

# A Guide to Professional Development Awards: from inception to implementation

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 About this guide

This guide covers the process for developing and validating Professional Development Awards (PDAs), using the revised design principles approved by SQA's Qualification Committee in May 2005. These procedures should be used when SQA manages the development and validation process, including where the centre involved does not have devolved responsibility for the validation of SQA qualifications. Centres with devolved responsibility for validating PDAs may choose to use these guidelines or their own.

Sections 1–7 of this guide cover the general processes for developing and validating PDAs at all levels. Section 8 gives information on developing PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above. There are particular considerations that need to be taken into account at these levels.

## 1.2 Terminology used in this guide

**SCQF:** This stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which is a new way of speaking about qualifications and how they inter-relate. We use SCQF terminology throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For more information on the SCQF, visit [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk).

**SCQF credits:** One SCQF credit point equates to 10 hours of learning.

**SCQF levels:** The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. PDAs are available at SCQF levels 6 to 12 and will normally be made up of Units at SCQF levels 6 to 12.

**Qualification Design Team:** A Qualification Design Team works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager to steer the development of a PDA from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

**Consortium-devised PDAs** are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

**Specialist single-centre PDAs** are those developments or revisions led by a single centre which provides knowledge and skills in a specialist area.

**Specialist collaborative PDAs** are those developments or revisions led by a small group of centres which provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area.

## 2 Professional Development Awards

PDA's that are developed under the new design principles will remain the flexible, useful product that was established under the previous design rules. However, the new design principles will also bring a measure of coherence to this important qualification, and this will enhance their credibility among users and employers.

PDA's will be designed for people who are normally already in a career or vocation and who wish to extend or broaden their skills base. However, in some cases they will be designed for those wishing to enter employment. They will assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills.

### 2.1 Revised design principles

Professional Development Awards:

- ◆ will be available at SCQF levels 6–12
- ◆ at SCQF level 6 will be made up of Units with a minimum credit value of 12 SCQF credit points
- ◆ at SCQF levels 7–12 will be made up of a minimum credit value of 16 SCQF credit points
- ◆ will be made up of at least two Units
- ◆ will have at least half the SCQF credit points at the level of the Group Award
- ◆ will be made up of mandatory and/or optional Units which reflect the title of the Group Award
- ◆ will be aligned to National Occupational Standards, or other professional body standards, as appropriate to the Group Award area

### 2.2 Main changes to PDA's

There are four main changes to the design of PDA's under the new principles. These are:

- ◆ all PDA's and their component Units will be credit rated against the SCQF
- ◆ PDA's will have a minimum number of SCQF credits and be made up of at least two Units
- ◆ there will be seven distinct levels — SCQF levels 6–12
- ◆ there will be new titles for all revised PDA's. These will reflect the vocational context and the SCQF level of the Group Award. So, they will be titled 'Professional Development Award in XXXX at SCQF

level X’, for example, ‘Professional Development Award in Enterprise at SCQF level 8’

**NB** Revised PDAs will be certificated under the new title from early 2007.

## 2.3 Additional information on revised design principles

- ◆ PDAs can comprise HN, NQ and Workplace-assessed Units.
- ◆ All Units will be validated and credit rated by SQA.
- ◆ PDAs can have mandatory and optional Units; *or* all mandatory Units; *or* all optional Units. The choice of structure must reflect the title and aim of the award, and this will be checked at validation. For example, if an award is comprised solely of optional Units, you would have to show how each choice of the optional Units provided the skills and knowledge outlined in the aims of the Group Award.
- ◆ It will be possible to have PDAs with the same vocational context at different SCQF levels. However, each Group Award must have distinct aims that are commensurate with the level of the PDA, and there would have to be a separate need and demand for each level.
- ◆ PDAs can be embedded within another qualification, such as an HNC or HND. In these cases, a separate rationale, aims, purpose and structure must be given for the PDA, and this must be supported by market research (although the PDA can be validated at the same event as the HNC/D).

## 2.4 Distinguishing PDAs from other qualifications at similar levels

PDAs will span SCQF levels 6–12. It is important to ensure at the beginning of each development that the award is distinguished from other qualifications at that level and that a PDA is the ‘right’ qualification for a required need. A quick rule-of-thumb is to remember the ‘Professional’ in PDAs — the target audience is normally those in work, or seeking employment, who require a specific skill set.

It is vital to look at this before development. This would be part of ‘Establishing the need’ (see Section 3.1). These are some of the qualifications that need to be distinguished:

**National Progression Awards (NPAs) at SCQF level 6.** At first sight, NPAs and PDAs at SCQF level 6 might seem similar in terms of design principles. However, the target audience and purpose of NPAs are different in three key ways:

- ◆ PDAs would normally extend, broaden or enhance skills in a particular area, whereas NPAs are likely to provide underpinning knowledge and skills or develop new skills.
- ◆ PDAs would normally be undertaken by those who have an existing qualification or substantial experience/skills in an occupational area, whereas NPAs are mainly for those with minimum qualifications who are seeking to learn the skills necessary to operate in a vocational area.
- ◆ PDAs would normally be designed for those established in an occupation or profession, or wishing to enter employment in a new occupational area, whereas NPAs would be designed, by and large, for those new to an occupational area or wishing to enter, or return to, employment.

**HNC at SCQF level 7 and HND at SCQF level 8.** HNC/Ds and PDAs differ in the following ways:

- ◆ HNC/Ds aim to provide broader skills (such as Core Skills) as well as vocationally-specific skills, whereas PDAs are designed to provide defined specialist skills within a vocational/occupational area.
- ◆ HNC/Ds have a set number of credit points that must be achieved, whereas PDAs are flexible above the minimum set.
- ◆ HNC/Ds are often aimed at a different target audience — full-time students — whereas PDAs will mainly draw on those already in work or seeking to enter employment.
- ◆ HNC/Ds must have a mandatory section, whereas PDAs are more flexible in that they can have mandatory and optional Units; *or* all mandatory Units; *or* all optional Units.

**University provision at SCQF level 9 and above.** PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above are designed to provide advanced specialist and transferable skills required by industry. Further guidance on developments at SCQF level 9 and above is given in Section 8.

**Customised Awards.** These are designed to meet the needs of an individual customer (usually an employer) and, as such, reflect the specific requirements of the company.

### **3 Establishing the need, Qualification Design Teams and further market research**

Before the revision or development of a PDA takes place, it is important to establish an evidence base for the need for the qualification and for its shape and structure.

#### **3.1 Establishing the need**

Requests for the development/revision of PDAs come from a range of stakeholders and may be required to serve a niche market, eg Golf Course Management, or a wider employment purpose, eg Classroom Assistants. Irrespective of where the request comes from, SQA managers must establish the need for the qualification and its viability and permission to proceed must be sought from the relevant Business Manager. Some initial considerations will include:

- ◆ whether there are similar qualifications at that SCQF level in the same occupational area — it is essential that you find this out before proceeding with any development (see also Section 2.4 for further guidance)
- ◆ uptake figures for an existing PDA
- ◆ achievement rates for an existing PDA
- ◆ estimated uptake figures for a new/revised PDA
- ◆ amount of development required, eg writing new Units or revising existing Units
- ◆ cost of development
- ◆ validation costs
- ◆ cost of marketing and on-going costs

#### **3.2 The Qualification Design Team**

Once a Business Manager has agreed that the development/review of a PDA should proceed, a Qualification Design Team should be established to direct and manage the development and validation process. The aim of the Qualification Design Team is to conduct a detailed initial review of the current or proposed Group Award, determine the extent of revision/development required, and manage the development or revision of the Group Awards through to validation and launch/implementation.

The composition of the Qualification Design Team will vary, depending on the size of the qualification, area of speciality, etc. However, it should

include a convener, an SQA officer, and sufficient experienced practitioners and industry representatives to provide an informed view of the development.

Consultants might be engaged ad hoc to undertake specific work such as market research or identifying appropriate National Occupational Standards or professional body requirements.

During the initial review stage, the remit for the Qualification Design Team will include:

- ◆ looking at other qualifications development in the same occupational area and identifying any gaps in provision at different SCQF levels and/or potential overlap
- ◆ agreeing the communications strategy of the team
- ◆ reviewing existing market research
- ◆ identifying the key stakeholders for the development
- ◆ determining the strategy for consulting with key stakeholders identified
- ◆ conducting further market research (see Section 3.3)
- ◆ analysing feedback from consultation/market research
- ◆ deciding on the extent of revision required to an existing group award — major/minor
- ◆ agreeing draft Group Award title, rationale and principal aims
- ◆ agreeing draft access requirements
- ◆ agreeing main subject areas (with associated SCQF levels) to include in structure
- ◆ reviewing existing Unit provision and planned developments in related areas
- ◆ agreeing existing Units to incorporate in structure and new Units to develop
- ◆ identifying all relevant National Occupational Standards and/or other professional body requirements, eg by using feedback from existing or new research (see Section 3.4)
- ◆ deciding on the alignment of the PDA to specific National Occupational Standards and/or other professional body requirements (see Section 3.4)

### **3.3 Further market research**

As part of the development of a new Group Award, or revision of an existing Group Award, further market research needs to be carried out to ensure the relevance of the qualification to users and employers. The market research should set out to ascertain such things as:

- ◆ content, eg the specific knowledge and skills required
- ◆ level, eg which SCQF level would be appropriate to meet the aims of the PDA
- ◆ structure, eg mandatory Units, optional Units, etc.

The extent of the market research required may vary — for instance, a single employer requesting a PDA may already have a notion of its content. However, it is important that the broad range of stakeholder interests is represented and therefore initial suggestions should be tested more widely, where appropriate.

### **3.4 National Occupational Standards and professional body standards**

A crucial aspect of ensuring that a qualification is relevant to the occupational sector it serves is by taking into account the recognised professional standards for the sector or industry. This is particularly important as it is one of the revised design principles for PDAs (see Section 2.2), and is also part of our commitment to ensuring that our qualifications are fit for purpose.

Professional and occupational standards can be found in the National Occupational Standards for a sector or industry, or in the standards set by a Standard Setting Body. There is guidance on these in *Using National Occupational Standards in the development of SQA Group Awards* (see [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

It is important that you identify any relevant National Occupational Standards or professional standards at an early stage of development. This will inform the work of the Qualification Design Team in shaping the qualification, and will also provide a basis for Unit development, if you need to write Units.

