

Foreword: about this Update

This is the first update about Access 1 and 2. It is aimed at teachers and lecturers in special schools, secondary schools, further education colleges and any other SOA centres which offer provision at this level. Its purpose is to support centres delivering Access 1 and 2, and to help keep them up-to-date with current developments.

Access 1 and 2 provision includes the following:

- ◆ Access 1 Units
- ◆ Access 2 Units and Clusters
- ◆ Scottish Group Awards (Access 2)*
- ◆ Skillstart Group Awards (Access 2)*
- ◆ Lifestart and Workstart Group Awards (Access 2)

* There are also Group Awards at Access 3

The Convener of SQA's Assessment Panel for Access 1 and 2 is Coral Bell, of Perth and Kinross Council. This is her introduction to this update.

'Access 1 and 2 National Qualifications demonstrate that "Opportunity for All", which was one of the key aims of the Higher Still development programme, is being met.

For the first time all young people in education have parity with their peers in being able to achieve nationally-recognised qualifications. The amount of time required to undertake Units, Clusters and Group Awards is no longer a barrier – all young people, and adults returning to education and training, now have greater opportunity to fulfil their ambitions.

Many educational establishments and centres have taken up the opportunity offered by the diversity of Units and Clusters available, and have tailored the curriculum to match the needs of candidates and give them recognition for their efforts. Uptake of Units has increased markedly over the last two sessions.

This update tells you about Units, Clusters and Group Awards at Access 1 and 2; assessment; support materials; and plans for the future. It also answers some frequently asked questions.

Access 1 and 2 provision is evolving and changing to meet the needs of candidates and plans to develop new provision or revise current provision are highlighted. The views of practitioners are essential to ensure that SQA is meeting the needs of its stakeholders so that the learning needs, aptitudes and interests of all candidates can be met and success ensured.'

- ◆ See page 2 for examples of how Access 1 and 2 qualifications are being delivered in different kinds of centres.

Candidate entry and completion for Access Clusters

Clusters are groupings of National Units at Access 2 and Access 3. To ensure that candidates are awarded the Cluster on completion of all the component Units, you have to enter the candidate for the Cluster as well as the individual Units.

You can use any completion month throughout the year for Units in a Cluster. For those Clusters with completion dates before May, certification will be weekly, as soon as all component Units have been completed. Clusters with completion months of May and June will be certificated along with the main August diet, as long as Unit results are submitted to us by the completion date specified.

There is more information on entries in *Registrations, Entries and Results: a guide for schools 2001/2002*, (AA1239, February 2002).

Who is offering Access 1 and 2, and how?

Many centres, including schools, further education colleges, and special schools are offering Access 1 and 2 Units, Clusters and Group Awards. On these pages, we're having a look at some of the different ways Access 1 and 2 Units and Clusters are being offered in centres.

A special school

Headwell School in Fife uses a combination of Curriculum Descriptors and Access 1 and 2 Units to link with activities already being delivered in the classroom. The Units are drawn from the following areas: Physical Education; Personal and Social Education; Personal Care; Home Economics; Enterprise through Craft; and Computing through Mathematics.

The school links activities for different Units in meaningful ways. For example, candidates made Christmas decorations whilst doing the Practical Craft Skills – Producing Artefacts (Access 1) Unit. These were sold at the Christmas Fayre (allowing candidates to demonstrate enterprise and numeracy skills), and the proceeds will contribute to a residential visit (allowing them to demonstrate Working with Others skills). Pupils recently completed a Japanese study which may allow them to gain one or both of the

Access 1 Life in Another Country Units.

Many candidates use augmentative systems, signs and symbols to communicate. Staff had to incorporate symbols and programme pupil touch talkers to allow access to Units (choice and decision-making was part of this process and embedded in the assessment of candidates' work).

A further education college

Some colleges are finding that candidates already have a range of Access Units and Clusters when they come to college. For some of these candidates, progression may be to Scottish Group Awards (single, double or triple). For others, smaller programmes of Units devised by the centre are more appropriate for candidates.

