



**Arrangements for:**  
**National Progression Award (NPA) in**  
**Construction Operations**  
**at SCQF level 5**

**Group Award Code: G9AT 45**

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## **Acknowledgement**

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# 1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the new Group Award in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5, which was validated in March 2009. 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.

The National Progression Award (NPA) in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is designed as a stand-alone qualification to equip candidates with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for employment, or for progression to further academic and/or professional qualifications.

The award is aimed at candidates who are interested in pursuing a career in construction related occupations, but who do not necessarily have any prior experience in the construction environment. The diagram on page 3 shows how the NPA in Construction Operations sits with other qualifications for the sector.

It is also intended that this award will become a component of the level 2 Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Scotland. As indicated by ConstructionSkills<sup>1</sup>, the Modern Apprenticeship will consist of three elements:

- ◆ A relevant SVQ/NVQ (or alternative competency based qualification)
- ◆ Core Skills
- ◆ Industry specific training

It is intended that the award will satisfy the industry specific training requirement of the MA.

The NPA in Construction Operations has been designed to fit with the new Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF) and, by including it in the MA framework, contributes towards embedding the SCQF into the MA programme.

As part of the MA programme, this award also supports the goal of providing ‘...security of employment for the trainee whilst developing skills that are relevant within the workplace.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Apprenticeship in Construction, Framework Qualifications and Registration Requirements Guidance Document for Training Providers/Modern Apprenticeship Centres in Scotland, January 2009 (update), p.2

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, Skills for Scotland A Lifelong Skills Strategy, September 2007, p. 35

## 2 Rationale for the development of the Group Award

Construction is a labour-intensive industry that relies heavily on the skills of its workforce to constantly adapt to different projects, teams and changing site conditions, so attracting and retaining a high-quality, qualified workforce is essential.

As the majority of workers lack formal qualifications, the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship, of which the NPA is a component part, will aim to bridge that gap by contributing to the up-skilling of the sector. Gaining an SVQ/NVQ also enables workers to obtain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card or one from any other affiliated scheme; these are the recognised competency-based registration schemes within the industry.

The new award is not designed to train people to full industry competence. The NPA is aimed at those who do not necessarily have any prior experience of the construction industry and are therefore classed as ‘new entrants’. Candidates can then build on the skills and knowledge gained from achievement of the NPA when working towards achieving an SVQ, should they wish to do so. This approach aligns with the goal of the sector qualification strategy to ensure there is a clear differentiation between training for experienced workers and new entrants<sup>3</sup>.

