



## **SQA PUBLISHES BLUEPRINT FOR STANDARD GRADE REPLACEMENTS**

Tuesday, 1 February 2011

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) this week publishes the draft Course Rationale and Summary documents for the new National 4 and National 5 qualifications. These new qualifications are intended to replace Standard Grades in just over two years' time.

The draft documents, which provide a broad blueprint for the new qualifications, are now available on the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk/rationales](http://www.sqa.org.uk/rationales)) and feedback is being sought from interested parties by Thursday, 31 March, 2011.

Course Rationales and Summaries are available for 43 National 4 and 48 National 5 subjects. The new qualifications form part of the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) initiative.

The draft Course Rationales and Summaries outline the proposed content for the new National 4 and National 5 qualifications and their aims and purposes. The course Rationales will identify the skills and knowledge learners will develop. The course Summaries detail how courses will be structured. They provide a brief description of each Unit in the Course and what is required to pass the course.

SQA has set up a CfE liaison team which is a dedicated resource for every school, college and local authority in Scotland. The liaison team supports and advises schools and colleges on the implementation of the new qualifications.

Later in the development process, and following this two month consultation period, more detailed specifications will be published up to spring 2012. The new qualifications will replace Standard Grades (first introduced in 1986) for the 2013 / 2014 academic session.

The National 4 qualifications, equivalent to the current Standard Grade at General level will be internally assessed in schools and externally verified by the SQA. The National 5 qualification, the equivalent of Standard Grade at Credit level, will comprise a mix of internally assessed coursework and an externally assessed examination set by the SQA.

Dr Gill Stewart, the SQA's director of qualifications development, said: "The publication of these draft documents marks a significant stage in the development programme. We are now in a position to let everyone see what the new qualifications will look like, what skills and knowledge they will give Scotland's learners and how the qualifications will be structured.

“The new qualifications will be more relevant and better suited to actually testing the skills required to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Concerns have been expressed in some quarters that where qualifications are not externally marked then they will in some way be diminished. This isn’t the case with HNDs or HNCs or, even university degrees, and we want to make it clear that when qualifications are internally assessed in school they will still be subject to our rigorous verification and quality assurance processes,” said Dr Stewart.

She added: “This extensive project has only been possible with the support and contributions of over 1,000 people each of whom has contributed to the development process. These include sector professionals, subject experts and nominated representatives from partner organisations, stakeholders, teaching associations and parent groups from across Scotland. I’d like to thank them for all their work and support.”

“The publishing of draft documents throughout the development is a new way of working for SQA and mirrors the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. This transparent approach allows everyone to see behind the scenes of the development and to make comments on key documents, giving individuals the opportunity to help shape the future of Scotland’s national qualifications.

“These draft course Rationales and Summaries are being published now to let everyone, but most importantly, the teaching profession, stakeholders from the education sector, including parents, see the information in each Course for National 4 and National 5 and to give them the opportunity to feed back comments. We welcome all feedback on these draft documents by the end of March 2011,” said Dr Stewart.

Responses will be fed into the development process and will help inform the next stage of the development, the draft Course Specifications, from April 2011 to April 2012.

## **-ENDS-**

### **Notes for Editors:**

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national accreditation and awarding body in Scotland.

SQA is one of four partner organisations leading the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) programme. SQA's principal role is to design and develop the new qualifications and assessment.

Our partners – the Scottish Government, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) – and other organisations including the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES), teaching unions and parents' groups are involved in overseeing and monitoring the qualifications development.

New national qualifications called **National 4** and **National 5** will be introduced.

They will replace a number of current national qualifications – Standard Grade General, Standard Grade Credit, Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2. Standard Grade Foundation will be replaced by the updated **Access 3**.

Revisions will also be made to the current **Access 1**, **Access 2**, **Higher** and **Advanced Higher** qualifications.

The new **National 4** and **National 5** qualifications will be introduced in 2013/14 as will the new **Access** qualifications. The new **Higher** will follow in 2014/15 while schools will deliver the new **Advanced Higher** from 2015/16 onwards.

To take the development process forward, we have set up a number of working groups:

**Curriculum Area Review Groups** provide advice and guidance in each curriculum area. Each group is made up of nominated representatives from partner organisations, stakeholders, teaching associations and parent groups.

**Qualifications Design Teams** work on the design of qualifications within individual subjects such as Physics, History, English, Music etc. They are made up of nominated subject experts.

**Subject Working Groups** carry out specific pieces of work as designated by the Qualifications Design Teams. Teachers can nominate themselves to join these groups.

- Keep up to date with the latest on the development of the new National Qualifications - [www.sqa.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence](http://www.sqa.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence).
- SQA seeks feedback on the new qualifications – contact us at [www.sqa.org.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.sqa.org.uk/haveyoursay)
- Anyone can sign up to SQA 'MyAlerts' service to receive e-mail alerts direct to their in-box - [www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts](http://www.sqa.org.uk/myalerts)

**Course Rationales and Summaries are published in the following curriculum areas:**

Expressive Arts - Health & Wellbeing – Languages – Mathematics - Religious and Moral Education – Sciences - Social Studies – Technologies.

**Details of SQA's Curriculum for Excellence Liaison Team is available –** [www.sqa.org.uk/cfeteam](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfeteam)

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