Stevenson College has devised its own programmes based on Access level Units to meet the needs of young adults and adult returners –

including preparing them for independent living and employment where appropriate. The programmes also cater for the needs of candidates who cannot attend college on a full-time basis.

When candidates start college, the college allows some time to find out, through its internal verification procedures, what provision would best meet candidates' needs.

Although Access Clusters may be offered, the college finds that there is more flexibility in packaging the Units from the Clusters (plus other free-standing Units) into coherent programmes, for example vocational programmes such as 'An Introduction to the Modern Office'; or programmes which can prepare candidates for independent living, such as 'Step In' and 'Moving On'. The expansion of provision at Access has been welcomed by the college, as it has provided more opportunities for lateral progression as well as vertical.

National Assessment Bank (NAB)

Every Access 2 Unit in a National Cluster has a National Assessment Bank (NAB) exemplar. There are no plans to develop further NAB exemplars at Access 2 at present as the current NAB exemplars have been written generically and can be modified to provide re-assessments.

Centres are free to devise their own assessment instruments and these can be submitted to our Moderation Section in Glasgow for prior moderation. We will arrange for vetting by an External Moderator and, if necessary, amendment. Assessment instruments submitted by centres may, with the centre's permission, be added to the National Assessment Bank.

Where a Unit assessment embeds assessment of Core Skills components, centres must submit the assessment instrument for prior moderation or use the NAB Unit assessment.

Centres can modify NABs, but if significant changes have been made, the amendments must be included with candidate evidence if the Unit is selected for moderation. Again, where a Unit assessment embeds assessment of Core Skills, any significant changes should be checked with us first.

We welcome comments from teachers and lecturers on the appropriateness of NAB materials. Please write to the

Assessment Services Unit in our Dalkeith office.

At present, because Access 1 Units are derived from Access 2 Outcomes, there are no NAB packs for Access 1 Units. Instead, the relevant sections of the Access 2 NAB pack, may be used.

Centres receive two free copies of each NAB pack they have requested. If you would like to check which NABs your centre should have, or to purchase additional copies, please contact SOA Sales on 0141-242 2168 (e-mail: sales@sqa.org.uk). Please note that there is a charge of £15 for additional NAB packs purchased.

Department of Special Education in a mainstream secondary school

Lochgelly High School has a large Department of Special Education, and all pupils have a Record of Needs. Before National Qualifications were introduced, the department offered a number of National Certificate Modules, and it has found the transition to National Qualifications Units, Clusters and Group Awards straightforward.

Initially the department offered English and Communication and Mathematics Units at Access 2, but it has gradually included National Units for Personal and Social Education which incorporates the existing vocational, community and independent living skills programmes. National Units in Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies, and Social Subjects, are being considered for delivery in the near future.

Good links with the Home Economics Department have enabled shared delivery of a Home Economics Cluster at Access 2. Drama, Art, Physical Education, Computing and Science Units and Clusters are

delivered by mainstream teachers in consultation with department staff.

The department benefits from good relationships with the local special school whose students, where appropriate, are included in relevant National Units. To ensure that there is no duplication of Units delivered/ offered to Department of Special Education students at college, there is regular consultation.

The curriculum is flexible and needs-driven. Individualised Educational Programmes can include both National Units at Access level and Standard Grade subjects which are delivered by mainstream subject specialists. The department is proud of the fact that some students have achieved double Scottish Group Awards with the support of mainstream teachers.

A mainstream secondary school

Mainholm Academy offers a range of Access Units and the Skillstart (Access 2) Group Award. The school plans to build up to Clusters in Social Subjects and Home Economics. Some candidates take a mixture of Access Units and Standard Grades.

The school works closely with the local college, and believes there are great benefits to candidates and centres in this kind of collaboration.

For English and Mathematics, Access 1 and 2 candidates are taught in the same class, which is very motivating for Access 1 candidates. The Skillstart programme is very successful and offers greatly stimulating and enjoyable activities for candidates. For example, candidates doing the Unit Participating in Leisure Time Activities (Access 2), will participate in visits to cinemas, restaurants and the bowling. Another Access 2 PSE Unit, Contributing to an Enterprise Activity, is integrated with the Skillstart Unit Catering (Food Service): An Activity Approach (Access 2) to bake foods which can then be sold in the school's Garden Café. This has proved to be very rewarding and motivating for candidates.

