Credit Rating and Levelling Scottish Vocational Qualifications for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

Guidance for Sector Skills Councils, Standard Setting Bodies, Awarding Bodies and Participants

SQA Accreditation

Contents

SQA Accreditation

SQA Accreditation is a part of the Scottish Qualifications with a role that is distinct from SQA's function as an awarding body. SQA Accreditation has autonomy of operation within SQA under the management of its Head who reports directly to the SQA's Chief Executive. Governance is exercised by the SQA Accreditation Committee, which is established by legislation. The Accreditation Committee comprises of lay members and reports to the SQA Board of Management. The Chair of the Accreditation Committee is a non-executive member of the SQA Board of Management. SQA Accreditation's remit has been expanded by the Scottish Government to cover accreditation of all qualifications other than degrees and other qualifications awarded by universities. In addition, SQA Accreditation approves awarding bodies to offer these qualifications including SQA Awarding Body.

SQA Accreditation's stated objective is to 'provide a service which promotes and maintains public confidence in accredited qualifications and approved awarding bodies and in order to achieve this:

- approves awarding bodies cross the UK, to award accredited qualifications

- accredits qualifications offered by approved awarding bodies

- accredits the SVQ component, or equivalent alternative qualification, contained within Scottish Modern Apprenticeship frameworks

- can accredit all qualifications in Scotland ,other than degrees and other qualifications awarded by universities

- audits awarding bodies to ensure they continue to meet SQA Accreditation's criteria for awarding bodies

- monitors approved centres of learning to ensure awarding bodies are meeting the SQA Accreditation centre approval criteria

Introduction

This document provides guidance on the calculation of Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) credit points and the allocation of SCQF levels to Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs).

The guidance sets out one possible methodology in order to assist those proposing SCQF levels and credit values for SVQ Units and SVQs. This approach is not intended be prescriptive. Alternative methods may be used but their suitability must first be confirmed with SQA Accreditation.

The advantage of having SVQs added to the SCQF is that learners, employers, receiving institutions, awarding bodies, sector skills councils (SSCs) and standard-setting bodies (SSBs) can see the level of skills being developed and how SVQs relate to other qualifications in Scotland and other credit frameworks. It can also help when selecting relevant training options and identifying development paths and progression routes.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications can be added to the SCQF provided they meet the following criteria from SCQF:

- are outcome-based, ie the qualification and or learning programme must contain statements of knowledge, skills, values or competence that are capable of being measured at the end of a process of learning (based on learning outcomes)

- are capable of being assessed, ie there must be a robust, effective system of assessing that the outcomes have been achieved. (These outcomes must be recorded.)

- are subject to external quality assurance, ie the qualification and or learning programme must have a documented process of external quality assurance for the assessment of the learning outcomes

- consist of a minimum of 10 hours of notional learning time

It is intended that the credit rating guidance contained in this document will be equally applicable to the SCQF, the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Within each part, the guidance offers information on points to consider, before going on to describe the processes involved.

Note that it is intended that the determination of SCQF levels and credit points will be an embedded process in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) Programme and in the development and revision of SVQ Units.

For further information, advice and support in implementing the guidance please contact SQA Accreditation:

Tel: 0845 213 5249

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Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

What is the SCQF?

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) provides a national framework for qualifications in Scotland.

The SCQF was developed to meet the needs of Scotland's learners and was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework.

Launched in December 2001, the SCQF was developed in partnership by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Universities Scotland, the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland, and the Scottish Government. In February 2006, the partnership was extended to include the Association of Scotland's Colleges.

Following the end of the implementation phase in March 2006, the SCQF partners agreed that the way forward was to establish a company limited by guarantee and the SCQF was incorporated on 7 November 2006. The board of the company comprises the Association of Scotland's Colleges, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and Universities Scotland.

The main aims of the SCQF Partnership are to:

- maintain the quality assurance and integrity of the Framework

- promote and develop the SCQF; and

- maintain and develop relationships with other frameworks in the UK, Europe and internationally

The board has established the SCQF Quality Committee to advise it on all aspects of quality assurance regarding the Framework. A chief executive has also been appointed.

For more information on updates and developments, contact the SCQF Core Team at:

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
39 St Vincent Place
Glasgow
G1 2ER
Tel: 0845 270 7371   Fax: 0845 270 7372
e-mail: info@scqf.org.uk   www.scqf.org.uk

Aims of the SCQF

The aims of the SCQF are to:

- help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential

- enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other, and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce

The SCQF is also intended to help describe programmes of learning that lead to the various qualifications; support the development of routes to progress from qualification to qualification; and maximise the opportunities to transfer credit points between qualifications. It will do this by making the overall system of qualifications and relevant programmes of learning easier to understand and by providing a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities.