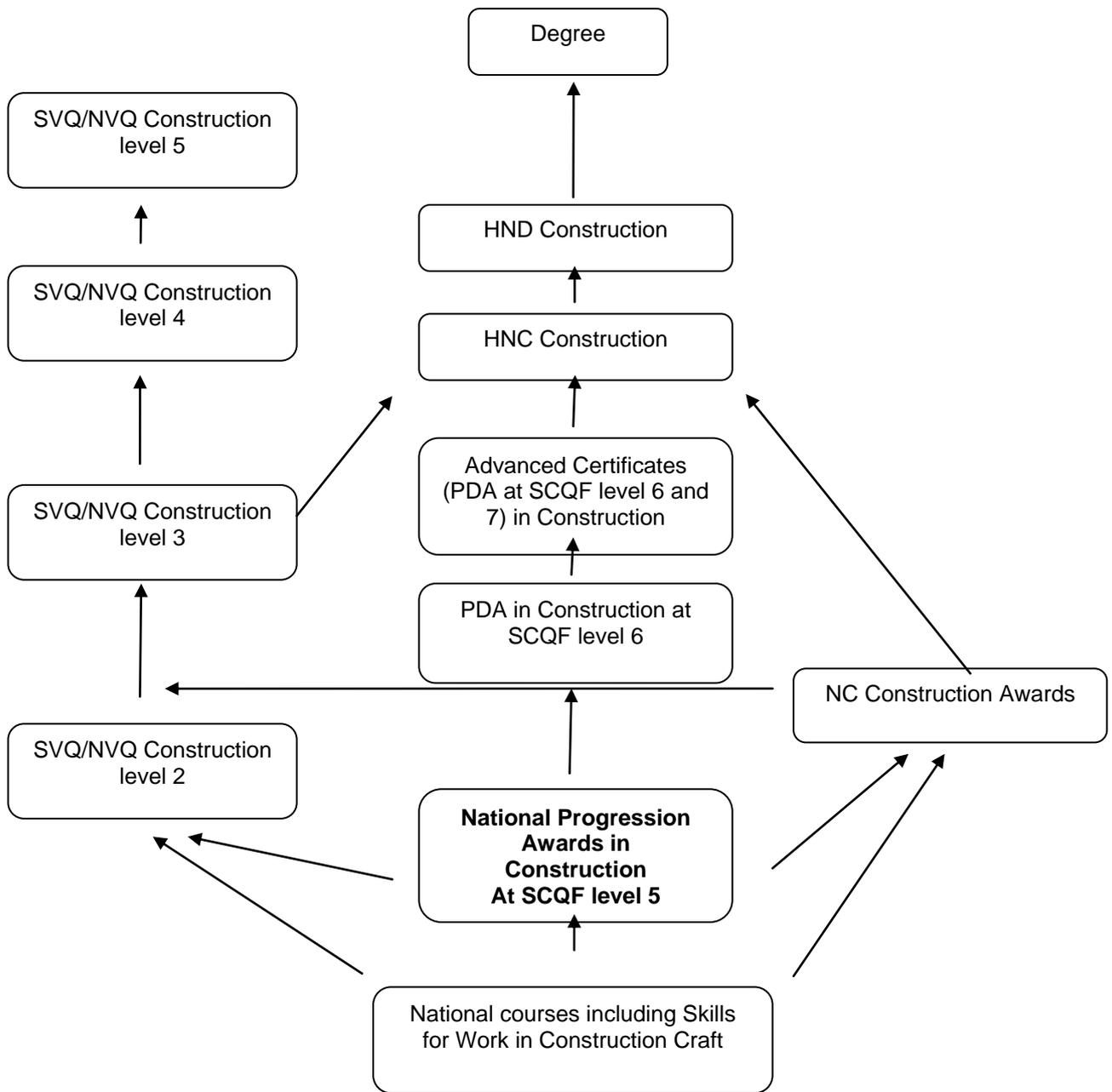
It is intended that the NPA in Construction Operations will each allow candidates to develop a broad appreciation of topics based on accepted and recognised industry practices. The award will provide a sound basis for working in the construction industry for a range of potential candidates (please see section 3.3 on target candidate groups)

The diagram below illustrates how the NPA fits within other, existing qualifications for the Construction industry at a range of levels. Progression routes between qualifications are also identified.

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<sup>3</sup> ConstructionSkills, Construction Qualification Strategy (CQS) Action Plan — Scotland, February 2007, p. 3

## 2.1 Progression diagram



Note: The term 'construction' is used here in a general context.

## 2.2 Objectives

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will provide structured opportunities for candidates to experience the world of work and enterprise activity while still enjoying the benefits of close contact with their training/education provider.

The NPA in Construction Operations is designed to provide:

- ◆ National Construction Qualifications with detailed common standards and learning Outcomes which are recognisable to centres, candidates, employers and professional bodies
- ◆ Common mandatory elements of study for various vocational pathways
- ◆ Choices of optional Units appropriate to the main career disciplines of each occupation
- ◆ Flexible approaches within a national framework
- ◆ The opportunity to preserve and build upon existing good practice
- ◆ Compatibility with feeder qualifications, in particular Skills for Work (SfW)
- ◆ Compatibility with progression qualifications, eg Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) in Construction Operations
- ◆ A response to changing training and educational needs
- ◆ Preparation for employment
- ◆ A contribution to the skills, knowledge and understanding required to underpin relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- ◆ A focus on the development of candidates' practical skills, knowledge and understanding which underpins performance in the workplace

## 2.3 National Progression Award

NPAs are vocational qualifications which provide practical opportunities for developing real skills that are valid and relevant to the world of work.

The NPA in Construction Operations has been developed at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5. This means it is comparable with credit level Standard Grade in terms of the demand it makes on candidates and the effort required to achieve the Award. It also means that activity and attainment out-with traditional qualifications can now be recorded and awarded.

The NPA in Construction Operations is composed of National Units which vary in their numbers of guided learning hours, depending on the subject area. The Award stipulates a minimum of 180 guided learning hours, although the flexibility of the framework allows for the option of increasing the hours required, by commensurately increasing the Units taken.

