

Implementation Guide for Access 1 and 2

Introduction

This guide is designed to help staff in centres delivering or considering to deliver Access 1 and 2 qualifications.

Several guidance documents are already available on SQA's website that may provide support for SQA Co-ordinators and other centre staff, including *Induction Guide*, *Guide for new Co-ordinators*, *Guide to Quality Assurance*, etc. While these guides contain information relating to National Qualifications at Access 1 and 2 levels, they also contain a lot of detail relating to qualifications at other levels, and other types of qualification such as Higher National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications. The purpose of this guide is to try to gather the information in one place that is only relevant to Access 1 and 2 qualifications.

Qualifications at Access 1 and 2 levels

The basic building block for all SQA qualifications is the Unit and there are several different categories of Unit at level 1 and 2. Units may be taken individually or grouped together into Courses or Group Awards. The various types of Units, Courses and Group Awards available at Access 1 and 2 are described in the table below.

Level	Qualification description	Details
Access 2	Units	Access 2 Units were developed in 1999 through Higher Still, mainly as part of Courses. There are also several Units which pre-date the Higher Still development and are still available and listed in the NQ Catalogue.
Access 2	Courses	Courses were developed in 1999 as part of the Higher Still development. To gain a Course, candidates must achieve three specified Unit credits.
Access 2	Scottish Group Awards (SGAs)	There is one SGA at Access 2 level. However, it can be achieved in different combinations called a single award (9 Unit credits), a double award (14 Unit credits) and a triple award (18 Unit credits).
Access 2	Skillstart Group Award	The Skillstart Group Award requires candidates to achieve 6 Unit credits at Access 2 level.
Access 1	Derived Units	When Access provision was developed in 1999 through Higher Still it was decided that Access 1 Units should be developed based on the individual outcomes of the Units at Access 2 level. On this basis, a group of Units were developed at Access 1 level and came to be described as 'Derived' Units as they were effectively subsets of Access 2 Units.

Access 1	Independent Units	It was decided in 2003 that there was a need for some Access 1 Units that were not derived from the Outcomes of Access 2 Units. Centres had indicated that there is a group of candidates who were not capable of achieving the Derived Units but could, with some assistance, achieve Units at Access 1 level. On this basis 11 ‘Independent’ Access 1 Units were introduced in 2003 and others have subsequently been added.
Access 1	Supported Units	These Units were first developed in 2003 after the introduction of the Independent Units. The Supported Units were developed in response to an SQA consultation on Access 1 provision which showed clear evidence of a need for a new category of Access 1 Unit that would allow candidates that may always need a level of adult support to gain certification within the national framework. The Supported Units were developed for delivery to candidates with a variety of support needs and nine specific levels of support were identified. It was agreed that candidates would be certificated nationally for achieving Supported Units at Access 1, but that the specific support level candidates required in order to achieve the Units should be recorded and held locally by centres.
N/A	Curriculum Descriptors	These are learning programmes, similar to SQA Units in terms of their coverage. They were developed by HSDU at the time of Higher Still with the intention that they should be used for candidates who were unable to achieve the requirements of the Access 1 Derived Units. These are not certificated by SQA.

Units

Each Unit in the SQA catalogue is given a credit value. The credit value relates to the expected time it will take to deliver the Unit. In most cases Units have a notional design length of 40 hours and are worth one Unit credit. However, there are some 20 hour Units worth half a Unit credit and some 80 hour Units worth two Unit credits. At Access 1 and 2 levels almost all of the Units are worth one Unit credit.

Although one credit Units have a notional design length of 40 hours, it is important to note that at Access 1 and 2 level this length is notional and that the time it takes to deliver a Unit may vary widely depending upon the individual candidate. Some candidates will pick things up easily and will be ready for assessment quickly while others will take much longer and these candidates will require more time (possibly much more than 40 hours) before they can be assessed.

Each SQA Unit is written to a standard format. The Unit specification has three main headings:

- ◆ *general information* — general and administrative information about the Unit

- ◆ *statement of standards* — this is the mandatory part of the Unit specification and contains the following:
 - Outcomes
 - Performance Criteria
 - Evidence Requirements
- ◆ *support notes* — these are not mandatory but provide guidance about the intentions, scope and objectives of the standards. They contain the following sections:
 - Guidance on the content and context for the Unit
 - Guidance on learning and teaching approaches for the Unit
 - Guidance on approaches to assessment for the Unit
 - Candidates with additional support needs

Where to find copies of National Unit specifications

There are two ways you can download Access 1 and 2 Unit specifications:

1. Through the NQ Unit Search facility on the main SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk).
2. Through the Access 1 and 2 website (www.access1and2.org.uk). Follow the links to Access 1 qualifications or Access 2 qualifications from the homepage and select the subject area/Units you wish to download.