### **3.5 Time considerations**

Although the process for developing and validating PDAs is the same as for other qualifications, the time taken to develop or revise these is likely to be shorter than for larger qualifications such as HNC/Ds. One of the strengths of PDAs as a product is that they can be developed to meet particular needs at a specific time, though this does require tight planning and delivery schedules.

## 4 Development

As we saw in Section 3, it is likely that the Qualification Design Team for a PDA might be quite small. However, there are key tasks that must be undertaken at this stage irrespective of the size of the Group Award. These are:

- ◆ managing the writing process for revised/new Units, including the brief for Unit writers \*
- ◆ confirming the aims, content and structure of the PDA
- ◆ reviewing and actioning any resulting conditions or recommendations
- ◆ ensuring that the alignment of National Occupational Standards or professional standards to the PDA has been carried out \*\*
- ◆ developing approaches and strategies for delivery and assessment of the qualifications
- ◆ carrying out further consultation with stakeholders where a PDA is designed to enhance articulation or contribute towards professional body status
- ◆ preparing and reviewing validation document (see Section 5)
- ◆ presenting the case for the Group Award at the validation event (see Section 5)

\* The validation of Units and Group Awards is dealt with in Section 5.

\*\* Please refer to SQA's guide *Using National Occupational Standards in the development of SQA Group Awards* for further guidance on alignment of PDAs to NOS.

# 5 Validation

## 5.1 Overview of validation

### 5.1.1 The purpose of validation

Although the design principles for PDAs have been changed, the validation system and criteria have not.

Validation is the quality assurance process by which SQA ensures that all new, revised, or amended qualifications are valid, credible, and fit for purpose. It is a process of peer-group review that focuses on the justification for, and coherence of, a proposed qualification, and its technical specification. It confirms that any new qualification fully satisfies SQA's quality criteria for Units and Group Awards.

The validation criteria for SQA qualifications are detailed in Appendix 1.

Validation is required when any new or existing Group Award, or modification of an existing Unit or Group Award, is proposed.

### 5.1.2 The Validation Proposal Document

Once the Qualification Design Team has completed the development of the PDA, they will prepare a validation proposal in the form of a document giving details of the proposed qualification and the support there is for it. The Validation Proposal Document should contain all the information the validation panel needs to be able to judge whether the proposed PDA meets SQA's validation criteria.

There's more on the Validation Proposal Document in Section 5.4.

### 5.1.3 Validation of Units

SQA has sole authority for validating Units. Centres with the necessary devolved authority will still be able to validate PDAs made up of Units from our catalogue.

Units will be validated before the Group Award. They should be validated at least three months before Group Award validation.

### 5.1.4 Validation of Group Awards

Validation happens at a meeting of subject experts. The meeting can be hosted either by SQA, or by a centre which has devolved authority for validating Group Awards.

After each validation meeting, a Validation Report is produced. We will send a copy of the Validation Report to the convener for signature and return.

**Note:** Centres can validate Group Awards made up of validated SQA Units if they have devolved authority for validating SQA qualifications, ie if they have been successfully audited against our validation criteria (see Appendix 1). These centres are responsible for organising and hosting validation meetings.

### **5.1.5 Validation outcomes**

At the validation meeting, the panel will reach one of three possible decisions about the proposed qualification:

- ◆ qualification validated
- ◆ qualification not validated until conditions have been met
- ◆ qualification not validated

There is more about validation outcomes in Section 5.3.4.

### **5.1.6 Validation spans**

Under the design principles, the validation period for both Units and Group Awards is open-ended, ie PDAs will no longer have a specified lifespan. This will bring PDAs into line with HNC/Ds and National Qualifications. However, PDAs should be reviewed regularly, with the frequency of the review reflecting the pace of change in the occupational sector.

### **5.1.7 Producing a Validated Document**

Once the PDA has been validated, the Validation Proposal Document will become the Validated Document. This is essentially the same document, but it will be amended to:

- ◆ meet any conditions of validation
- ◆ reflect the decisions made at validation
- ◆ indicate the confirmed position of the Group Award — for example, instead of ‘It is proposed that the title of the Group Award should be xxxx’ the text would read ‘The title of the Group Award is xxxx’

### **5.1.8 After validation**

Once the qualification has been validated, it will be entered onto SQA’s system and will be available to candidates through approved centres. The qualification will be reviewed periodically to determine whether it should

be revised, and if so, how. The review could result in one of the following conclusions:

- ◆ Take no further action and allow the qualification to lapse without replacement — this is usually the result of a change in industrial practice, eg there is no longer an employment market in Scotland for qualifications in Mining.
- ◆ Take no further action because the qualification as it stands still satisfies current market need.
- ◆ Re-validate the qualification with minor revisions.
- ◆ Undertake a major revision of the existing structure and/or Units, and re-validate.

### **5.1.9 Producing a Validated Document and Arrangements Document**

Once the qualification has been validated, the Validation Proposal Document will be converted to a Validated Document. An Arrangements Document will also be produced. The Arrangements Document will be based on key parts of the Validated Document, and will serve as a guide to the implementation of the Group Award to delivering centres.

If the PDA is a sub-set of another qualification such as an HNC/D, a separate Arrangements Document or separate section within the HNC/D Arrangements Document should be produced. This is because PDAs are qualifications in their own right.

There is more information on producing an Arrangements Document in Section 6.

## **5.2 Validation panels — members and their roles**

### **5.2.1 Organisation of the panel**

A proposal for a new qualification, or for extensive revisions to an existing qualification, will be validated by a panel of subject experts at a validation meeting. SQA will organise and host the validation meeting:

- ◆ for consortium-devised PDAs
- ◆ when asked to do so by a centre which is putting forward a PDA proposal for validation — the centre will have the opportunity to comment on the panel that SQA has brought together, to avoid potential conflicts of interest

Alternatively, the lead centre of a collaborative development, or single centre putting forward a PDA proposal, may wish to organise and host

the validation meeting. When a centre decides on this course of action, SQA will have been consulted on the composition of the validation panel and will normally make at least one nomination to it. All the panel members attending a validation meeting are acting on behalf of SQA in assessing the proposed qualification against SQA's quality elements (this is the name we give to our criteria for quality assurance — these can be found in Appendix 1).

### 5.2.2 Size of panels

The size of the panel will depend on three factors:

- ◆ whether the development is a new PDA
- ◆ whether the development is a revision to an existing PDA and the extent of that revision
- ◆ the scope of the PDA — eg is this for a specific employer need or for a whole occupational sector

Regardless of the factors that apply, all members of the panel are equal partners at the validation meeting. Their role is to act as independent judges of the proposed qualification, and to make a validation decision at the end of the meeting. However, given the occupational or vocational focus of PDAs, there should be clear representation of the occupational sector.

The panel should consist of, at a minimum, three people — four if the proposal has been submitted by a centre or small group of centres. It should include:

- ◆ industry, employer, Sector Skills Council and/or other sector expert representatives. As PDAs are focused on occupational/professional development it may be appropriate that one of these representatives should also act as convener of the panel
- ◆ an educationalist and/or centre representative (if the development has been initiated by a centre or small group of centres)
- ◆ an SQA representative

If the PDA is designed to articulate with degree programmes, an additional representative from the higher education sector would be appropriate.

Panels may be larger if a greater range of expertise is required, but they should not be smaller.

**Note:** The panel should not include any members of the Qualification Design Team or Steering Groups although those contacted for consultation/market research may be included.

### 5.2.3 Role of the convener

Panels are convened by individuals who are independent of the Qualification Design Team and of the centre or centres proposing the qualification. The convener has a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the validation meeting, and should display:

- ◆ knowledge of the validation process
- ◆ impartiality
- ◆ objectivity
- ◆ experience of chairing meetings
- ◆ experience of participating in the validation of qualifications
- ◆ expertise in a field related to the qualification
- ◆ thoroughness of approach
- ◆ good communication and interpersonal skills
- ◆ diplomacy and tact

Members should be encouraged to work as a team, bringing their own expertise and experience to it. The convener's role is to ensure all members are allowed an equal opportunity to participate so that the meeting is not dominated by any individual or small group.

It is the convener's responsibility to ensure that the proposed qualification is assessed comprehensively and objectively against the validation criteria. At the first private meeting (see Section 5.3.3) the convener will co-ordinate the drawing up of:

- ◆ any changes to the draft programme for the day
- ◆ an agenda of issues for discussion with the Qualification Design Team

It is important to make full use of the expertise of all the members of the panel. Each member will have identified issues that require clarification and discussion, and these should be pooled to form an agenda for the meeting. The convener may wish to identify individual panel members who will take the lead on specific topics, but this should not prevent others from joining in with related points.

The convener should ensure that all members of the panel are comfortable with educational terminology, and should be ready to provide explanations whenever necessary. The SQA representative will be able to help provide clear definitions of terminology and policy.

Validation panels will be presented with a Validation Proposal Document that has been developed in partnership with, or supported by, an SQA officer. It will already have passed through rigorous internal scrutiny. The Validation Proposal Document will normally have been the result of extensive work and comment before it is presented for a fresh and

impartial scrutiny by the validation panel. The convener should ensure that the work and the professionalism of the Qualification Design Team are acknowledged both formally and implicitly in the conduct of the meeting.

If panel members are not convinced that the proposals address all of SQA's validation criteria (see Appendix 1), or if they think that the evidence supporting the proposal is unclear or insufficient, the convener will agree the broad conditions that he/she wishes to see addressed before final validation.

The convener should ensure that reasonable timescales for meeting the conditions, and the mechanism for meeting these conditions, are agreed with the Qualification Design Team. It is very important that he/she ensures that the validation panel members do not attempt to re-write any aspect of the proposal. While helpful suggestions for improvements will always be welcome, the purpose of the validation is to confirm (or otherwise) that the SQA validation criteria have been broadly met. Detailed suggestions for re-writing should not form part of any formal conditions for validation.

#### **5.2.4 Role of other panel members**

##### **Industry/employer/SSC representative/subject expert**

As the focus of PDAs is to provide specialist vocational or occupational skills, the role of this member is crucial.

Industry-based panel members are selected because of their subject expertise and knowledge of related employment sectors. Although they may have been consulted during the market research for the qualification, they should view the proposal objectively on its merits and without any sense of personal 'ownership'.