We'd like to acknowledge the assistance of Headwell School, Lochgelly High School, Stevenson College and Mainholm Academy in sharing their good practice.

Consultation – Access 1

We recently carried out a consultation to investigate the need for more Units at Access 1. Feedback received over the last year suggests there may be a need for further Units in the following areas:

- ◆ Mathematics
- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Personal Profiling
- ◆ Using a Computer
- ◆ Art
- ◆ Physical Education
- ◆ Home Economics
- ◆ Craft and Design
- ◆ Sampling Work

Copies of the consultation letter were sent to all education authority special schools, independent special schools, Further Education authorities and Directors of Education. Feedback on the responses to the consultation will be given to centres in late Spring 2002.

New and revised provision 2001-2002

Two Units in music have been developed at Access 1. These are:

D7S4 07 Music: Performing and Creating – Creating (Access 1)

D7S5 07 Music: Listening and Performing – Performing (Access 1)

Two further Units in social subjects have been developed at Access 1. These are derived from the Unit D527 08 Contrasting (Access 2).

D75M 07 Social Subjects: Contrasting – Demonstrating Knowledge (Access 1)

D75L 07 Social Subjects: Contrasting – Making a Contrast (Access 1)

A free-standing Unit D75N 08 Life in Another Country – Optional Language (Access 2) has been developed to enable candidates to study countries other than the ones associated with the five languages in the Access 2 Modern Languages Cluster: French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish. This Unit follows the same format as the existing Life in Another Country (Access 2). The NAB for the Life in Another Country Unit is also being updated to clarify some of the terminology.

Following feedback from centres, the Access 2 NABs for the Mathematics Units Using Mathematics in Everyday Situations 1, 2 and 3 have been revised. The Units themselves: Using Mathematics in Everyday Situations 1 (Access 2); Using Mathematics in Everyday Situations 2 (Access 2); Using Mathematics in Everyday Situations 1 – Money (Access 1); and Using Mathematics in Everyday Situations 1 – Weight and Measurement (Access 1) have had minor revisions made to them so that they will still correspond to the revised NABs.

Further information about new and revised Units was issued to centres in December 2001. All new and revised Units will be added to the SQA website on www.sqa.org.uk/higher-still, and included on the next National Qualifications CD-ROM.

Access support materials

Note: HSDU support materials are now managed by the National Qualifications Support Team (NQST) in Learning and Teaching Scotland.

Two support packs distributed to centres in November/December 2001 were Access in Modern Languages: A Support Pack for staff (HSDU), and Access 2 Social Subjects – an exemplification of delivering the cluster in the context of Housing (HSDU).

A support pack, Supporting Candidate Assessment in National Qualifications has been developed by HSDU in co-operation with SQA. The advice and support given covers all levels and a range of subjects and will be relevant to all staff. One section deals specifically with amending Access 3 NABs.

Access CD-ROM (HSDU)

The main resource for Access is the CD-ROM (distributed in December 2001). This has all major HSDU support documents for Access 1, 2 and 3, and also key information and documents distributed by SQA. It includes both general and subject-specific documents:

General

- ◆ Arrangement documents including current Unit specifications (SQA)
- ◆ Access/Intermediate 1 Scottish Group Awards support pack (SQA)
- ◆ Matching of Access 1 Units to Access 2 Outcomes (SQA)
- ◆ Curriculum Descriptors for pre-certification level (HSDU)
- ◆ All generic Access support documentation distributed by HSDU that is still relevant

Subject-specific support

- ◆ All Access 2 packs distributed up to November 2001 (HSDU)
- ◆ All Access 3 packs distributed to departments in schools/colleges up to November 2001 (HSDU)
- ◆ A list of any other Intermediate 1/ Access 3 support packs which may be appropriate to some students

working at Access level as a step to Intermediate 1 (HSDU)

Also in development is a CD-ROM containing all Access 2 NABs (SQA). You will be able to adapt the NABs to adjust font size, create larger spaces for candidate responses, and make variations to the questions. This resource will allow centres to make permissible adjustments to NABs where layout, carrier language or some other feature is proving to be a barrier to some candidates.