Teaching and assessing candidates

The role of the teacher/lecturer in a centre is to deliver the learning and teaching to prepare candidates for assessment. Staff in centres may develop their own learning materials or work with other centres to share the development and materials. Some Local Authorities have set up networks to encourage collaboration in developing materials and sharing experience between centres.

Centres should also consult the Learning Teaching Scotland website (www.ltscotland.org.uk) and check for materials that may assist in the delivery of specific Units. The NQ online section of the LTS website offers a variety of online materials which are organised in subject order and may be downloaded.

Once the assessor (teacher/lecturer) judges that the candidate is ready to be assessed the candidate should be assessed using the appropriate assessment materials.

Where can I find assessments for Access Units?

SQA provides a bank of assessment materials known as National Assessment Bank materials (NABs). However, not all Units at Access 1 and 2 level have NABs. Most Access 2 Units have a NAB and the relevant parts of the Access 2 NABs should be used for the Derived Units at Access 1. Where a NAB is available for a given Unit, centres should use this for assessment purposes. To check if a particular Unit has a supporting NAB, centres should consult the *Guide to Access 1 and 2 Staff Support Materials*.

Units at Access 1 Supported level and Independent level do not have NABs. These Units have extended support notes in the Unit specification, including an assessment exemplar.

Copies of NABs are available from the secure area of SQA's website. The SQA Co-ordinator in each centre has a password to access this secure site, and NABs can be downloaded from there.

Modifying the National Assessment Bank pack

Centres may alter the assessment instruments given in the National Assessment Bank pack for assessment and reassessment purposes provided that the same standard is maintained. However, where any significant changes have been made to the instrument of assessment, it is recommended that centres seek prior verification of their materials to ensure that the same standard is being maintained. Prior verification involves an External Verifier checking over an assessment or assessments and providing feedback to the centre.

Centre approval

Before staff within a centre can begin delivering an SQA qualification they must first check that their centre has approval to offer it. Most centres that come under Local Authority control will have automatic approval to offer all Access 1 and 2 qualifications. Centres that do not come under direct Local Authority control should check their approval status in relation to the Units they seek to offer.

For full details of how to seek approval for new qualifications, centres should consult the Approval section of SQA's website.

Verification

Verification is one of a range of Quality Assurance measures used by SQA to ensure that centres' assessment decisions are sound (valid, reliable and practicable) and that National Standards are being uniformly applied. Verification ensures that SQA qualifications are being assessed to a common standard.

Internal verification

Internal verification should be an integral part of a centre's Quality Assurance process. Centres are responsible for internal verification and should have an internal verification system (system of quality checks) in place. The Internal Verifier(s) in a centre provide(s) support to the assessors and checks that:

- ◆ each assessor is assessing to the correct standard
- ◆ each assessor is making consistent and accurate internal assessment decisions

For full details of how to carry out internal verification, centres should consult the *Guide to Internal Moderation for Centres*.

External verification

Verification is the process by which SQA ensures that national standards are applied in assessments carried out by centres. Verification takes place on Units, Standard Grades and National Courses. There are two main types of verification:

Central verification

For this type of verification, centres are asked to submit assessment evidence relating to a group of candidates for particular Units/Courses. The Verifier then looks at

candidates' evidence individually in his/her own time or as part of a team where Verifiers meet at a central location to look at candidates' evidence together.

Visiting verification

This type of verification takes place when the Verifier visits the centre and either observes the assessment or moderates the candidates' work.

For further details on external verification, centres should consult *Verification Visits: A Guide for Colleges, Employers and Training Providers*.

Development visit

Centres can request a visit from an External Verifier to discuss particular issues in relation to the assessment of Units. This could be a centre new to delivering qualifications at Access 1 and 2 levels looking for advice and guidance on assessing and delivering these qualifications. SQA charges a fee of £200 for development visits and they must be arranged by phoning the Verification Team.

Prior verification

When a centre alters the National Assessment Bank materials it is recommended that centres seek prior verification of the assessment to ensure that the same standard is being maintained as in the NAB. Prior verification is carried out by a Verifier.