Industrialists are on the panel to represent the views of prospective employers. It is their role to determine whether:

- ◆ the proposed qualification meets the short, medium, and longer term education and training needs of employers in the targeted sectors
- ◆ the qualification has taken due account of relevant elements from the National Occupational Standards of the sector or other professional body requirements

- ◆ the PDA will equip successful candidates with the knowledge and skills that will:
  - meet skills gaps
  - provide continuing professional development
  - provide opportunities for progression in the workplace

If industry-based panel members are unfamiliar with educational terms (for example, in regard to the SCQF), they should not hesitate to look to the convener for clarification.

Though industry-based panel members may have no personal experience of validation, this should not debar them from participating. Hosting centres should, if requested, provide validation training for those who feel it is necessary.

### **Educationalists**

Educationalists are selected for their expertise in validation and their specialist subject, and for their experience in the management and delivery of similar qualifications. Familiarity with the level of qualification being validated is essential, as the educationist may be called upon to explain issues to other members of the validation panel.

Educationalists will play a major role in determining whether:

- ◆ the qualification represents a unique achievement worthy of separate certification
- ◆ there is any overlap with existing provision and, if so, whether this is acceptable
- ◆ the demands made on candidates are reasonable and justify the level and credit value of the qualification
- ◆ the Group Award is at the appropriate SCQF level
- ◆ each Unit specification is at an appropriate level and conforms to SQA's criteria

In making these determinations, educationalists should consider only SQA's validation criteria. Issues such as candidate demand and inter-centre competition for viable numbers are not relevant to the validation process. Though broad suggestions for improvements to the Validation Proposal Document will be welcome, detailed proposals for re-writing any aspect of it should not form part of the decisions of the validation panel members. The Qualification Design Team will be expected to take account of any discussion of all aspects of the proposal.

### **Centre representatives**

Where the proposal has been submitted by a centre or by a group of centres, the validation panel should include a centre representative —

normally someone with a management position in the centre. This person should not be or have been a member of the Qualification Design Team, and should never be regarded (or regard himself or herself) as a spokesperson for the submission. The centre representative should be a fully participating member of the validation panel.

The centre representative's crucial role is to assure the validation panel that the proposal is realistic and has the support of the centre's management. That is, that adequate resources, etc, will be available to support the implementation of the PDA.

When the meeting is arranged and hosted by a centre, it will be the responsibility of the centre representative to complete and submit the Validation Report form. The centre may provide secretarial support for its representative throughout the meeting — this has the great advantage of ensuring that an accurate note of the proceedings is kept whilst allowing the representative to participate fully.

**Note:** Where a proposal has been developed by a group of centres, the Qualification Design Team will be asked to nominate a single representative from one of the participating centres. This representative should not have been a participating member of the Qualification Design Team.

### **SQA representative**

The SQA representative will be appointed based on his or her experience of validation and knowledge of SQA policy. He or she will be someone who has not been directly involved in development of the qualification and who therefore does not have a vested interest in its validation. The representative will clarify any points of SQA policy that arise at the meeting, and should be able to make a full contribution to discussions, especially those concerning whether or not validation criteria have been met.

Where the meeting is arranged and hosted by SQA, it is the responsibility of the SQA representative to complete and submit the Validation Report form.

Where the centre hosts the validation meeting, the SQA representative will complete a summary report using the checklist supplied by SQA.

### **Higher education representative**

Most PDAs are designed for progression in the workplace. However, if the PDA design facilitates progression to university programmes, a higher education representative will be appointed based on his/her experience of the vocational area and articulation. In addition to general comments relating to the validation of the Group Award, the HEI representative would also be expected to comment on:

- ◆ the way in which the Group Award will prepare successful candidates for further study at a higher education institution
- ◆ the suitability of the content of the Group Award for articulation to a particular level of study at a higher education institution

### **5.2.5 Training of validation panel members**

Validation panel members should be trained before participating in a validation meeting. At a minimum this should involve:

- ◆ familiarisation with the design principles for PDAs
- ◆ reading a copy of this guide — *A Guide to Professional Development Awards: from inception to implementation*
- ◆ a briefing session or written brief from an SQA manager (or centre representative if being hosted by a centre)
- ◆ an opportunity to clarify any aspect relating to the validation process with an SQA manager (or centre representative if being hosted by a centre) prior to the validation event

## **5.3 The validation event**

This section deals with the validation of Group Awards. As indicated in Section 5.1.3 above, the validation of Units (or accreditation of SVQ Units) is undertaken by SQA and must be carried out prior to the validation of the Group Award.

### **5.3.1 Validation meeting**

At least two weeks before the validation meeting, validation panel members will normally be provided with:

- ◆ the time and date of the meeting
- ◆ a location map of the venue
- ◆ a list of panel members
- ◆ a provisional programme for the meeting

- ◆ guidance on validating PDAs including:
  - validation checklists
  - SCQF level descriptors
  - validation criteria
- ◆ an expense claim form, if members are eligible to have their expenses reimbursed

These will be accompanied by the Validation Proposal Document. This will give panel members an opportunity to familiarise themselves thoroughly with the details of the proposed qualification. If a panel member feels that he/she has not been given sufficient time (ie at least two weeks) to assess the proposal, he/she can contact either SQA or the centre, as appropriate, to ask for the meeting to be postponed.

We recommend that panel members complete the appropriate validation checklist, and bring this along to the meeting. This will be used as a means of forming and communicating collective views based on individual comments. The validation checklists include lists of questions which might be raised under the various section headings in the Validation Proposal Document, though these lists of questions are by no means exhaustive and panel members are encouraged to add questions of their own.

There is a validation checklist in Appendix 2.

Validation panel members should prepare for the meeting by reading the Validation Proposal Document thoroughly, evaluating it against the validation criteria, and annotating any issues and/or comments they wish to raise with the Qualification Design Team on the validation checklist.

### **5.3.2 What to do if panel members do not arrive**

If, on the day of the meeting, one or more members of the panel fail to arrive, it may be necessary to postpone the validation meeting. The meeting should proceed only if the range of expertise available is sufficient to allow a comprehensive assessment of the proposed qualification.

The decision on whether or not to postpone the meeting should be taken by the convener, in consultation with the SQA representative (or centre representative if this is being hosted by a centre). If additional guidance is required, the SQA representative will immediately contact SQA to discuss the matter with the Qualification Team Business Manager or Qualifications Manager/Officer.

If the convener fails to arrive, the meeting may proceed only if another panel member with experience of chairing meetings is prepared to take on this role. SQA (or centre representative if this is being hosted by a

centre) must be consulted on the change of convener before the meeting starts.

Any changes to the panel membership must also be explained in the Validation Report.

### **5.3.3 Format of the meeting**

Before the formal meeting with the Qualification Design Team, the validation panel members will have an opportunity to hold a private meeting. At this stage, panel members should confine themselves to identifying areas of concern that they wish to discuss more fully with the Qualification Design Team, rather than trying to reach any conclusions about changes they may wish to make.

The convener will collate comments under the section headings in the validation checklist, and allocate issues to individual panel members who will lead the discussion with the Qualification Design Team. It is essential that all members of the validation panel contribute to a full discussion of the points to be addressed.

During the private meeting, the panel can re-arrange the draft programme for the day if they feel this is necessary. In this case, any changes should be communicated to the leader of the Qualification Design Team. The convener will endeavour to ensure that the programme is kept on schedule, but this should not be allowed to interfere with a full discussion of the proposal.

At the start of the formal meeting with the Qualification Design Team, the convener will introduce all the panel members and inform the Qualification Design Team of the programme for the day and the principal items for discussion. Further amendments to the programme may, of course, be made in the light of issues raised during the discussion with the Qualification Design Team.

Depending on the size of the PDA, validation meetings typically last from 3–6 hours. Sufficient time should be allocated to cover all issues fully. A typical programme for a full validation meeting is given in Appendix 3 — this should be adapted accordingly.

All questions directed to the Qualification Design Team should be opened. The aim is to encourage a focused discussion but also to ensure that the opportunity to address wider issues is provided. The focus of the discussion will be the evaluation of the proposed qualification against the validation criteria.

Remember — validation is about ensuring that the proposed Group Award broadly meets SQA's criteria, and not about the centre's ability to offer the qualification. That is dealt with through a separate process called 'approval'.

The Units will have been validated before the Group Award validation, so validation panel members will only be expected to comment on their suitability for inclusion in the Group Award framework.

After the formal meeting with the Qualification Design Team, there will be an opportunity for the validation panel to hold a second private meeting. At this stage, panel members should decide whether or not all of the issues have been satisfactorily addressed during the discussion with the Qualification Design Team. During this second private meeting, the validation panel will discuss and finalise its recommendations.

The panel should then reconvene with the Qualification Design Team. The outcome of the panel's discussion will be communicated to the Qualification Design Team by the convener. If the panel decides that conditions have to be met before validation is confirmed, the clarity of these conditions and the reasonableness of the timescales proposed should be discussed with the Qualification Design Team before finalisation.

#### 5.3.4 Validation outcomes

Having considered all the evidence provided in the Validation Proposal Document and the subsequent discussion with the Qualification Design Team, the panel will reach a decision on the outcome of the validation meeting. The proposed qualification must always be judged solely against SQA's validation criteria (see Appendix 1).

The panel will make one of three decisions:

- ◆ **Qualification validated** (with recommendations if appropriate) — the validation span of PDAs is open-ended, although the qualification will be subject to periodic review to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of candidates and employers. However, the validation panel may wish to recommend a review period, especially in subjects where technology rapidly changes.
- ◆ **Qualification not validated until conditions have been met** — where the decision is not to validate until conditions have been met, all the conditions must be satisfied before the qualification will be validated, ie before any centre can be given approval to offer it.
- ◆ **Qualification not validated** — where the panel cannot recommend validation, the Qualification Design Team can, after further development work, submit new proposals, though any new proposal will have to be validated in the usual way.

#### 5.3.5 Validation conditions

If the validation panel wishes to set conditions on the validation of a qualification, it is important to recognise that these will need to be fully

satisfied before the qualification can be considered validated. The conditions should therefore be achievable in the time span set by agreement between the Qualification Design Team and the panel.

Meeting the conditions is the responsibility of the Qualification Design Team. The validation panel should not attempt to re-write the proposal, but should specify the changes that have to be made or the further development that must be undertaken before the qualification can be validated.