Extra copies of support material may be obtained from:

- ◆ National Qualifications Support Team – Learning and Teaching Scotland (tel: 01382 443600)
- ◆ SQA Sales (tel: 0141-242 2168)
- ◆ NQ Online (Learning and Teaching Scotland) Centres will be able to access NQ support materials from April 2002 at www.LTScotland.com

Frequently asked questions

Are there NABs for Access 1 Units?

No. At present, the Outcomes in Access 1 Units are based on the Outcomes in Access 2 Units. The NAB materials issued for Access 2 Units can therefore be used for Access 1 Units.

Will it cost more to complete an Access 2 Unit by doing some of the Outcomes as Access 1 Units?

Yes. The cost of entering for an Access 2 Unit is the fee for a single Unit. If a candidate does two Access 1 Units and then enters for an Access 2 Unit to complete the remaining Outcome, the fee will be for three Units.

What is meant by registration?

Each candidate being entered for an SQA qualification must be registered with SQA and allocated a nine-digit Scottish Candidate Number (SCN). This is a once-only process and no candidate should be registered for a second time. Most candidates in schools will be registered in S3 or S4. It is very important that candidates progressing to further education keep their same SCN number.

Will Access 1 Units always be derived from Access 2 Outcomes?

At present, all Access 1 Units are derived from Access 2 Outcomes. However, feedback from teachers and lecturers is indicating that there may be a need for further Units at Access 1 which are not derived from Access 2 Units. SQA carried out consultation on this towards the end of 2001. Centres will be informed of the outcome of the consultation in late Spring 2002.

What are Curriculum Descriptors?

Curriculum Descriptors contain Learning Targets and cover roughly the same areas as the Elaborated 5-14 Curriculum Framework. They illustrate ways in which a candidate's progress towards the Outcome of a particular Access 1 Unit can be planned and recorded. The Learning Targets are based on a Performance Criterion (PC) of an Outcome in an Access 1 Unit. Achievement of Curriculum Descriptors is recorded using Individual Education Programmes and/or the Progress File. There is no formal certification by SQA for Curriculum Descriptors.

I would like to check that I am delivering and assessing Units to the correct standard. Who should I check this with?

You can request a development visit from an External Moderator. There is charge of £100 for a visit. A visit could involve staff from more than one centre – and this can help to spread the cost.

Access uptake 2000/2001

Session 2000/2001 figures on uptake for Units and Clusters at Access 1 has shown an increase in candidates. The five most popular Access 1 Units were:

- ◆ D2SN 07 Healthy Basic Cooking – Using a Cooker/Microwave
- ◆ D3JY 07 English and Communication: Oral Communication – Delivering
- ◆ D3JX 07 English and Communication: Oral Communication – Responding
- ◆ D2S9 07 Developing Drama Skills – Participating With Others
- ◆ D3K0 07 Using Mathematics in Everyday Situations 1 – Time

The five most popular Access 2 Clusters were:

- ◆ English and Communication
- ◆ Mathematics
- ◆ Physical Education
- ◆ Computing
- ◆ Home Economics

Note: many candidates opt to do the Units that make up Clusters on a free-standing basis, or as part of a Group Award, rather than complete Clusters.

Carry on Skillstart: Pre-vocational training links with Access qualifications

'We are a Skillstart centre' said the manager of a centre offering pre-vocational training to school leavers in the mid 1990s. Visit the centre today and you will hear the same comment. Skillstart is carrying on with links to Access level.

Skillstart 1 and Skillstart 2 were available in the early 1990s as pre-vocational qualifications for school leavers with learning difficulties, or for those who wished to return to basic education and pre-vocational training. They were originally designed for use on government training schemes, and were given early recognition for Local Enterprise Company funding. The qualifications covered basic Core Skills and pre-vocational skills. Skillstart 1 provided taster experiences across several vocational areas, and Skillstart 2 concentrated on particular vocational areas.