For further details on prior verification centres should contact SQA's Verification Team on 0845 213 5345.

Registrations, entries and results

Registration is the process by which prospective candidates have their personal details (surname, first initial, date of birth, address and gender) recorded by the centre and passed to SQA. Registration is only for candidates who do not already have a Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) and a candidate should only be registered once.

Registration creation involves centres sending candidate details (surname, first initial, date of birth, address and gender) to SQA. On receiving these details SQA will search its database for any candidate records with matching details and then:

- ◆ If no matches are found (ie if this candidate has not been registered already by another centre) the candidate is allocated with a SCN and registered onto SQA's database. The new SCN is then reported back to the centre.

or

- ◆ If any potential matches are found these will be reported back to the centre, as it may be that there is more than one candidate with the same name and date of birth. However, it is vital that each candidate has only one SCN as this record will hold details of his/her SQA achievements for life.

Centres must wait until all registrations have been successfully processed before entering candidates for qualifications.

Registration update is the process by which centres can update the records of any candidate with an existing SCN. This function is used to update address details for candidates who have moved house and it is important that these details are kept up to date as the candidate's certificate will be issued to the address shown on SQA's database at the time the certificate is issued.

Entries

'Entry' is the process by which centres indicate which qualifications candidates are aiming to achieve and the expected completion date of the qualification. For National Courses the centre notifies SQA of the Course code and level and the Unit code(s) and level(s).

For further information on registrations, entries and results please refer to the Operational Help Centre, available through SQA's website.

Levels, Credits and SCQF

Units and Courses are identified by a '4+2' digit code. The four digits identify the subject and the two digits identify the level. A Course can easily be identified as the code starts with the letter 'C', similarly a Unit will usually start with the letter 'D'. Access 1 level is always represented by '07' and Access 2 by '08'.

For example 'C003 08' is the Course code for *Art and Design* at Access 2 and 'D9ET 07' is the Access 1 Unit *Handling Money*.

In the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), Access 1 is SCQF level 1 and Access 2 is SCQF level 2.

SQA Co-ordinator

Each school has an SQA Co-ordinator. The SQA Co-ordinator is the main point of contact for the information flow between the school and SQA. All general correspondence, circulars, assessment materials, operational guides and promotional materials are either sent directly or copied to your SQA Co-ordinator. The SQA Co-ordinator will have a good general knowledge of SQA's operating processes and procedures, and will be able to direct you to appropriate information. The SQA Co-ordinator also has the password to gain access to the National Assessment Bank materials on the secure area of SQA's website.

Customer Service Managers

SQA has a team of Customer Service Managers (CSMs) who each cover a geographical area of Scotland. CSMs can offer centres advice and assistance on various SQA systems and processes such as internal verification, centre approval, registrations, entries and results, etc. To find out who your CSM is and how you can contact them please contact our Customer Contact Centre.

SQA.net

SQA.net is an internet-based facility that allows the SQA Co-ordinator in each centre to view candidate registration, entry and results data relating to candidates from their centre. It also allows Co-ordinators to send data directly to SQA for processing. The use of SQA.net is strictly controlled to prevent misuse and to restrict access only to specified staff and specified workstations. However, this system does allow centres a window into what data SQA is holding on its system at any given time.

Support network

SQA offer centres the opportunity to join the Access 1 and 2 support network. The support network is a simple list published on a website, showing the contact details for centres who deliver particular subjects at Access 1 and 2 level. Anyone from a

centre involved in the delivery of Access 1 and 2 provision can ask to join the network, which means their name, contact details and the subjects they are interested in, are added to list of names on the website. The intention of the support network is to encourage contact between centres to share experiences, seek advice, compare approaches and in some cases exchange materials.

Practitioners who are not currently on the support network and wish to join should e-mail **sandy.riddell@sqa.org.uk** for an application. Once an application is submitted, the practitioner's details are added to the website and they are sent the website address.

Group Awards

There are no Group Awards available at Access 1 level.

At Access 2 level the following Group Awards are available:

G852 08	Skillstart 1
G7V6 08	Scottish Group Award – General Single (Access 2)
G7V7 08	Scottish Group Award – General Double (Access 2)
G7V8 08	Scottish Group Award – General Triple (Access 2)

Copies of the frameworks which identify the Units that must be achieved to qualify for each Group Award can be downloaded from the Access 1 and 2 website.