Any conditions imposed by the validation panel should concern the need to rectify significant failures to satisfy the validation criteria. More minor issues should be dealt with by recommendations, and should be explained in the Validation Report under the appropriate section heading (see end of Section 5.3.7 below). Recommendations are points that are not essential to the integrity of the Group Award but are suggestions for clarification or further information that might be incorporated into the final Validated Document or subsequent Arrangements Document. They might include expanded information on integration of assessment, flexibility of delivery or other aspects of learning, teaching and assessment.

The panel should also agree with the Qualification Design Team on the mechanism and estimated timescale for lifting the conditions (see the Validation Report Form, Appendix 4). This might mean a revised Validation Proposal Document being considered by:

- ◆ the SQA representative only
- ◆ the SQA representative and convener
- ◆ all panel members providing comments to the convener (without meeting)
- ◆ a meeting of the re-convened full validation panel
- ◆ or some other method

Whatever the mechanism selected, it is important that the entire panel is in agreement with it and that it is specified in the Validation Report form.

Where the conditions are to be lifted by a mechanism which does not include the SQA representative — and this should only be in exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the SQA representative — the centre must ensure that SQA is kept fully informed of developments. Any delay may slow the validation process.

### **5.3.6 Recommendations**

The validation panel may wish to make recommendations for the future development of the qualification such as integration of assessment or a recommended review date. Unlike conditions, these do not have to be met before the qualification can be validated.

### **5.3.7 The Validation Report**

After the meeting, a Validation Report must be completed and sent to SQA's Reference Section, normally within one week.

If the meeting is arranged and hosted by SQA, it will be the responsibility of the SQA representative to complete and return the Validation Report.

If the meeting is arranged and hosted by a centre, it will be the responsibility of the centre representative to complete and return the Validation Report — in this case, the SQA representative will submit a summary report immediately after the meeting.

In both cases, the Validation Report must be signed by the convener to indicate agreement with its contents.

Once the appropriate SQA Qualification Team Business Manager has countersigned the Validation Report, copies will be sent to all panel members. All matters pertaining to the meeting and its outcome should be treated in confidence. If, on receipt of the Validation Report, a panel member has questions concerning any part of it, he/she should contact SQA without delay. A Qualifications Manager/Officer will then follow up the matter. A copy of the Validation Report form is attached as Appendix 4.

### **5.3.8 Appeals against validation outcomes**

A Qualification Design Team can lodge an appeal if it feels that the validation panel has failed to conduct the validation meeting in an objective way and in accordance with SQA's validation criteria. Appeals will only be considered if it can be shown that SQA's validation criteria have been misinterpreted, or that the procedures followed were not consistent with those laid down in this guide.

Appeals will be considered on the following grounds:

- ◆ lack of objectivity of the panel
- ◆ misinterpretation of validation criteria
- ◆ deviation from procedures (as laid down in this guide)

A Qualification Design Team can appeal by writing to SQA's Depute Director, Higher National and Vocational Qualifications, within two weeks of the event, setting out the grounds for the appeal. Appeals will normally be considered by SQA's Appeals Sub-Committee within six weeks of receipt of a full submission. However, before making the appeal, all parties are encouraged to discuss the matter informally to seek

a solution without recourse to a formal hearing. If there is to be a hearing, the convener of the validation panel will be invited to attend.

This mechanism for making an appeal against validation outcomes is available to centres putting forward PDA proposals for validation, and to Qualification Design Teams led by SQA. Appeals must be submitted by the Head of the Centre (or his/her representative) or by the Qualifications Manager if SQA is making the appeal.

For more information on appeals, see the current edition of SQA's *The Appeals Process* on the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## 5.4 Validation Proposal Document for a PDA

Proposals for the validation of PDAs should be presented in the form of a Validation Proposal Document. The Validation Proposal Document should take the following format:

- ◆ Title page
- ◆ Contents page
- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Rationale for the award
- ◆ Aims of the award including, where appropriate, the development of transferable skills.
- ◆ Recommended Access to the award
- ◆ Structure of the award
- ◆ Approaches to delivery and assessment
- ◆ Appendices
  - Unit specifications
  - supporting evidence

There is more on each of these aspects below.

### 5.4.1 Title page

The title page should give:

- ◆ the title of the Group Award. This will be 'Professional Development Award in XXXX at SCQF level X'
- ◆ the date of the validation meeting

The title of the PDA should give clear information about the vocational competences required. One of the purposes of the PDA is to certificate a set of specialised skills in a particular vocational area and the title should reflect the specialism/vocational area as closely and concisely as possible. So it may be that rather than a Professional Development

Award in Administration at SCQF level 7, it would be better to have a Professional Development Award in Administration for Practice Managers at SCQF level 7.

PDA's could have the same title but must be distinguished at SCQF level. If PDA's with the same title are developed at different levels, the validation proposal must show distinct rationales, aims and skills that would be acquired at each level.

**NB** It is not possible to have different PDA's with the same name at the same SCQF level.

### **5.4.2 Introduction**

This should be a brief introduction to the PDA. The information given might include:

- ◆ whether the PDA is new or a revision to an existing PDA
- ◆ what it broadly seeks to do — eg provide skills for an occupational area
- ◆ what it might give individuals — eg improved professional practice or continuing professional development

### **5.4.3 Rationale for the award**

The rationale should provide a justification for the new or revised PDA. The information given in this section should be supported by market research or employer support. This will include:

- ◆ the nature and purpose of the Group Award. This should include information about key competences, which should be commensurate with the PDA title — see guidance under 5.4.1
- ◆ how it meets employers' needs
- ◆ how it meets needs for specific skills within a professional area
- ◆ how the structure/framework will meet the skills' needs
- ◆ information to show that the level of the PDA is commensurate with the SCQF descriptor for that level
- ◆ the target client group
- ◆ progression routes, increased employment opportunities, continuous professional development and links to and from other existing qualifications, eg a specialised set of skills which builds on a general HNC or providing a specialised set of skills without doing an HNC
- ◆ links to occupational standards — this is essential, and Qualification Design Teams should provide a mapping of the alignment of National Occupational Standards or other professional body requirements to specific Units within the PDA. An example of such an alignment carried out for a PDA in Personal Enterprise is given in Appendix 5

- ◆ brief details of changes, if this is a revised Group Award

#### **5.4.4 Aims of the award**

The Aims section should provide an explanation of how aims will be met through structure, content, and the needs of its users (especially candidates and employers) and there should be evidence of employer support for the aims identified. Aims should be appropriate to the target employment sector. All PDAs will have specific aims and they may also have other more general aims.

##### **Specific aims**

The specific aims of the PDA are important as they define the vocationally specific competences that the successful candidate will achieve. Specific aims might include:

- ◆ development of specific knowledge
- ◆ development of specific skills
- ◆ improving professional effectiveness in a specific area
- ◆ leadership skills in a specific area
- ◆ application of knowledge to new technology
- ◆ meeting a skills gap identified by employer

##### **Other aims**

Other aims might include some general aims and/or opportunities to develop Core Skills and/or other transferable skills. This will depend on the PDA and the vocational area it serves. In some cases, general aims and core/transferable skills may be incorporated into specific aims. This is particularly the case where a PDA serves a general area, such as Management. For example, some of the specific aims of the PDA in Personal Enterprise at SCQF level 9 include the development of high level transferable skills, such as enterprise skills and project management skills, but this might not be the case in a PDA that deals with Road Haulage, which may be more focused on specific technical skills.

General aims might include:

- ◆ personal development
- ◆ professional development
- ◆ career progression
- ◆ job mobility

Where Core Skills and/or other transferable skills will be developed, these should be included in this section.

Core Skills are at SCQF level 2–6 and are identified in the Core Skills framework. They are:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Numeracy
- ◆ Information Technology
- ◆ Working with Others
- ◆ Problem Solving

Transferable skills will most likely lie outwith the type and range included in the Core Skills framework — especially those at higher SCQF levels. Transferable skills may include:

- ◆ enterprise skills
- ◆ technology skills
- ◆ analytical skills
- ◆ management skills
- ◆ business skills
- ◆ project management skills
- ◆ managing change skills
- ◆ learning and study skills
- ◆ planning skills
- ◆ evaluative skills

#### **5.4.5 Recommended access**

This section should outline the type of qualification and/or experience and/or knowledge and skills candidates would typically possess before embarking on the PDA. Some points that should be considered include the following:

- ◆ Prior knowledge and skills — given that PDAs cover a wide range of vocational areas and work situations, consideration should be given to those who may not possess formal qualifications but who do have substantive experience of operating at the required level.

- ◆ Formal qualifications — it may be that candidates will hold a qualification in the same area *or* a different area but at a similar level *or* have an out-of-date qualification but have transferable skills and potential to undertake the PDA as part of continuing professional development.
- ◆ Advice on any bridging programme from an existing level of knowledge and skills to that required for entry to the PDA. For example, a candidate may have skills at SCQF level 7 but is embarking on a PDA at SCQF level 9, so he/she may need to bridge the gap between 7 and 9. Another example is that a PDA may require well-developed written communication. Candidates may possess good vocational skills but need to do something to enhance their written skills before embarking on the PDA.

## 5.4.6 Structure of the award

PDA at SCQF level 6 will be achieved on the successful completion of at least two Units (at least 12 SCQF credit points). At least half the SCQF credits must be at the level of the award.

PDA from SCQF level 7 – 12 will be achieved on the successful completion of at least two Units (at least 16 SCQF credit points). At least half the SCQF credits must be at the level of the award.

This section should show that, overall, the content of the PDA meets the identified aims of the Group Award; does not place unnecessary barriers to achievement; and represents an achievement consistent with the SCQF level of the Group Award.

This section must contain the following:

- ◆ A copy of the framework with:
  - validated Unit titles
  - Unit codes
  - SCQF credit points (eg 8 SCQF credit points)
  - SCQF level (eg SCQF level 7)
  - SQA credit value (eg 1 HN credit, 2 HN credits, 1 NQ credit, etc)
  - the mandatory/optional structure. This must ensure that all optional routes meet the requirements of the Group Award in terms of SCQF levels and credit points and the aims of the award.
- ◆ Information on how the combination of Units meets the SCQF level of the Group Award, eg how some Units may be ‘building’ Units and contribute to higher level Units that define the output at a specific level, or which are the main Units that develop the specific vocational skills that are required at the specific level of the Group Award. In the case of having only two Units of equal credit points, a rationale for the Group Award level should be given, eg whether one of the Units is a building Unit.
- ◆ Information on the way the Units link to the specific aims of the Group Award. An example of this is given in a grid format in Appendix 6.
- ◆ Information on how the National Occupational Standards or other professional body requirements align to the Group Award and Units within it. An example of this is given in Appendix 5.
- ◆ Details of any exemption from assessment or requirements for professional body registration.
- ◆ Information on whether the PDA or Units of the PDA provide advanced entry/articulation with other programmes of study.