The NPA in Construction Operations consists of a core of generic, mandatory units which introduce the candidate to Construction Safety Practices and Efficient Construction Practices.

This Award has been designed for candidates to gain or develop their skills within the Construction Operations environment by demonstrating their knowledge of the respective principles, legislation and specifications as well as developing their ability to carry out given practical tasks in specialised construction areas.

## **2.4 National Occupational Standards**

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for all construction trades are developed and owned by ConstructionSkills SSC. They detail the standards of knowledge and performance that practitioners are expected to meet to be considered competent in their job role. They form the basis of SVQs, which have in turn been used as a foundation for the development of this award.

The NOS therefore act as a useful benchmark against which to measure occupational competence and for the assembly of a range of development tools, including qualifications.

The NPA units have been set at a slightly lower level than the SVQ Units — and by association the NOS — to allow for progression to the full SVQ, and are designed to develop and assess defined sets of skills and knowledge in each subject area.

## **2.5 Development**

The procedures involved in this development have included the writing, vetting and editing of Unit specifications followed by the validation of the Units and Group Award.

A number of organisations were contacted as part of the development process, some providing training materials, and/or reviewing the NPA units and qualification structures in their respective specialist subject areas. The organisations included private training providers and Further Education colleges who deliver and assess construction related programmes; employers, trade bodies and the Sector Skills Council.

Following the drafting of the units and structures the proposed documentation was circulated to the above organisations for review and comment. A brief questionnaire was developed to capture feedback on the drafts. The centres contacted offer a mixture of taught and assessed provision, with respondents drawing on their industry experience and knowledge of delivery.

The findings were overall positive, revealing that the Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements were clear, achievable and appropriate.

## **2.6 Sector Skills Council — ConstructionSkills**

ConstructionSkills is the Sector Skills Council with strategic responsibilities for education and training in the construction industry. They have been strong supporters of the development of recognised construction vocational and pre-vocational qualifications and have endorsed the development of the NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5.

ConstructionSkills is an employer-led organisation, which means it identifies and responds to the needs of the industry, acting as an employer voice.

ConstructionSkills is leading the way in the development of the level 2 MAs for the Construction industry in Scotland, having identified a clear requirement and demand from the sector for their introduction.

Industry experts at the Sector Skills Council have contributed to the development of this award, ensuring that they meet the needs of the industry and that it is aligned with the corresponding SVQs.

### **3 Aims of the Group Award**

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is a vocationally-related qualification which will provide practical opportunities for developing real skills that are valid and relevant to the world of work.

This Award has been developed at SCQF level 5 in order to fill identified gaps in the qualifications framework for the sector, to link to the appropriate SVQs and form a component part of the respective Modern Apprenticeships.

This means it is comparable with other provision on the SCQF at the same level in terms of the demands made on candidates and the effort required to achieve the award.

#### **3.1 Principal aims of the Group Award**

The new NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will develop candidates’:

- ◆ practical skills
- ◆ ability to solve problems
- ◆ transferable skills, eg employability skills, work ethic
- ◆ ability to be flexible and work cooperatively with others
- ◆ responsibility for own learning
- ◆ planning, organisational and evaluation skills
- ◆ basic technical skills
- ◆ oral, written and communication skills
- ◆ numerical and graphical skills
- ◆ resource management ability
- ◆ flexibility, knowledge, skills and motivation as a basis for progression

#### **3.2 General aims of the Group Award**

The new NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will:

- ◆ prepare candidates for careers in the construction civil engineering sector eg site preparation, general construction, alteration and extensions, dismantling work replacements and refurbishments
- ◆ provide introductory knowledge and skills which are directly relevant to general building operations and construction operations jobs eg checking and preparing machinery/ small plant for use, operating powered tools and equipment, digging trenches, putting up trench supports, laying kerbs and channels, modular paving
- ◆ enable candidates to make an immediate contribution in employment in the construction environment they are training at the same time as being employed
- ◆ provide opportunities for progression within the SCQF (please refer to the diagram in section 2)
- ◆ form a component part of the level 2 Modern Apprenticeship in Construction Operations

### 3.3 Target groups

The NPA in Construction Operations at level 5 is suitable for a wide range of candidates, including:

- ◆ S5 and S6 candidates
- ◆ School-leavers
- ◆ Progression candidates (eg Skills for Work)
- ◆ Adults returning to education
- ◆ Employed candidates who wish to enhance their career prospects
- ◆ Unemployed candidates who wish to enhance their job prospects (this includes those currently in the NEET group — ie Not in education, employment or training)

### 3.4 Employment opportunities

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 can lead to employment within the construction industry, particularly through Modern Apprenticeships. There are a large number of Modern Apprentices in the construction sector and each year brings a significant increase in the number of apprentice registrations. All available research and projections indicate that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future.

As well as the traditional crafts, this Award will provide invaluable practical experience and knowledge to candidates who aspire to the more technical professions which exist in construction, such as Civil Engineering and Management.

The NPA in Construction Operations is suitable for those returning to work or transferring from other sectors and could be delivered on a full-time or part-time basis.

This award is based on existing standards and has been developed in order to ensure that UK-wide companies can access suitable and appropriate provision in Scotland.

## 4 Access to Group Award

Access to the NPA in Construction Operations is at the discretion of the centre. There are no specific requirements for prior qualifications, knowledge and skills and/or previous experience. It is assumed that the level of experience of those undertaking the NPAs is that of a ‘new entrant’.

However, when the award is taken as a component of the Modern Apprenticeship the candidate must be in active employment.

The assessments for the NPA in Construction Operations will be challenging and meaningful, but nonetheless still achievable for all candidates who are prepared to work to gain the award. It is designed to familiarise candidates with a culture of attainment where assessments will challenge them, but do not put unreasonable obstacles between them and real achievement.

For all units, assessment is based primarily on practical activities and, where possible, holistic assessment is encouraged — particularly the integration of assessment for the mandatory units covering Health & Safety and Efficient Working Practices with those covering craft activities.

### Core Skills Entry level

<i>Numeracy</i>	Access 3
<i>Communication</i>	Access 3
<i>Working with Others</i>	Access 3
<i>Problem Solving</i>	Access 3
<i>ICT</i>	Access 3

## 5 Group Award structure

### 5.1 Framework

To achieve the full award, learners must gain 4.5 credits (180 hours), including two mandatory (M) Units of 0.5 credits each. The remaining 3.5 credits should be made up of optional (O) Units, with at least 0.5 credits from Option Block 1.

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
<b>Mandatory Units — 1 credit required</b>				
Construction Safety Practices: An Introduction	F1JP 10	3	4	0.5
Efficient Construction Practices: An Introduction	F1JR 10	3	4	0.5
<b>Option block 1</b>				
Installing Domestic Drainage Systems: An Introduction	F6LD 11	6	5	1
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Laying Kerbs and Channels	F6LE 11	6	5	1
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Modular Paving	F6LF 11	6	5	1
Forming Structural Concrete: An Introduction	F6LG 11	6	5	1
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Repair and Reinstatement of Excavations and Pavement Surfaces	F6LH 11	6	5	1
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Installing Road Drainage	F6LJ 11	6	5	1
Setting out Secondary Dimensional Work Controls	F6LT 11	3	5	0.5
<b>Option block 2</b>				
Using Machinery for Compacting Materials: An Introduction	F6LW 11	6	5	1
Appreciation of Access Platforms and Equipment	F6MF 11	6	6	1
Excavating Holes and Trenches: An Introduction	F6LK 11	6	5	1
Assisting with Arranging and Securing Loads	F6LX 11	6	5	1
Laying and Finishing Concrete: An Introduction	F6LL 11	6	5	1

<b>Unit title</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>SCQF credit points</b>	<b>SCQF level</b>	<b>SQA credit value</b>
<b>Option block 2 (cont)</b>				
Providing Temporary Excavation Supports	F6LN 11	6	5	1
Guiding Moving Loads or Machinery	F6LY 11	3	5	0.5
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Installation Of Ironwork Fixtures	F6LP 11	6	5	1
Operating a Powered Tool and Equipment: An Introduction	F6S8 11	3	5	0.5
Appreciation of Slinging and Signalling of the Movement of Loads	F6LR 11	6	5	1
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Signing, Lighting and Guarding the Work Area	F6LS 11	6	5	1
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Searching for Underground Services	F6LV 11	3	5	0.5