The SCQF will also help to clarify the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby highlighting opportunities for international progression routes and credit transfer.

The qualifications and learning programmes contained within the Framework will change and expand over the next few years as it is rolled out across Scotland's education and training sectors.

The framework helps to compare qualifications in terms of their level of difficulty and their size, and makes the relationships between qualifications clearer. The framework also provides guidance on routes for progression within and across education and training sectors.

Learners and employers can see the level of skills being developed and how SVQs relate to other qualifications in Scotland

What does the SCQF look like?

The SCQF uses two measures to describe qualifications and learning programmes: level and credit. The term 'credit rating' encompasses both the allocation of an SCQF level and the calculation of SCQF credit points.

There are 12 levels within the SCQF which increase in difficulty from SCQF level 1, for basic learning, to SCQF level 12, for learning at doctoral level. The levels therefore indicate the *complexity* of learning. The number of credit points indicates the *volume* of learning required to achieve a qualification.

The SCQF incorporates a wide range of qualifications:

- school qualifications, such as Highers

- further and higher education qualifications, such as Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and degrees

- training/workplace qualifications, such as Scottish Vocational Qualifications

The SCQF does not differentiate between the different types of qualification — academic and vocational qualifications sit side-by-side within the Framework. This is not to say that they are equivalent, but that the Framework allows them to be compared in terms of their SCQF level.

Qualifications can be small or large; or they can cover a wide range of skills or focus on a narrow, specialised area. The SCQF allows you to compare their level of complexity and their size. For example:

- a Higher and an SVQ level 3 both sit at SCQF level 6

- a Higher National Diploma and an SVQ level 4 are both at SCQF level 8

These qualifications are designed to meet different needs and have different forms of delivery and assessment. The fact that they are at the same SCQF level means that they are dealing with the same level of complexity.

SCQF Ready Reckoner for SQA Qualifications

SQA

SQA Qualifications in the
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF

SCQF Levels			SCQF Levels
12		Doctorate*	12
11		Masters* · SVQ 5	11
10		Honours Degree*	10
9		Ordinary Degree* · Professional Development Awards · SVQ 4	9
8		Higher National Diploma	8
7	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate · SVQ 3	7
6	Higher		6
5	Intermediate 2/Credit Standard Grade	SVQ 2	5
4	Intermediate 1/General Standard Grade	National Progression Awards · National Certificates · SVQ 1	4
3	Access 3/Foundation Standard Grade		3
2	Access 2		2
1	Access 1	*Benchmark Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	1

How does the SCQF work?

The SCQF uses two measures to place qualifications and learning programmes in the SCQF: level and credit. The levels in the SCQF are defined in a series of Level Descriptors — one for each of the levels 2 to 12. The volume of the learning outcomes in each unit are described in terms of the number of SCQF credit points. The credit points are used to quantify units and qualifications and give them a value or currency.

The term 'credit rating' can be used to describe the process of allocating both SCQF level and credit points.

SCQF Level

There is no Level Descriptor for level 1. All provision below that of full achievement of the level 2 descriptor is allocated level 1.

Each level increases with the complexity of learning and demand of the learning outcomes. This is described in the Level Descriptors that underpin each level.

The Level Descriptors identify the Characteristics of qualifications under five broad headings:

Characteristic 1: Knowledge and understanding — mainly subject based

Characteristic 2: Practice — applied knowledge and understanding

Characteristic 3: Generic cognitive skills, eg evaluation, critical analysis

Characteristic 4: Communication, numeracy and IT skills

Characteristic 5: Autonomy, accountability and working with others

Characteristic 1	This Characteristic is about the complexity and breadth of knowledge and understanding required to underpin the achievement of skills and competence.
Knowledge and understanding— mainly subject based	Individuals will start with a basic knowledge of facts and will progress to a point where they will reflect on that body of knowledge and reason why it is correct or incorrect, and then adapt their knowledge accordingly.