### 5.4.7 Approaches to delivery and assessment

PDA's are primarily designed for those in work or preparing to go into employment. As such, the validation panel need to be assured that the possible approaches to delivery and assessment will result in the continuous professional development and progression skills that PDA's are designed to deliver. For this reason, the Validation Proposal Document should give guidance on:

- ◆ how assessment, teaching and learning approaches can bring coherence to the PDA rather than just being the delivery of individual Units
- ◆ the approaches the course team might take when organising the delivery of the Group Award
- ◆ how learning and teaching approaches might use existing experiences or the workplace to embed learning
- ◆ sequencing or integrating Units
- ◆ assessment strategy
- ◆ suggestions for integrating content and/or Units and/or assessment
- ◆ possible modes of delivery — this should include full-time, part-time, flexible and open learning. An explanation should be given on how delivery and assessment may/would be affected/changed if different modes were used. This is especially important because many candidates will be undertaking a PDA whilst in employment
- ◆ an explanation of how best to develop Core Skills and/or other transferable skills, if these have been included in the aims of the award

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

### 5.4.8 General information for candidates

This should provide a user-friendly text that can be given to candidates. This should include information on:

- ◆ the main skills/knowledge provided by the PDA
- ◆ the conditions they need to meet to achieve the Group Award
- ◆ the contribution the successful completion of the PDA could make to their job/career/progression
- ◆ what types of learning and assessment activities they might be involved in

- ◆ the Core Skills and/or other transferable skills that might be gained from undertaking the PDA

### **5.4.9 Unit Specifications**

The Validation Proposal Document should contain a complete set of specifications for all Units, mandatory and optional, as appropriate, that make up the Group Award framework. Where this involves a large number of Units, as a minimum the document should contain copies of the first section headed 'General Information for centres' for all Units.

### **5.4.10 Supporting Evidence**

There should be evidence to support the claims made within the Validation Proposal Document. This might include:

- ◆ details of consultations undertaken
- ◆ a summary of feedback obtained
- ◆ letters of support from employers, professional bodies, etc

## **5.5 After validation — producing the Validated Document**

Once a PDA has been validated, the Validation Proposal Document is converted to a Validated Document. This means amending it to:

- ◆ reflect the decisions made at validation
- ◆ meet any conditions set by the validation panel
- ◆ reflect any recommendations made by the validation panel, where appropriate
- ◆ reflect the change from proposal to agreement, eg instead of 'The proposed title for this Group Award is XXXX' the text would read 'The title of this Group Award is XXXX'

## 6 Implementation

The aim of this stage will be to prepare the PDA for launch and implementation by delivering centres. The specific remit for the Qualification Design Team will include:

- ◆ preparing and reviewing the Group Award Arrangements Document
- ◆ launching the Group Award
- ◆ considering the maintenance of the Group Award (see Section 7)

In some circumstances, the Qualification Design Team might also look at:

- ◆ the need for any support materials
- ◆ the need for staff development activities

### 6.1 Guidance for producing the Arrangements Document for PDAs

The Arrangements Document for PDAs is a vital part of the implementation and delivery of the Group Award. It will:

- ◆ assist centres to implement, deliver and manage the Group Award
- ◆ provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the Group Award
- ◆ capture the rich depth of discussion that led to the development of the Group Award
- ◆ inform stakeholders (course managers, teaching staff, assessors, candidates, employers, HEIs) of the aims and purpose of the Group Award

#### 6.1.1 Getting started: using the Group Award Validated Document

The starting point for an Arrangements Document is the Group Award Validated Document (see Section 5.5). This will provide the basis of the Arrangements Document but it is important to:

- ◆ adapt and expand the content for a wider audience — especially those delivering the award
- ◆ incorporate any recommendations made by the Validation Panel
- ◆ remove any information that is not relevant, retaining information that would allow a new centre to deliver the award

### 6.1.2 Content

You should decide what information from the Validated Document is relevant, and what is not, and whether any additional information may be desirable.

The following should NOT be included:

- ◆ *detailed* market research, though a summary and overview of market research should be given (ie detailed aspects such as sample questionnaires should not be included)
- ◆ statements that identify individuals
- ◆ Unit specifications — these are available on the SQA website **[www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)**

Letters from employers, professional bodies or higher education institutions (eg letters confirming articulation agreements or acknowledging parity with a professional qualification) should only be included if you have sought and been granted permission to publish from the originator.

Appendix 7 provides expanded guidance on the structure and content of an Arrangements Document, and Appendix 8 provides a checklist.

### 6.1.3 Updating the Arrangements Document

The Arrangements Document is a dynamic document that is designed to incorporate enhanced and additional guidance on such things as good practice in assessment, learning and teaching, or amendments required to meet the changing needs of users. This means that during the lifespan of a Group Award, this document will be added to with contributions from practitioners on delivery and assessment.

## 6.2 Launching the PDA

Once the Arrangements Document has been produced, the PDA is ready to go 'live'. It may be that the Qualification Design Team will want to arrange activities to promote the new/revised award. Activities might include:

- ◆ formal launch
- ◆ flyers
- ◆ stands at employers events
- ◆ newspaper/journal articles/adverts
- ◆ items on SQA's and centres' websites

# 7 Maintenance of PDAs

## 7.1 On-going review

Once the PDA has been validated and entered on SQA's system, it will be reviewed periodically to determine whether it should be revised, and if so, how. The review will result in one of the following conclusions:

- ◆ Take no further action and allow the qualification to lapse without replacement — this is usually the result of a change in industrial practice, eg there is no longer an employment market in Scotland for candidates with HNCs and HNDs in Mining and Metallurgy.
- ◆ Take no further action because the qualification as it stands still satisfies the current market needs.
- ◆ Re-validate the qualification with minor revisions.
- ◆ Undertake a major revision of the existing structure and/or Units, update and re-validate.

## 7.2 Qualification Support Teams

Once the PDA has been launched, the work of the Qualification Design Team is at an end. However, before it stands down, it should consider how the PDA will be maintained. Best practice is for a Qualification Support Team to be put in place to undertake this work. However, this will depend on the size of the PDA, whether it is a consortium, single-centre or collaborative development, and the degree of specialism, eg is it used by only one employer.

For some PDAs this might be a small team comprising of the SQA manager and one or two practitioners who are delivering the award. If it is a single-centre or collaborative development, it might be a nominated person from a centre plus relevant practitioners. It might also be appropriate to join with the Qualification Support Team established to support HNC/Ds in the same subject area. What is important is that a mechanism for feedback and response is established to ensure any implementation and review issues are dealt with promptly (although in some cases it may not be necessary for the team to actually meet).

The specific remit of the Qualification Support Team would be to:

- ◆ monitor, evaluate and address issues arising from the delivery of the PDA (including practitioner comments on specific Units)
- ◆ keep abreast of related developments, eg changes in National Occupational Standards, technology or legislation
- ◆ liaise with key stakeholders such as employers, professional bodies and SSCs to maintain and enhance recognition

- ◆ advise on the development of any resources/events that exemplify national standards
- ◆ monitor the operation of quality assurance processes (including verification reports)
- ◆ monitor the uptake of the PDA and assist in any promotional activities

## **7.3 Using the Arrangements Document**

The key document used by centres to shape the delivery and assessment of a Group Award is the Arrangements Document. For this reason, it is important that updating the Arrangements Document becomes part of the on-going maintenance of a Group Award (see Section 6.1.3).

# 8 PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above

## 8.1 Background information

The new design principles for PDAs have now established distinct levels for these awards at SCQF levels 6–12. Although in the past the potential to develop awards above HND level has existed and there has been a limited development of Units and smaller Group Awards above SCQF level 8, the majority of PDAs have been developed as sub-sets of HNCs and HNDs.

The introduction of SCQF, the revision of PDA design principles and the needs of specific vocational sectors has presented the opportunity to develop more systematically PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above. The specific aim of these qualifications will be to address current and projected skills shortages at intermediate professional and technical levels with high quality education and training aligned to National Occupational Standards and/or professional body requirements.

There are a number of principles that underpin the approach to the development of PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above. These include:

- ◆ a strong partnership between SQA, colleges, employers and professional bodies in the design, delivery and review of these qualifications
- ◆ an emphasis on incorporating work-based learning into the design and delivery of these qualifications
- ◆ enabling candidates to be work-ready thinkers and doers
- ◆ meeting the needs of industry through the alignment of the qualification to National Occupational Standards and/or other professional body requirements

SQA, in partnership with Scotland’s colleges, Sector Skills Councils, professional bodies, employers and, where appropriate, higher education institutions, is working on a number of pilot developments across a range of vocational education disciplines. These developments have arisen from an established market need as well as an identified gap in the current range of higher education qualifications in Scotland. Their implementation will enhance opportunities for candidates to develop high-level vocational skills.

## 8.2 Strategic and operational oversight

The strategic oversight of all PDAs lies with the HN Key Partners' Group (HNKPG), which represents the interests of key stakeholders in relation to advanced qualifications.

A Level 9 Steering Group, comprising Principals, Depute Principals and Assistant Principals, has also been set up to provide guidance and oversight on matters relating to PDA developments at SCQF level 9 and above. This group informs both the HNKPG and the Principals' Forum.

## 8.3 SQA's role in the development, validation and approval of PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above

SQA has set up a distinct project to oversee the development of PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above and, as part of that project, it has been agreed by the Level 9 Steering Group that:

- ◆ SQA, working with partners, will take the lead role in the development of vocational and professional qualifications at these levels. This will be the case irrespective of the size of the PDA
- ◆ Group Award validation will be a peer-review process with representatives of key stakeholders, as is currently the case with HNs. During the pilot phase validation will be centrally managed by SQA
- ◆ normal approval processes will apply, but additionally defined approval guidance and criteria will be agreed at validation. This may involve explicit criteria in terms of staffing, training and resources. Arrangements Documents will contain the guidance and criteria for approval.