## 5.2 Mapping information

<b>NPA Unit</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>SVQ Unit title</b>	<b>ConstructionSkills NOS reference</b>
Construction Safety Practices: An Introduction	F1JP 10	Conform to General Workplace Safety	VR 01
Efficient Construction Practices: An Introduction	F1JR 10	Conform to Efficient Work Practices	VR 02
Installing Domestic Drainage Systems: An Introduction	F6LD 11	Lay Domestic Drainage	VR 43
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Laying Kerbs and Channels	F6LE 11	Lay Kerbs and Channels	VR 368
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Modular Paving	F6LF 11	Lay Modular Pavement	VR 367
Forming Structural Concrete: An Introduction	F6LG 11	Form Concrete Structures	VR 371
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Repair and Reinstatement of Excavations and Pavement Surfaces	F6LH 11	Reinstate Ground Condition	VR 172
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Installing Road Drainage	F6LJ 11	Install Mains Drainage System	VR 369
Setting out Secondary Dimensional Work Controls	F6LT 11	Set out Secondary Dimensional Work Control	VR 401
Using Machinery for Compacting Materials: An Introduction	F6LW 11	Operate Plant or Machinery to Compact	VR 394
Appreciation of Access Platforms and Equipment	F6MF 11	Erect and Dismantle Access/Working Platforms	VR 250
Excavating Holes and Trenches: An Introduction	F6LK 11	Excavate Holes and Trenches	VR 373
Assisting with Arranging and Securing Loads	F6LX 11	Arrange and Secure Loads	VR 397
Laying and Finishing Concrete: An Introduction	F6LL 11	Place and Finish Non-specialist Concrete	VR 45
Providing Temporary Excavation Supports	F6LN 11	Provide Temporary Excavation Support	VR 370

<b>NPA Unit</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>SVQ Unit title</b>	<b>ConstructionSkills NOS reference</b>
Guiding Moving Loads or Machinery	F6LY 11	Direct and Guide the Movement of Plant or Machinery	VR 396
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Installation Of Ironwork Fixtures	F6LP 11	Install Street Ironwork	VR 366
Operating a Powered Tool and Equipment: An Introduction	F6S8 11	Operate Specialised Powered Tools and Equipment	VR 400
		Operate Ancillary Equipment	VR 399
Appreciation of the Slings and Signalling of the Movement of Loads	F6LR 11	Slings and Signalling the Movement of Loads	VR 402
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Signing, Lighting and Guarding the Work Area	F6LS 11	Segregate the Area for Highways Works	VR 365
Construction Operations: An Introduction to Searching for Underground Services	F6LV 11	Locate and Protect Utilities Apparatus and Sub-structures	VR 372

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

#### **Articulation**

The new NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 has been designed as a progression route to the full range of Construction SVQs, particularly SVQ level 2 in Construction Operations. It was also designed as an articulation route from the Skills for Work Construction awards. This is the first time there has been a clearly-defined pre-vocational/ vocational route for candidates to follow, and for centres to deliver within this construction area.

#### **Credit transfer**

There are no current National Units against which credit transfer might be considered.

## **6 Approaches to delivery and assessment**

### **6.1 Content and context**

The new NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is designed to equip students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for success in employment within the construction industry. It is mainly aimed at candidates who are interested in pursuing a career in Construction Operations.

This award is not designed to train people to full industrial competence. There is an emphasis on developing the basic skills normally taught to an apprentice at the very early stages of time-serving and these basic skills will be very attractive to employers. Candidates can then build on these skills when working towards achieving an SVQ/NVQ.

The programme should be delivered in the context of familiarisation with terminology, basic concepts and working practices and disciplines, including Health and Safety and Sustainability. It is intended that the new NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will develop a broad appreciation of topics based on accepted construction practices.

Candidates may go on to work as general labourers, ground workers or builders' labourers. They will require skills and knowledge in general workplace safety, the use of efficient working practices, protecting working areas, laying domestic drains, placing and finishing concrete.

### **6.2 Delivery**

The structure of this qualification allows for a high degree of flexibility in its delivery. Owing to the very practical nature of the award, it is recommended that each teaching/training session should be of a reasonable duration — perhaps three hours.