Many centres who started using Skillstart in those early days continue to do so. We invited a number of these centres to comment on Skillstart. Here are some of their responses:

Comment from a Further Education college

'We have been running Skillstart for about ten years in this college. We run a totally vocationally-based Course and prepare our students for jobs. The basic pre-vocational element of Skillstart gives our students a chance to get into a variety of work places and learn about the jobs that go on there.

Since it became available, Skillstart has been a core element of our Workwise programme. It was a first attempt to provide a Group Award with a vocational slant and places young people with learning difficulties on the SVQ ladder. It is attractive to Local Enterprise Companies and external funding bodies, such as ESF, since it provides a measure of achievement.'

How has Skillstart adjusted to change?

Lifestart, Workstart (see below) and Skillstart 1, with their well proven track records for delivery, were used in the Higher Still initiative as sources for new National Units at Access, particularly at Access 2.

Before long it became obvious that development was two-way. Skillstart has always recognised a progression from school to pre-vocational training, so the Skillstart qualifications were revised, taking into account Higher Still developments at Access. Skillstart 1 and 2, revised as Skillstart (Access 2) and Skillstart (Access 3) now incorporate Access Units in Computing and in Personal and Social Education. The revised Skillstart qualifications also contain communication and numeracy Units with the same level of Core Skill requirement as Access 2, but with a difference – the student has an opportunity to apply and achieve these skills in a work-related environment. Lifestart and Workstart will not be available after 2004, their purpose being met within the wide range of Access Units and by the Access 2 and 3 Group Awards.

How are candidates using the revised Skillstart awards?

Schools delivering particular Computing and Personal and Social Education Units at Access are providing their candidates with opportunities to put these Units towards Skillstart. This can be very important to candidates working at this level, who often undertake school programmes with a strong personal and social development element and may use computing to present their work. These are the very candidates who may leave school to take up a Skillstart pre-vocational Course at a further education college or with a training provider.

Comment from a Further Education College

'We have moved to the revised version, it takes time and work, but we see advantages for our students, for example:

- ◆ we run the new numeracy unit in our work placements, students see the relevance of applying these skills to the jobs they are doing and we can assess naturally as opportunities arise
- ◆ the Personal and Social Development Unit helps our students structure their personal management while on placement and the rigour of undertaking Units and being assessed shows students the importance of these personal skills'

Comment from a training provider

'It may be very familiar to us, but to them it is fresh and new. Skillstart is the first certificate some of our trainees get.'

Comment from a special school

'Skillstart allows more steps to be taken into college life for our students. They can add vocational elements to their school achievements. Parents welcome the idea of progression routes for their son/daughter which include vocational tasters.'

Skillstart carries on

Skillstart allows candidates to start and sustain pre-vocational training, providing opportunities to top up Core Skills at a basic level after leaving school. The inclusion of Access Units can add value to school achievement at any time in the future – whenever the person takes a first step into training for the world of work.

Comment from adult returner

We leave you with a comment from an adult returner who is a lone parent with a young family.

'I'm better organised now. I've had to learn how to organise my time, keep my work together and make arrangements for my children, and I've done it. I'm not stopping now, I'm going to try college.'

Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge opinions and comments from many Skillstart centres, in particular the contributions to this issue from Borders College, Mary Russell School, Jet 2000 now Inverness College – Dingwall Site, Stevenson College and Scottish Enterprise Grampian.

Lifestart and Workstart

Many of the Units in Lifestart and Workstart (which were developed using a similar mix of Core Skills and pre-vocational skills, but with the emphasis on practising the skills in a learning environment, such as a school, rather than in a working environment) have been used as sources for National Units at Access 2. The track record of Lifestart and Workstart has also played an important part in the development of SGAs at Access level.

To support the phased introduction of Access level qualifications, the Lifestart and Workstart qualifications remain in the National Qualifications Catalogue until 2002. They will then be phased out over the two years ending in 2004. This means that they will not appear in the National Qualifications Catalogue for 2002/2003, but they will still be available to allow candidates to complete a programme of Units over more than one year, and to allow for candidates who do not enter for a Group Award until the end of the programme. Entries for Lifestart and Workstart will be accepted until 31 July 2004. Results for all of the Units which are components of these Group Awards must be submitted to SQA by 30 September 2004.