## 8.4 Guidance on design, development, validation and implementation

The guidance given in Sections 1–7 of this guide should be followed when developing PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above, but this section gives additional information and advice on the specific considerations to be taken into account for more advanced awards — particularly at the review stage before a development is started.

At the initial review and early development stages, it is essential that the following points have been considered, that a justification can be given, and that this can be supported by evidence:

- ◆ Current provision of other qualifications at the SCQF level being considered has been researched.

- ◆ PDAs at SCQF level 9 and above must fill a discernible skills shortage, which may include transferable skills.
- ◆ A percentage of learning in the PDA must be practically/vocationally-based. This might be learning undertaken in the workplace as an employee, through a placement or through simulation, as appropriate.
- ◆ As with all PDAs, alignment with National Occupational Standards and/or other professional body requirements must be clear, identifiable and explicit.
- ◆ Full-time equivalent PDAs at SCQF level 9 would require 120 SCQF credit points.

Qualification Design Teams need to ensure that staff engaged to write Units have the skills to write these at the appropriate SCQF level, and that centres developing PDAs for delivery have identified staff with appropriate qualifications/experience to deliver the qualification at the appropriate SCQF level.



# Appendix 1: SQA'S Validation Criteria

## Process 6: Validation of SQA qualifications

Criterion	The centre	SQA
6.1 <i>The validation process for qualifications is defined and in the public domain</i>	a) ensures that submissions to SQA of locally-devised proposals for validation comply with the SQA's system, procedures and timescales	a) operates a validation system b) publishes the system, procedures and timescales for the validation of new and revised qualifications and makes them known to centres
6.2 <i>The qualification conforms to the SQA design rules and principles and other technical requirements which are current at the time of its validation</i>	a) uses SQA's design rules and principles and other technical requirements as the basis for development of proposed qualifications to be submitted to SQA for validation	a) publishes design rules and principles and other technical requirements and guidance on their use b) develops qualifications and validates them to ensure that all of these qualifications comply with the design rules and principles and the technical requirements*
6.3 <i>There is a demonstrable need for the qualification which fills a gap in the qualifications framework and makes a valuable and unique contribution to SQA's portfolio of qualifications</i>		a) works with stakeholders to identify the qualifications required to meet the needs of Scottish society* b) consults with appropriate bodies to identify the need for the qualification* c) operates a system of collecting feedback from stakeholders to regularly review the qualifications and engage in a programme of updating
6.4 <i>The qualification is accessible to all candidates who could potentially achieve it</i>		a) ensures that all qualifications which it validates are free from unnecessary barriers to achievement* b) conducts regular reviews of competences to ensure that they are not discriminatory*
6.5 <i>The qualification requires a candidate to demonstrate significant, achievable outcomes in a recognised curricular or vocational area</i>		a) ensures that qualifications which it validates meet this criterion* b) ensures that qualifications which it validates have assessment arrangements appropriate to the outcomes which candidates must demonstrate* c) operates a feedback system to collect stakeholders' views on the extent to which National and Higher National Qualifications meet this criterion*
6.6 <i>The qualification is coherent and its title accurately reflects its content</i>		a) ensures that qualifications which it validates meet this criterion* b) operates a feedback system to collect stakeholders' views on the extent to which qualifications meet this criterion*

# Appendix 2: Checklist for use in the Validation of Professional Development Awards

This checklist does not provide an exhaustive list of issues. You should feel free to identify other relevant issues for discussion with the qualification design team.

Heading	Checklist	Yes	No
<b>Title</b>	<p>The title should make clear to everyone what the successful candidate has achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is it appropriate?</li> <li>◆ Is it precise and unambiguous?</li> <li>◆ Does it conflict with existing titles at a specific SCQF level?</li> <li>◆ Does it clearly reflect the sum of the competences of the qualification?</li> <li>◆ Is it supported by information given in the Rationale</li> </ul>		
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Does the introduction say</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Whether the PDA is new or revised?</li> <li>◆ What it broadly seeks to do?</li> <li>◆ What candidates might gain by undertaking the award?</li> </ul>		
<b>Rationale</b>	<p>A Group Award must have a clear rationale which justifies its aims, structure and SCQF level in terms of the demand from employers and its position within the framework of national qualifications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are the nature and purpose of the qualification clearly explained?</li> <li>◆ Does the title reflect the vocational competences of the PDA?</li> <li>◆ Does the PDA meet employers' needs?</li> <li>◆ Does the PDA meet the need for specific occupational skills?</li> <li>◆ Is the SCQF level of the Group Award clearly explained in terms of the way it meets the SCQF level descriptors?</li> <li>◆ Is the target audience for the qualification clearly identified?</li> </ul>		

Heading	Checklist	Yes	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have progression routes, professional development, articulation opportunities and links to other qualifications been identified?</li> <li>◆ Has the qualification been linked clearly and explicitly to National Occupational Standards or professional benchmarks for the occupational/subject area?</li> <li>◆ Is the qualification worthy of certification in its own right?</li> <li>◆ Is the qualification unique?</li> </ul>		
<b>Aims</b>	<p>The aims of the qualification should be consistent with the nature of the target employment sector and the level of the qualification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are the specific aims clearly and adequately stated?</li> <li>◆ Are the aims appropriate to the target employment sector?</li> <li>◆ Is there evidence of employer support for the aims of the qualification?</li> <li>◆ Do the aims reflect the qualification title?</li> <li>◆ Do the aims demonstrate the achievement by the successful candidate?</li> <li>◆ Do the aims include the development of Core and/or other transferable skills, where appropriate?</li> </ul>		
<b>Access</b>	<p>The qualification should have no features which create barriers to achievement by placing unnecessary restrictions on the place, pace or mode of learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are the selection criteria for access to the qualification clear?</li> <li>◆ Is there a realistic indication of the previous achievement or experience which a candidate should have on entry to the qualification?</li> <li>◆ Does the access statement clearly define the required level of prior knowledge and skills?</li> <li>◆ Is access to the qualification based on recognised qualifications?</li> <li>◆ Are the access requirements appropriate to</li> </ul>		

Heading	Checklist	Yes	No
	<p>the level of the qualification?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is there consistency between the Group Award and Unit specifications access criteria?</li> <li>◆ Is access to the qualification restricted to a specific group of candidates?</li> <li>◆ If there are restrictions, are they justified?</li> <li>◆ Has sufficient advice been given on any bridging learning required?</li> </ul>		
<b>Structure</b>	<p>The structure of the qualification should be clearly stated and all possible routes to achieving it should be of a standard consistent with the type of qualification. The aims of the qualification should be satisfied by all allowable combinations of Units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is the structure of the qualification clear and unambiguous?</li> <li>◆ Does the choice of structure (mandatory or mandatory/optional or optional) reflect the title and aims of the award?</li> <li>◆ Does the structure of the qualification have an appropriate number of credits at the right level that supports the level of the Group Award?</li> <li>◆ Does the overall structure support the level of the Group Award?</li> <li>◆ Do all the possible routes to the qualification satisfy the aims of the qualification?</li> <li>◆ Are all routes equal in terms of the number of credits and levels?</li> <li>◆ Is there a logical progression and/or link between the Units of the qualification?</li> <li>◆ Is there evidence of coherence between the Units of the qualification?</li> <li>◆ Is there evidence that the structure aligns to the National Occupational Standards or other professional body requirements/benchmarks identified as underpinning the PDA?</li> <li>◆ Is there evidence of support from employers for the structure of the qualification?</li> </ul>		

Heading	Checklist	Yes	No
<b>Approaches to delivery and assessment</b>	<p>This should provide information which helps to contextualise and expand on the rationale and aims of the Group Award.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Does it provide information on how the PDA will be delivered to ensure coherence of the Group Award?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide advice to course team on approaches to the organisation of delivering the Group Award?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide guidance on how to embed delivery in workplace experience or simulation, where appropriate?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide information on the recommended sequence in which Units should be delivered?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide guidance on the possible integration of content or Units?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide advice on assessment strategy?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide guidance on potential integration of assessment?</li> <li>◆ Does it provide guidance on the modes of delivery, including distance learning, and the implications of different modes</li> <li>◆ If Core and/or other transferable skills have been included in the aims, has further guidance been given?</li> </ul>		
<b>General information for candidates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is the information clear and helpful?</li> <li>◆ Is it written in a style and tone appropriate for candidates?</li> <li>◆ Does it give information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— What knowledge and skills will be developed?</li> <li>— The contribution it could make to their job/career</li> <li>— What the conditions of award are?</li> <li>— What the possible progression routes are?</li> <li>— What types of learning and assessment activities they might be involved in?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

<b>Specifications</b>	<p>The Validation Document should contain a complete set of specifications for all mandatory and optional Units, which make up the Group Award framework. Where this involves a large number of Units, as a minimum the document should contain copies of the first section headed ‘General information for centres’ of all of the Units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Does the Validation Document contain copies of the Unit specifications which contribute to the Group Award framework?</li> </ul>		
<b>Supporting evidence</b>	<p>There should be evidence to support the claims made within the validation document in the form of an appendix which should include details of the consultation undertaken, and a summary of the feedback obtained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Is there evidence to support the claims made within the Validation Document, eg market analysis, professional body recognition etc?</li> <li>◆ Does the evidence include feedback from appropriate users, eg employers</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Issues to be raised with the Qualification Design Team:</b></p>			

## Appendix 3: Example of a validation meeting programme

- ◆ Arrival at centre/venue  
(Preliminary introductions and coffee)
- ◆ Private meeting of validation panel  
(To draw up a programme for the day, to identify issues to be raised with the Qualification Design Team and to allocate functions to the various team members)
- ◆ Meeting with the Qualification Design Team  
(To discuss the Group Award specifications in relation to the validation criteria)
- ◆ Private meeting of validation panel  
(To reach a decision and make any appropriate recommendations and set any necessary conditions)
- ◆ Meeting with the Qualification Design Team  
(To inform Qualification Design Team of the validation panel's decision)



<b>SECTION B2</b>	<b>VALIDATION EVENT DETAILS</b>
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<b>VALIDATION OUTCOME</b>	
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**Panel Decision** (tick as appropriate)

- |  |                          |                             |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2.1 Validated                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Now go to section C1</b> |
| 2.2 Not Validated until conditions have been met | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Now go to section C2</b> |
| 2.3 Not Validated                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Now go to section C3</b> |

DD                                  MM    YY  
Conditions to be met by:        /        /        **(applicable to option 2.2 only)**

Recommended review date: Session        /        (if applicable)

<b>SECTION C1</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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List any recommendations. Each recommendation should be cross-referenced to any relevant sub-section in the validation report (Section D).