Characteristic 2 Practice — applied knowledge and understanding	Competent practice and the development and use of skills comes through the application of knowledge and understanding. It requires an individual to contextualise and understand their knowledge of something so that this knowledge can then be applied in a variety of different situations and practices. Individuals will progress from relating knowledge to a few simple everyday contexts, to using a range of complex skills, techniques, practices and demonstrating originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge, understanding and practices.
Characteristic 3 Generic cognitive skills, eg evaluation, critical analysis	Cognitive skills involve the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, through thought, experience, and the senses. They include skills such as problem solving, creativity and innovation, ability to respond to change and monitor, evaluate and promote continuous improvement. Cognitive skills tend to be transferable, ie once an individual has developed the techniques they can apply them to different situations and job roles. Within any area of cognitive skill there are degrees of understanding and complexity. For example, cognitive skills required for problem solving could be broken down into the following stages: • identify problem solving situations • follow problem solving procedures • apply problem solving principles • resolve problem solving situations/theories/concepts

Characteristic 4	Skills in communication, numeracy and IT are essential for effective practice, and underpin many roles or tasks that individuals perform. It is not necessarily important in every job role for an individual to have skills in all three areas, nor is it necessarily a requirement for that individual to have an equal level of skill in all three areas.
Communication, numeracy and IT skills	Although some roles will have specific communication, numeracy and IT requirements, many of these skills are generic and can be transferred across different roles, companies or fields of work.

Characteristic 5	This Characteristic is about the ways in which individuals work, and the impact of this on their job role and other individuals. As an individual becomes more competent there is often, although not always, a tendency for that individual to become increasingly autonomous and accountable within their role. The individual's working relationship with others can also change, generally becoming either more independent or more management and leadership focused.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	This Characteristic also involves individuals in reflective practice — as they progress they would be expected to develop their skills in identifying strengths and weaknesses and means of improvement.

The SCQF Level Descriptors increase in the level of demand in relation to factors such as:

- complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding

- links to academic, vocational or professional practice

- the degree of integration, independence and creativity required

- the range and sophistication of application/practice

- the roles taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks

Taking Characteristic 5 as an example, this table illustrates how it is expressed in four of the levels.

Characteristic 5	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Level 2	Work alone or with others on simple, routine, familiar tasks under frequent and directive supervision. Identify, given simple criteria, some successes and/or failures of the work.
Level 5	Work alone or with others on tasks with minimum supervision. Agree goals and responsibilities for self and/or work team with manager/supervisor.
Level 8	Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level. Take significant managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work.
Level 12	Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities. Take full responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others.

Further information on SCQF levelling of SVQs can be found on pages 15–22.

SCQF credit points

SCQF credit points are used to quantify units and qualifications and give them a value or currency. This includes SVQ Units and SVQs. Credit points can be used by interested parties (eg learners, employers, other qualification providers) to give them an idea of how much learning has taken place and to compare this with other qualifications.

The SCQF credit points that are allocated to SVQ Units are general credit points and are allocated to outcomes of learning that are subject to valid, reliable methods of assessment.

SCQF credit points are calculated by measuring the 'volume' of an outcome of learning. This is arrived at by estimating the amount of time required by the 'average' learner to achieve the outcomes at a particular level.

In common with other credit systems including the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales (CQFW), 1 SCQF credit point represents a notional 10 hours of learning time. This is made up of time for teaching, assessment, study and preparation. Credit points are gained on successful achievement of the Outcomes contained in an SVQ Unit.

The number of credits will differ greatly from unit to unit and qualification to qualification, within levels and between levels.

For example, a qualification with 2 credit points at SCQF level 6 can be compared — in terms of the amount of learning that has taken place — with a qualification with 20 credit points at SCQF level 6.

Further information on SCQF credit points can be found on pages 25–34.

SCQF Credit Rating of SVQs

The first stage in the process of adding an SVQ to the SCQF is to consider the credit and level of the individual Units of an SVQ.

Each SVQ Unit must be allocated an SCQF level mapped against the Level Descriptors for the SCQF. The next step is to allocate SCQF credit points to each SVQ Unit.

Once the SCQF level and credit points have been established for each SVQ Unit, the next stage is to identify the relevant SCQF level and credit points for the whole SVQ. Many SVQs will be made up of SVQ Units which are at different SCQF levels and have different credit points.

The total SCQF credit points for an SVQ will vary due to the mandatory and optional Units within many SVQ qualification structures. Most SVQs will have a maximum SCQF credit value and a minimum SCQF credit value depending on the optional Units selected.

The advantage of having SVQs added to the SCQF is that learners, employers, receiving institutions, awarding bodies, sector skills councils and standard-setting bodies can see what level of skills are being developed and how SVQs relate to other qualifications in Scotland and other credit frameworks.

