Advanced Higher Course Specification

Advanced Higher Accounting Course Specification

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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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Course outline

Course title: Advanced Higher Accounting

SCQF: level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Course code: to be advised

Mandatory Units

Financial Accounting (Advanced Higher)	**12 SCQF credit points**
Management Accounting (Advanced Higher)	**12 SCQF credit points**

Course assessment **8 SCQF credit points**

This Course includes eight SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

Recommended entry

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- Higher Accounting Course

Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- degrees in Accounting and other related disciplines
- Higher National Diplomas in Accounting and other related disciplines
- careers in accountancy within a wide range of industries in the private, public and third sectors

Equality and inclusion

This Course Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Course Support Notes.*

Rationale

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities, as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles

The Advanced Higher Accounting Course provides learners with the knowledge and skills needed to understand, analyse and interpret complex financial information in order to make informed judgments and decisions.

The Course will give learners an in-depth understanding of the pivotal role accounting plays in the dynamic world of business and our ever-changing economy, highlighting the need for an in-depth understanding of financial information in all types of organisations. By acquiring this, learners will become better informed and more active citizens who are able to responsibly contribute to an organisation's success and in turn the economy.

The Course will provide many opportunities to develop learners' independence, through a high degree of independent study. This increased level of independence will offer learners opportunities to study, in-depth, the areas of the Course that particularly appeal to them, while taking on responsibility for personal time and task management, which will help prepare them for lifelong learning.

Learners will develop skills specific to accounting, which will enable them to produce, interpret, analyse and evaluate complex financial information with a high degree of accuracy and precision required by industry standards, making use of ICT when appropriate.

The Course covers a broad spectrum of learning and business contexts that allow for further progression and depth of study at a later date. It provides opportunities that allow learning to develop in a challenging and enjoyable way.

Purpose and aims of the Course

A successful organisation will be built on the strength of having management teams who have been provided with accurate and timely financial information. Ensuring that all staff, but particularly those working in the accounting department, have an understanding of finance and a responsible attitude towards it will help contribute to the success and resilience of organisations. This in turn will enable them to make a positive contribution to the economy.

The main purpose of the Course is to enable learners to understand and interpret complex financial information, which will allow them to prepare accounting statements and use them to analyse and evaluate an organisation's financial performance. A main feature of this Course is the advancement of numeracy and thinking skills.

The Course aims to enable learners to:

- develop skills in preparing complex accounting information with a high degree of accuracy and precision
- analyse and evaluate complex accounting information to aid planning, control and decision making in business and making informed judgements to support management teams
- develop an in-depth understanding of the principles which underpin costing
- gain an understanding of the regulatory framework that underpins the production of accounting information of public limited companies for external use
- apply the use of information technology in complex accounting tasks
- gain an understanding of the importance of the effective management of finance and how this contributes to successful organisations and a thriving economy

The Course combines practical and theoretical aspects of learning related to accounting, and encourages learners to think logically and to apply accounting principles in business.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

The study of Advanced Higher Accounting may be of greatest appeal to those learners who enjoy number processing and problem solving. Because of the Course's focus on independent problem-based learning, learners who are goal-orientated and solution-focused will relish the challenges posed by working independently through a series of tasks.

The Course is suitable for learners who have successfully completed Higher Accounting. It will also be of interest to learners who feel their skills are more suited to Courses which require attention to detail and who enjoy applying numeracy skills to resolve financial issues.

By doing this Course, learners will develop many transferable skills, preparing them for everyday life, the world of work and further study. These skills include: presenting; interpreting; evaluating and analysing complex financial information to resolve issues and aid decision making at all levels; and comparing and contrasting complex accounting information to draw valid conclusions and make informed judgements to support management.

Learners will also develop critical thinking and analytical skills in devising solutions to complex financial problems; ICT skills; skills in using appropriate accounting-related software for the preparation and presentation of complex accounting information; and accuracy in using financial information, which develops numeracy.

Successful completion of this Course opens up a wide range of progression routes for learners. These include Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) or degrees in Accounting or other related disciplines, and careers in a wide range of industries within the private, public or third sectors.