<b>SECTION C2</b>	<b>DETAILS of CONDITION(S)</b>
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List any conditions which must be met before the Group Award is validated. Each condition should be cross-referenced to any relevant sub-section in the validation report (Section D).

**Please indicate which mechanism has been agreed for lifting conditions:**

1. Who will be responsible for collating papers to lift the condition(s)?
2. Who will receive and distribute these papers?
3. Who will decide if conditions have been met?

**NB** In all cases a completed Validation Conditions Form (HN V3) should accompany these documents

<b>SECTION C3</b>	<b>NON-VALIDATION</b>
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List reasons for withholding validation. Any reason should be cross-referenced to the relevant sub-section in the validation report (Section D).

*Please give details of the panel's comments regarding the compliance of the proposals with the validation criteria under the following headings. Where conditions and recommendations have been set, the reason should be explained under the appropriate section heading. Additional pages should be used as required.*

**1. Group Award Title(s)****2. Rationale for the Group Award**

**3. Aims of the Group Award****4. Access to the Group Award**

**5. Structure of the Group Award****6. Graded Units (where applicable)**



# Appendix 5: An example of NOS mapping

## PDA: Personal Enterprise (SCQF level 9) - comparison with Management & Leadership Occupational Standards

The new National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Management and Leadership have been developed by the Management Standards Centre (MSC), the government recognised standards setting body for management and leadership (M&L). These NOS are the product of an extensive research project carried out by the MSC between 2002 and 2004. The NOS are designed to act as a benchmark of best practice.

There are 47 standards covering 6 functional areas of management and leadership:

- ◆ Managing self and personal skills
- ◆ Providing direction
- ◆ Facilitating change
- ◆ Working with people
- ◆ Using resources
- ◆ Achieving results

Four of the seven units which comprise the PDA provide a range of generic skills which can be applied across many of the standards in management and leadership. For example, communications skills, covered by the Unit 'Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making', are required by every one of the management and leadership occupational standards. The table below lists some of the generic skills listed as required by many of the standards and the PDA units which specifically develop these skills.

M&L NOS Generic skills	Professional Development: Communicating and Influencing for Effective Decision Making	Personal Development Planning	Action Learning	Professional Development: Personal Effectiveness
Communicating	X	X	X	X
Influencing	X			X
Planning		X		
Time management		X		X
Problem solving		X	X	X
Reflection	X	X	X	X
Conflict resolution			X	X
Delegating				X

Negotiation	X			X
Self assessment	X	X	X	X
Evaluation	X	X	X	X
Learning	X	X	X	X

The table below presents a mapping of the 47 standards against relevant outcomes from the PDA in Personal Enterprise (level 9). Matching of generic skills is not shown on the mapping table. The Unit ‘Professional Development: Communication and Influencing for Effective Decision Making’ does not appear in the table as the generic skill of communicating covers all standards.

<b>M&amp;L Occupational Standard</b>	<b>SQA DPE Unit</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>A Managing Self and Personal Skills</b>		
A1 Manage your own resources	Personal Development Planning Action Learning Personal Effectiveness Professional Effectiveness	1, 2 1, 2, 3 2 1, 2, 3, 4
A2 Manage your own resources and professional development	Personal Development Planning Action Learning Professional Effectiveness	2, 3 1, 2, 3 1, 2, 3, 4
A3 Develop your personal networks		
<b>B Providing Direction</b>		
B1 Develop and implement operational plans for your area of responsibility	Managing a Project for an Organisation	2
B2 Map the environment in which your organisation operates	Professional Effectiveness	1, 2
B3 Develop a strategic business plan for your organisation		
B4 Put the strategic business plan into operation		
B5 Provide leadership for your team	Leadership for Performance Improvement Personal Effectiveness	2 1
B6 Provide leadership in your area of responsibility	Leadership for Performance Improvement	2
B7 Provide leadership for your organisation	Leadership for Performance Improvement	2
B8 Ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, ethical and social requirements		
B9 Develop the culture of your organisation		
B10 Manage risk	Managing a Project for an Organisation	3
B11 Promote equality of opportunity and diversity in your area of responsibility		
B12 Promote equality of opportunity and diversity in your organisation		
<b>C Facilitating Change</b>		
C1 Encourage innovation in your team	Leadership for Performance Improvement	2
C2 Encourage innovation in your area of responsibility	Leadership for Performance Improvement	2
C3 Encourage innovation in your organisation	Leadership for Performance Improvement	2
C4 Lead change		

<b>M&amp;L Occupational Standard</b>	<b>SQA Unit</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
C5 Plan change	Managing a Project for an Organisation	3
C6 Implement change	Managing a Project for an Organisation	3
<b>D Working with people</b>		
D1 Develop productive working relationships with colleagues	Action Learning Leadership for Performance Improvement Managing a Project for an Organisation	1, 2, 3 2, 3 3
D2 Develop productive working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders	Leadership for Performance Improvement Managing a Project for an Organisation	2,3 3
D3 Recruit, select and keep colleagues		
D4 Plan the workforce		
D5 Allocate and check work in your team	Managing a Project for an Organisation	3
D6 Allocate and monitor the progress and quality of work in your area of responsibility	Managing a Project for an Organisation	3
D7 Provide learning opportunities for colleagues	Action Learning	1, 2, 3
<b>E Using Resources</b>		
E1 Manage a budget	Managing a Project for an Organisation	3
E2 Manage finance for your area of responsibility		
E3 Obtain additional finance for the organisation		
E4 Promote the use of technology within your organisation		
E5 Ensure your own action reduces risks to health and safety		
E6 Ensure health and safety requirements are met in your area of responsibility		
E7 Ensure an effective organisational approach to health and safety		
<b>F Achieving Results</b>		
F1 Manage a project	Managing a Project for an Organisation	1, 2, 3, 4
F2 Manage programme of complementary projects		
F3 Manage business processes		
F4 Develop and review a framework for marketing		
F5 Resolve customer service problems	Personal Effectiveness	3
F6 Monitor and solve customer service problems	Personal Effectiveness	3

<b>M&amp;L Occupational Standard</b>	<b>SQA Unit</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
F7 Support customer service problems		
F8 Work with others to improve customer service		
F9 Build your organisation's understanding of its market and customers		
F10 Develop a customer focused organisation		
F11 Manage the achievement of customer satisfaction		
F12 Improve organisational performance	Professional Effectiveness	1, 2, 3, 4

# Appendix 6: Example of aims and structure from PDA in Personal Enterprise

## 3.1 Specific Aims

The award will enable candidates to:

1. Develop autonomy and self direction in learning and to take personal ownership of the process of planning and reviewing their own experience and development.
2. Develop their existing knowledge, skills and attitudes through action learning and to consider how they can use this development to improve their future professional and personal performance.
3. Improve their personal performance and interpersonal skills using a range of established management techniques.
4. Improve their professional effectiveness by means of developing their practical skills and knowledge in analysing the value of existing information from their own professional fields.
5. Develop their leadership skills and make effective interventions in order to improve the performance of individuals and teams.
6. Enhance communication, negotiation and people management skills with individuals and groups using a range of communication tools and techniques.
7. Apply personal enterprise competences and project management capability to a project for a key stakeholder.



# Appendix 7: Guidance on producing an Arrangements Document

The following sections give suggestions of what should be included in each section in the Arrangements Document. Each main section and subsections have been numbered. Additional main sections cannot be added but additional subsections can be included within the relevant main sections. These should be numbered appropriately.

A checklist for producing an Arrangements Document is given in Appendix 7.

## FRONT PAGE

The front page should state:

- ◆ the full title(s) of the award (s)\*
- ◆ the Group Award code \*
- ◆ the validation date — month and year (eg January 2005). This will not change as any new validation will result in a completely new Arrangements Document with new codes
- ◆ the month and year of the original publication of document (eg June 2005).
- ◆ the version number, ie Version 1, Version 2, etc. with the month and year of publication of that version in brackets (eg August 2006). Details of changes will be given in the History of Changes page, which will be situated after the Contents Page.

\* The title will be confirmed at validation and the code will be obtained from Reference Section once the validated award has been submitted for coding.

The SQA logo should appear in the top right hand corner of the front page of any Arrangements Document that is being published by SQA.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT PAGE

This page should contain the following standard statement:

‘SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland’s colleges have made to the development of Professional Development Awards’

No other acknowledgements should be made here.

## CONTENTS PAGE

This will give page numbers referring to the relevant sections in the document with the left alignment of titles and right alignment of page numbers. This should be checked prior to publication to ensure that everything matches.

## HISTORY OF CHANGES PAGE

The History of Changes page should contain details of the changes that have been made to the Group Award. This might include such things as:

- ◆ new Units added to the framework
- ◆ further information on articulation agreements
- ◆ new information on National Occupational Standards
- ◆ further guidance on delivery of the Group Award

The grid in the template must be used to record:

- ◆ the version number
- ◆ description of the change
- ◆ the date of change
- ◆ the Qualification Manager/Officer responsible for making the change

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction should explain the purpose of the Arrangements Document. The following standard paragraph is included in the Arrangements Document template and relevant information should be inserted where text has been italicized.

*‘This is the Arrangements Document for the Professional Development Award In xxxxxxxx, at SCQF level xx, which was validated on xxxxxxxxxxxx. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure, and guidance on delivery.’*

Anything else that is unique to the award/s should be added after the standard paragraph. For example, a brief statement on what the Group Award will provide for candidates, eg skills in an occupational area, improved professional practice, etc.

## 2 RATIONALE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OR REVISION OF THE AWARD

The heading should read:

*Either* RATIONALE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AWARD

## *Or* RATIONALE FOR THE REVISION OF THE AWARD

The rationale should provide a justification for the new or revised PDA.

