling represents, then it will become less clear to what extent the award reflects voluntary participation. It might then become less clear to what extent the award reflects the kinds of capacities of “enthusiasm and motivation”, “ambition” and so on, discussed above. Another way of thinking about this issue is to ask: “how would a Natural Connections award be different, or be differently understood, if it was a mandatory Standard Grade?”

Finally, the issue of inclusion and the prescription of outdoor activity in the previous two sections present a combined issue, of particular pertinence following Disability Discrimination legislation. Is it physically possible for everyone to access the same outdoor experiences? The John Muir Award (not the John Muir Trust) defines “wild places” as including urban gardens and school grounds. The reasons for this are not stated but might include recognition of the need for inclusion of those who are prevented from accessing “true wilderness” because of their age or physical ability/disability.

5.3 Group activity versus recognition

In deciding that participation alone was sufficient to demonstrate “enthusiasm and motivation for learning”, “determination to achieve high standards” and “ambition”, in Table 2, as discussed above, we also chose *not* to attribute “enterprising attitude” and “take the initiative and lead” from the “Effective Contributors” capacity on grounds of participation alone. Although they are closely related to the former capacities, we take them to reflect an outward relation with others (to whom the contribution is being made, or for whom the initiative is being made, or who are being led), whereas we understood the capacities previously mentioned from “confident individuals” and “successful learners” to be more about an internal, personal pursuit. This distinction might discriminate between different programmes (as it does in our very limited understanding of the three programmes in Table 2), but it also raises a wider issue.

If recognising “initiative and leadership” involves a group participating in the award, whose initiative and leadership are involved, are there so-called “free-riders”, and does it matter? This kind of question is often raised when attempting to recognise the achievement of groups. Certification is about transferring recognition accredited by those who directly assess achievement, to the rest of the world, so that the rest of the world knows something about the achievement of the “recognised” or accredited achiever. For all concerned, this is straightforward when an individual’s achievement is recognised. However a recognised *group* does not then re-form and re-present itself when, for example, applying for a job – instead, an individual must present the recognition afforded to the group as being somehow representative of him/herself.

What is the status of the recognition in this situation? It is perhaps relatively straightforward to suggest that group recognition confirms some capacity like “the ability to work in groups” on the individual, but it less straightforwardly shows a capacity to “take the initiative and lead” or to “be an effective contributor”. (Group recognition alone almost *denies* such a capacity, despite the need for a group to exist in order for leadership to be shown). These uncertainties lie behind an assumed preference for individual recognition, and ultimately that is what all the award programmes discussed here claim to offer. In the case of the John Muir Award, for example, the Award Provider is responsible for determining that each of the four challenges has been met by each individual, ensuring that participants participate willingly and that the ethos and criteria are met by each²⁸.

That such award providers take this approach suggests that the awards are less distant from traditional practices of recognition. This is positive in terms of the ease with which partnerships can be formed with formal education (indeed, many schools and local authorities are already partners and awarding bodies for such awards). However, accepting this need for individual recognition may also reduce the range of capacities that can be recognised and therefore reduce the supposed complementarity with traditional practice that such partnerships are expected to bring.

5.4 Commitment versus recognition

For the purposes of this discussion “commitment” is being used in a particular way – it represents the notion that someone’s explicit values and beliefs are to be expressed in their lives and decision-making, not just in abstract discussion or argument. We assigned “commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life” and “develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world” to the John Muir Award and Natural Connections, but for different reasons that are themselves instructive.

The John Muir Award has an explicit social commitment at its heart that participants must engage in (concerning the conservation of wild places). This is more than the “development of self” which lies at the centre of the *expedition section* of The Duke of Edinburgh Award (note, though, that similar social commitments are clearly part of The Duke of Edinburgh Award in other sections of the award and are by no means excluded from the expedition section).

Natural Connections claims to have an explicit social commitment at its heart (“caring for the environment”) but it uses the same slightly dubious assumptions as traditional school awards. These assumptions are: that knowledge and understanding leads inevitably to people committing to live their lives according to some set of values; and that therefore such commitment can be incentivised by recognising (rewarding) knowledge and understanding. In the case of Natural Connections, for example, its section “caring for the environment” is sub-titled “finding out about the environment”.

²⁸ <http://www.jmt.org/award/award/yourorg/roles.html>, accessed May 2006

However, a truer recognition of commitment in the traditional practice of awards has proved difficult: because different people subscribe to different values so that “there is no right answer” (provision of ‘the right answer’ in an examination would result in conferring recognition through the examined award); and because educational recognition is in part about the reproduction of a society’s or culture’s values, not the celebration of alternatives. The kinds of SQA awards discussed above – those that are likely offer opportunity for outdoor activity – tend to recognise candidates’ awareness of a range of viewpoints. However this also entails the assumption that they will then “make up their own minds” and commit to living accordingly. All of this, of course, is complicated by the issue of compulsory schooling and inclusion: it is not hard to envisage young people, in particular communities for example, who are inclined not to share the John Muir Trust’s explicit commitment to the conservation of wild places. At the moment, such young people are not compelled to pursue a John Muir Award and the John Muir Award is not required to ensure that they can be included.

5.5 Fun and enjoyment

All the awards we studied mentioned fun and enjoyment as central outcomes of participation. The capacity to “have fun and experience enjoyment” is one of the purposes of the curriculum, but “a sense of ... mental and emotional well-being” is, so we coded against this. We can’t help feeling though that the latter was supposed to convey something more – serious.

5.6 The need for recognition

Outdoor Connections can debate the above discussion points – none of which are new to educational discourse – in several ways, three of which are given here.

The first is to attempt to resolve the issues that might arise in attempting to use non-traditional award schemes as a means of recognising young people’s achievements against the four capacities of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. These issues include those that we have tried to raise above.

The second is to ask whether such a use of non-traditional awards is likely to undermine itself. Because of recent developments such as *Assessment is for Learning*, the *A Curriculum for Excellence* programme is alive to this danger:

“One of the most important aspects of *A Curriculum for Excellence* is the need to be able, for each child and young person, to give recognition to a broader range of their achievements that we do at present. We need to develop straightforward and simple ways of doing this, especially so that processes of assessment do not distort the intrinsic value and satisfaction of achievement.” (Scottish Executive, 2006: 17).

We would suggest that the kinds of non-SQA award programmes discussed above have avoided this distortion, but we can then ask whether they can continue to do so if used more centrally in young people’s education.

The third is to ask whether the kind of recognition that this project is predicated upon is really necessary. ASDAN’s website quotes an English teacher who describes ASDAN as “A marvellously liberating concept!”²⁹. It is worth asking what this non-traditional award approach is liberating him/her from. Perhaps if young people’s education in Scotland really

²⁹ http://www.asdan.org.uk/national_status.php?osCsid=20aa9cc096fae4dc58dca25c65fc03ad, accessed May 2006

comes to be what *A Curriculum for Excellence* hopes it will – non-prescriptive and essentially enabling – and if all young people are educated through such a curriculum, we might not feel that they have to prove it.

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