This award could be offered full-time, part-time, block-release, day-release or evening. Combination of delivery is also a possibility. Such combined study may enable candidates to complete the award within a shorter time period.

There are many opportunities for integrated delivery of Units within the award. Teaching and learning for Construction Safety Practices and Efficient Working Practices Units should always be integrated with technical/practical Units as much as possible, and assessment should be encouraged to be within the application of these technical/practical Units. The Unit Specifications will identify specific opportunities for integration with other Units.

It is recognised that the NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 focuses on the development of the candidates' practical skills. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities for the introduction of e-learning during the teaching and delivery of the award. The learning and assessments of the knowledge-based Outcomes can be conducted by either using e-learning methods, or by traditional teaching techniques. For example, formal assessments may make use of IT systems and facilities when available, or alternatively can also use the standard mode of supervising candidates during classroom paper-based assessments.

It is further recognised that health and safety considerations and the age-profile of candidates may present a challenge to centres. However, in order that the quality and integrity of assessments are maintained, centres are reminded that all practical assessments should take place in a realistic working environment with appropriate use of simulation where health and safety considerations are key.

### **6.3 Core Skills**

There are opportunities to integrate Core Skills into the delivery and assessment processes. These opportunities are identified in each of the Unit specifications.

### **6.4 Assessment**

The assessment strategy for the new NPA in Construction Operations is designed to ensure an appropriate level of rigour whilst not imposing excessive demands on centres or candidates. The design principles for the award encourage an holistic approach to assessment and this has been adopted in each Unit specification for the award.

Each Unit Specification includes guidance on delivery and assessment and, where appropriate, any potential opportunities for integrated delivery and assessment with other Units.

Centres can decide the order in which Units are delivered, based on candidate recruitment patterns, mode of delivery, resource issues and logical progression dictated by topics and Unit content and level.

Throughout all Units emphasis should be placed where appropriate on the application of Health and Safety. Safe working practices should be looked at in accordance with current safety codes of practice and regulations.

## **7 General information for centres**

### **Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

### **Internal and external verification**

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

External verification 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 verification 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)).

## 8 General information for candidates

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is a practical-based qualification that requires you to spend the majority of your time in a training environment.

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is designed to give you the knowledge, understanding and skills to gain employment in the construction industry, or to move onto further qualifications such as to the SVQ in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5.

Some examples of the types of construction work that this award relates to are: site preparation, general construction, alteration and extensions, dismantling work, replacements and refurbishments.

It shall provide you with the introductory knowledge and skills which are directly relevant to general building operations and construction operations jobs eg checking and preparing machinery/small plant for use, operating powered tools and equipment, digging trenches, putting up trench supports, laying kerbs and channels, modular paving.

Occupations are available with a wide variety of construction companies within the building industry. If you wish to investigate career opportunities in the building industry you can contact ConstructionSkills at [www.citb.org.uk](http://www.citb.org.uk).

In order to complete the NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 you must achieve a minimum of 4.5 credits. There is a variety of ways to do this, which can be clearly understood by looking at the Award framework. This details the mandatory Units — which you must take — and the range of optional Units you have to choose from.

You may take additional Units which you will receive credit for.

You will be assessed on your knowledge and skills developed in each Unit. The assessment may take a number of forms, including multiple choice questions, practical tasks with checklists, and other practical activities when working in teams.

The practical Units will provide you with the basic skills and knowledge you need to carry out practical work competently. You will then need to carry out these practical tasks in order to demonstrate your range of abilities.

## 9 Glossary of terms

**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 further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

**SCQF credit points:** One HN credit is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points. This applies to all HN Units, irrespective of their level.

**SCQF levels:** The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HN Units will normally be at levels 6–9. Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8.

**Subject Unit:** Subject Units contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

**Graded Unit:** Graded Units assess candidates' ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

**Dedicated Unit to cover Core Skills:** This is a non-subject Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills.

**Embedded Core Skills:** This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

**Signposted Core Skills:** This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie out-with automatic certification.

**Qualification Design Team:** The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the HNC/HND 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 HNCs and HNDs** are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

**Specialist single centre and specialist collaborative devised HNCs and HNDs** are those developments or revisions led by a single centre or small group of centres who provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area. Like consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs, these developments or revisions will also be supported by SQA. centres in partnership with SQA.