- ◆ the nature and purpose of the Group Award. This should include information about key competences, which should be commensurate with the PDA title — see guidance under 5.4.1
- ◆ how it meets employers needs
- ◆ how it meets needs for specific skills within a professional area
- ◆ how the structure/framework will meet the skills/employers need
- ◆ information to show that the level of the PDA is commensurate with the SCQF descriptors for that level
- ◆ the target client group
- ◆ progression routes, increased employment opportunities, continuous professional development and links to and from other existing qualifications, eg a specialised set of skills which builds on a general HNC or providing a specialised set of skills without doing an HNC
- ◆ links to occupational standards - this is essential and Qualification Design Teams should provide a mapping of National Occupation Standards or other professional body requirements to specific Units within the PDA. An example of a mapping carried out for a PDA in Personal Enterprise is given in Appendix 5
- ◆ brief details of changes if this is a revised Group Award

The rationale will have been supported by market research or employer support. It would be useful to give a summary of the way market research supports the rationale in this section. Further details of market research could be given in the appendices.

## **3 AIMS OF THE AWARD**

### **3.1 Specific aims of the award**

The specific aims of the award should mirror those given in the Validation Document. Specific aims might include:

- ◆ development of specific knowledge
- ◆ development of specific skills
- ◆ improving professional effectiveness in a specific area
- ◆ leadership skills in a specific area
- ◆ application of knowledge to new technology

### **3.2 Other aims**

PDA's will focus on specific aims but in some cases more general aims and Core and/or other transferable skill development might also be included. This will depend on the PDA and the vocational/occupational area it serves. In some cases general aims and core/transferable skills may be incorporated into specific aims. This is particularly the case where a PDA serves a general area such as Management. For example, some of the specific aims of the PDA in Personal Enterprise included the development of enterprise skills and project management skills but this might not be the case in a PDA that deals with Road Haulage, which is more focused on specific technical skills.

You may want to number each aim if you intend to reference the aims in other sections of the Arrangements Document, eg see Section 5.2.

### **Other subsections**

Other subsections could include articulation with degree programmes or professional recognition. Subsections included should be numbered appropriately — 3.2, 3.3, etc. These could be supported by further information given in the appendices.

## **4 ACCESS TO AWARDS**

This section should include information on access to the award and any entry qualifications, experience or skills. This should include:

- ◆ prior qualifications for entry to the PDA
- ◆ prior knowledge and skills
- ◆ any requirement to have been practising a skill for a set amount of time
- ◆ any bridging qualification that might be required
- ◆ anything that would prevent a candidate taking this award

**NB** SQA has a responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure that there are no barriers to accessing its qualifications. It is therefore essential that this aspect has been carefully considered and applied. Information here should co-incide with that given in other sections. It is important to ensure that there is no information that is contrary to current legislation.

## **5 AWARD(S) STRUCTURE**

This section must include:

### **5.1 Conditions of the Group Award**

This section should state the conditions of the Group Award. For example, PDAs at SCQF level 6 will be achieved on the successful completion of at least 12 SCQF credit points. Half the SCQF credits must be at the level of the award and must comprise at least 2 Units. PDAs from SCQF level 7 – 12 will be achieved on the successful completion of at least 16 SCQF credit points. Half the SCQF credits must be at the level of the award and must comprise at least 2 Units.

### **5.2 Framework**

- ◆ A copy of the framework with:
  - validated Unit titles
  - Unit codes
  - SCQF credit points (eg 8 SCQF credit points)
  - SCQF level (eg SCQF level 7)
  - SQA credit value (eg 1 HN credit, 2 HN credits, etc.)
  - the mandatory/optional structure. This must ensure that all optional
    - i. routes meet the requirements of the award in terms of SCQF points and
    - ii. levels; aims of the award and the requirements of HEIs, employers, etc.
  
- ◆ Any further information on changes to the award that have not been covered in the Rationale.

### **5.3 Mapping information**

- ◆ An indication of how the Units map to the aims of the award. This is probably best presented in tabular form.
- ◆ An explanation of the alignment of the Units/Group Award with National Occupational Standards or other professional body requirements. An example of this is given in Appendix 5.

### **5.4 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer**

- ◆ If the PDA is designed to articulate with other programmes, eg HNC or degree programmes, an explanation of how the student will gain the necessary credits (96 in terms of HNC) or specific Units (eg a requirement for a particular Unit to articulate with a specific degree programme).
- ◆ If the HNC/D is designed to gain professional recognition, then an explanation of any specific requirement in terms of particular Units must be given.

## **6 APPROACHES TO DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT**

PDAs are Group Awards and more than just a collection of Units. As such, guidance should be given here on best practice in delivery and assessment of the Group Award, and how these would contribute to the

continuing professional development and progression skills of the candidate.

This section should include information on:

- ◆ how assessment, teaching and learning approaches can bring coherence to the PDA rather than just being the delivery of individual Units
- ◆ approaches of course team to the organisation for the delivery of the Group Award
- ◆ how learning and teaching approaches might use existing experiences or workplace to embed learning
- ◆ sequence of delivery or integration of Units
- ◆ assessment strategy
- ◆ suggestions for integrating content and/or Units and/or assessment
- ◆ possible modes of delivery. This should include full-time, part-time and open learning. An explanation should be given on how delivery and assessment may/would be affected/changed if different modes were used. This is especially important given that many candidates undertaking a PDA will be doing so whilst in employment
- ◆ an explanation of how best to develop Core and or other transferable skills if these have been included in the aims of the award.

## 7 GENERAL INFORMATION FOR CENTRES

The following information must be included in this section.

- ◆ Information on candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs. The following standard statement should be used:

**‘Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).’

- ◆ Internal and external moderation of assessments (including the GU). The following standard statement should be used, with the necessary adaptation made to italicized words:

## **Internal and external moderation**

All instruments of assessment used within *this/these Group Award(s)* should be internally moderated, using the appropriate policy within the Centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External moderation will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external moderation can be found in SQA's *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

- ◆ Any other information of a general nature that is not covered in other sections of the Arrangements Document.

## **8 GENERAL INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

This should be user friendly, written in plain English and should include:

- ◆ the main skills/knowledge provided by the PDA
- ◆ the conditions they need to meet to gain the Group Award
- ◆ the contribution the successful completion could make to their job, career, progression
- ◆ what types of learning and assessment activities they might be involved in
- ◆ the Core and/or other transferable skills that might be gained from undertaking the PDA

## **9 APPENDICES**

This could include a glossary of terms and any other information as necessary.

# Appendix 8: Arrangements Document Checklist

## Checklist for Higher National Certificate and Diploma Group Award Arrangements Document

Heading	Checklist	Yes	No
<b>Front Page</b>	The following information should be present - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Full title of award(s)</li> <li>◆ Group award(s) code(s)</li> <li>◆ Validation date</li> <li>◆ Month and year published</li> <li>◆ Version number</li> </ul>		
<b>Acknowledgement Page</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Does this contain only the standard statement?</li> </ul>		
<b>Contents Page</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Left alignment of titles and right alignment of page numbers?</li> </ul>		
<b>History of Changes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Has a history of changes grid been included?</li> </ul>		
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Has the standard statement been used?</li> <li>◆ Has any other relevant information been included?</li> </ul>		
<b>2 Rationale for the Development or Revision of the Award(s)</b>	Does this include — <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The right rationale title – development or revision?</li> <li>◆ The nature and purpose of qualification in relation to market research information. This should include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How the award meets employers' needs or skills gaps/shortages</li> <li>○ The level of the award and justification for this</li> <li>○ Explanation of the target market for the award(s)</li> <li>○ Changes required because of employer needs, where appropriate</li> <li>○ Progression within the workplace</li> <li>○ Professional recognition</li> <li>○ Link to other qualifications/developments in the sectoral area e.g HNC/D, SVQs, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<b>3 Aims of Award(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Are the specific aims clearly stated?</li> <li>◆ Have any other aims – general or core/transferable skills – been covered?</li> <li>◆ Have target groups been identified</li> <li>◆ Have progression opportunities been</li> </ul>		

	<p>identified?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have other subsections been added, as appropriate, e.g articulation links?</li> </ul>		
<b>4 Access to the Award</b>	<p>Has guidance been included on –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Prior qualification for entry to the PDA</li> <li>◆ Prior knowledge and skills</li> <li>◆ Any requirement to have been practising for a given amount of time</li> <li>◆ Any bridging learning</li> <li>◆ Anything that would prevent a candidate taking this award</li> </ul>		
<b>5 Award(s) Structure</b>	<p>Does this include -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A copy of the framework(s) with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— validated Unit titles</li> <li>— Unit codes</li> <li>— SCQF credit points and level</li> <li>— SQA credit value</li> <li>— the mandatory/optional structure clearly shown</li> </ul> </li> <li>◆ Any further information on changes that have not been covered in the rationale</li> <li>◆ Mapping information on the aims of the award to the Units</li> <li>◆ Mapping information on the alignment of the Units and Group Award to National Occupational Standards.</li> <li>◆ Any relevant information on articulation, progression or credit transfer.</li> </ul>		
<b>6 Approaches to Delivery and Assessment</b>	<p>Is there are clear explanation of -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The coherence of the Group Award</li> <li>◆ Approaches and strategies of the Course Team</li> <li>◆ The use of workplace experience or simulation (where appropriate) in learning and assessment activities.</li> <li>◆ The assessment strategy for the Group Award</li> <li>◆ Sequence of delivery of Units</li> <li>◆ Possible integration opportunities in teaching, learning and assessment</li> <li>◆ possible modes of delivery, including open learning</li> <li>◆ Opportunities to develop core/transferable skills, where appropriate</li> </ul>		

<b>7 General Information for Centres</b>	<p>Have the following standard statements been included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs</li> <li>◆ Internal and external verification</li> </ul>		
<b>8 General Information for Candidates</b>	<p>Does this contain information on -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The main skills/knowledge provided by the award</li> <li>◆ The conditions to be met to achieve the award</li> <li>◆ The contribution the PDA could make to job, career, progression</li> <li>◆ The types of learning and assessment activities they might be involved in</li> </ul>		
<b>9 Appendices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Does the number of each appendix match the reference in the Arrangements Document?</li> <li>◆ Have general and specific terms been explained?</li> </ul>		
<p>Have you removed the following from the validation document when preparing the arrangements document —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Unit specifications</li> <li>◆ Statements that identify individuals (although include if written permission has been given to include anything of relevance ie articulation agreement)</li> <li>◆ Detailed information should be removed from the validation document; however enough information should be retained to allow a new college to deliver the award eg detailed market research information is unnecessary but a summary is helpful.</li> </ul>			