Course structure and conditions of award

Course structure

The Course combines practical and theoretical aspects of learning. Skills, knowledge and understanding are developed through a range of real-life business contexts within the broad discipline of accounting.

The Course consists of two mandatory Units. Within each there is a degree of flexibility in how study is carried out. By its nature, the Course develops a wide range of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, by providing learning opportunities in real-life contexts. These include: essential employability skills and attitudes, including flexibility; adaptability; independence; critical thinking; reliability and working with others; and effective use of ICT in accounting-related contexts.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a number of ways.

However, there is scope in the design of the Units to allow the Course to be taught in an integrated experiential way. It would be beneficial if the use of ICT permeated all Units.

Financial Accounting (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, learners will develop and enhance skills, knowledge and understanding relating to the preparation of complex financial accounting information for public limited companies. They will carry out learning activities that allow them to investigate, analyse and report on the organisation's current financial position and performance. Learners will gain an in-depth understanding of the regulatory framework governing published financial statements.

Management Accounting (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, learners will develop and enhance skills, knowledge and understanding relating to the provision of internal accounting information, and the ability to use a range of complex accounting techniques. They will carry out a range of learning activities to identify and calculate costs. Learners will gain an in-depth understanding of the significant impact that management accounting information has on the planning, control and decision making within a business. This will give learners the opportunity to provide solutions which can assist in future business financial planning.

Conditions of award

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Further information on the assessment of skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course is given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course is given in this section.

This includes:

- applying knowledge of the accounting regulatory framework
- applying knowledge of the regulatory framework to produce and analyse income statements, balance sheets and cash flow statements (with associated disclosure notes) for external publication
- producing consolidated accounting information for multiple company entities
- demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the accountant's role in meeting organisational goals, including profit maximisation and social responsibility
- using management accounting information to produce a range of budgets to aid internal planning
- applying a wide range of complex cost accounting techniques to help control business performance
- producing management accounting information to facilitate business decision making
- using ICT to produce and communicate accounting information in a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts

Skills, knowledge and understanding to be included in the Course will be appropriate to the SCQF level of the Course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level (www.sqa.org.uk/scqf).

Assessment

Information about assessment for the Course is included in the *Course Assessment Specification*, which provides full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specification.*

They can be assessed on a Unit-by-Unit basis or by combined assessment.

They will be assessed on a pass/fail basis within centres. SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgements are consistent and meet national standards.

The assessment of the Units in this Course will be as follows.

Financial Accounting (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, learners will be required to provide evidence of their:

- knowledge and understanding of the accounting regulatory framework
- ability to prepare financial statements of a public limited company for external reporting purposes
- ability to evaluate the performance of a business organisation, using financial and non-financial indicators
- ability to prepare basic consolidated financial statements

Management Accounting (Advanced Higher)
In this Unit, learners will be required to provide evidence of their:

- ability to apply costing techniques to help management control business performance
- ability to calculate complex management accounting information to aid business decision making
- ability to produce a range of budgets to aid internal planning

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units is provided in the *National Assessment Resource.*

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of added value[1]. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course, as defined in the Course rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge or application.

[1] Definitions can be found here: http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58409.html

In the Advanced Higher Accounting Course, added value will focus on:

- challenge
- application

This will be assessed through a combination of an Accounting question paper[2] and an Accounting project[3].

The question paper will require demonstration of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated from across the Course.

The project will extend learners' knowledge of accounting concepts by requiring them to apply relevant skills and understanding, and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

[2] Definitions can be found here: http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58409.html
[3] See link above for definition.

Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad generic skills through this Course. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Course are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Course where there are appropriate opportunities.

2 Numeracy

2.1 Number process
2.2 Money, time and measurement
2.3 Information handling

4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship

4.1 Employability
4.2 Information and communications technology (ICT)

5 Thinking skills

5.3 Applying
5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these skills is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills will be appropriate to the level of the Course. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for the Course is given in the *Course Support Notes*.

Administrative information

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History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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