Certification and Moderation

Completed Access 1 Units can be used as evidence towards the relevant Access 2 Unit. For example, a candidate may have completed an Access 1 Unit which corresponds to one of the Outcomes of an Access 2 Unit. To complete the Access 2 Unit, the candidate will only need to provide evidence of the remaining Outcome(s) of the Access 2 Unit. The candidate would then be eligible for the Access 2 Unit on the basis of this evidence plus the completed Access 1 Unit(s). Please note that to be awarded the Access 2 Unit the candidate has to be entered for it – this will not be done automatically.

Evidence of achievement of all of the Outcomes must be available for moderation. This may be in the form of the candidate's Scottish Qualifications Certificate showing achievement of the Access 1 Unit(s), or actual evidence from doing the Access 1 Unit(s). Evidence of achievement of the outstanding Access 2 Outcome(s) should also be available for moderation.

Not all Access 2 Outcomes have corresponding Access 1 Units – only the most common subjects were selected for Access 1 Units in the first instance. However, the framework may well be expanded if there is a demand for particular Units.

Moderation

There are three types of moderation – visiting, central and postal. Access 1 and 2 Units use all three. If your centre is not selected for moderation, you have to retain candidate evidence for moderation for at least three weeks after the completion date of the Unit.

If you have been selected for moderation, you should retain all candidate evidence for the appropriate Unit until at least three weeks after a moderation decision has been made by SQA. For Units with completion dates of later than March, you will be advised to retain evidence until after the selection of Units for retrospective moderation has taken place.

For more about moderation, see *External Assessment Moderation in National Qualifications and Higher National Qualifications: a guide for centres* (AA0892, December 2001).

Scottish Group Awards at Access

Scottish Group Awards (SGAs) at Access 2 and Access 3 have been successfully achieved by a number of school and college candidates. During the first year of implementation, some questions were raised by centres about entering candidates for Group Awards and how their previous qualifications may count. The following points highlight the main issues raised.

Candidates need to be entered for Scottish Group Awards. Our Awards Processing System will not check if a candidate is eligible for an SGA automatically.

You should submit entries for SGAs as soon as it is clear that a candidate is following a programme which will lead to an SGA.

It is important that the completion date of the SGA is later than the completion dates of the Clusters and Units which contribute to it.

In SGAs at Access 2 and Access 3, there is no external assessment, so the

completion date can virtually be at any time throughout the year.

Standard Grades can contribute to SGAs, in place of Clusters at Access 3, or in place of Courses at Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2. In the specific section of SGAs, only specified Standard Grades can count instead of specified Clusters. Each SGA specification contains an appendix which details the particular ways that Standard Grades can contribute to the Group Award.

When you are designing candidates' SGA programmes, you should look at candidates' existing qualifications as some of these may be able to count towards the SGA. This includes candidates' existing Core Skills profiles and any levelled former National Certificate Modules.

Some former National Certificate Modules have not been levelled. (These are shown with '04' as the last two digits.) These modules cannot count towards an SGA – with the exception of some old Core Skills modules.

Former National Certificate Modules in the Core Skills of Communication, Numeracy, Information Technology and Problem Solving are interchangeable with new Core Skills Units in SGAs. Care should be taken, however, if a module is used, because the title of the module includes a number (eg 1) which has been confused with the level of the Core Skill. For example, module Information Technology 1 carries the IT Core Skill at Access 3. A number of centres have thought that the '1' means Intermediate 1.

Core Skills profiles can also be achieved from Standard Grades. Details are contained in the publication *Catalogue of Core Skills in National Qualifications 2001/2002* (BA0906, September 2001).

The Working with Others Core Skill is not embedded in any Standard Grades or in many Clusters or National Units. Often, to complete the Core Skill, candidates will have to undertake one of the dedicated Core Skills Units.

More information

If you have any enquiries about Access 1 and 2 Units, Clusters or Group Awards please contact Margaret Miller (0141-242 2316; e-mail: margaret.miller@sqa.org.uk) or Annette Foulcer (0141-242 2075; e-mail: annette.foulcer@sqa.org.uk).

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