Scottish Vocational Qualifications can be added to the SCQF provided they meet the following key criteria from the SCQF Handbook:

- They are outcome-based, ie the qualification and or learning programme must contain statements of knowledge, skills, values or competence that are capable of being measured at the end of a process of learning (based on learning outcomes)

- They are capable of being assessed, ie there must be a robust, effective system of assessing that the outcomes have been achieved and these outcomes must be recorded

- They are subject to external quality assurance, ie the qualification and/or learning programme must have a documented process of external quality assurance for the assessment of the learning outcomes

- They consist of a minimum of 10 hours of notional learning time

All SCQF credit rating must be confirmed and approved by an authorised Credit Rating Body for the SCQF. SQA Accreditation is an approved SCQF Credit Rating Body.

All SVQs must be credit rated in conjunction with SQA Accreditation. This is because SQA Accreditation is the owner of the SVQ brand and is also the Qualifications Regulator for Scotland.

SQA Accreditation provides guidance and support for sector skills councils and awarding bodies in order to ensure consistency in the application of the methodology to credit rate SVQs.

It is essential to keep full details of the allocated SCQF levels and SCQF credit points throughout the credit rating process. In order to assist with this, SQA Accreditation has developed recording documentation which should be used when credit rating SVQs. These are as follows:

SVQ Unit Grid Level Recommendations Part 1 (see appendix 2)

SVQ Average Candidate Profile Form (see appendix 2)

SVQ Unit Grid Credit Point Recommendations Part 2 (see appendix 2)

SVQ Unit Summary Grid Recommendation for SVQ Level and Credit (see appendix 2)

SVQ Unit Sign-Off Form Recommendation for SVQ Level and Credit Points of an SVQ Unit (see appendix 2)

Recommendation for Overall SVQ Level and for Minimum and Maximum SCQF Credit Values for SVQs (see appendix 2)

Allocating SCQF levels to SVQ Units

Mapping process

You should look for the 'best fit' between the SVQ Units and the SCQF generic descriptors for the Characteristics. You shouldn't use the Level Descriptors as a checklist, expecting to find all the examples given in the Level Descriptors in your SVQ Unit. Instead, you should match examples from the SVQ Unit to the relevant Characteristics. Not all Characteristics will be relevant to every SVQ Unit descriptor.

Take time to look at the Level Descriptors to get a feel for some of the differences between the levels. They are indicative, not prescriptive. They give examples of the different levels of demand across the five Characteristics. Don't expect everything in the Level Descriptors to be relevant to your SVQ Unit. The SCQF Level Descriptors are designed to allow broad comparisons to be made between the outcomes of any learning that has been, or can be, subject to valid, reliable and quality-assured assessment.

Try to identify the distinguishing features between levels in areas such as 'familiar or unfamiliar situations', and 'supervised and independent working'. The range of knowledge can also be a useful indicator — learning at a lower level often involves a limited range of knowledge, whereas learning at a higher level requires a wide range of knowledge and skills.

Think about the objectives for your SVQ Unit. This could include:

- What is being asked of the individual? What is the SVQ Unit trying to achieve?

- Is the SVQ Unit mainly knowledge-based, or practice-based?

- What are the Outcomes of the SVQ Unit? Do the words used suggest a level of skill? Are there other indicators of complexity in the component?

- Does the assessment/evidence requirement indicate a specific level?

Words like analyse, interpret, describe, synthesise, repeat, identify and so on will help to indicate the level of demand on the learner.

The Ready Reckoner on page 7 indicates where the notional levels for SVQs sit within the SCQF. This can be a starting point when allocating an SCQF level to an individual SVQ Unit. These notional levels are an estimate of where the SVQ Unit might sit within the SCQF. Once you have completed this process you may find that the notional level is different from the level you originally identified.

Mapping an SVQ Unit using the Level Descriptors

A useful way to use the Level Descriptors is to benchmark the SVQ Unit descriptor against the SCQF Level Descriptors.

Please ensure you read the SVQ Unit descriptor in full before commencing SCQF levelling. Do not assume you know the content of the SVQ Unit descriptor.

There are a number of approaches to benchmarking:

- Review the Characteristics for each SCQF Level Descriptor — they provide an overview of each SCQF level

- Identify an existing SCQF levelled unit with which you may be familiar and which you think is around the same level as the SVQ Unit that you are about to allocate an SCQF level to

- Consider the job role of individuals for whom the SVQ Unit is designed — for example, is the job competence at technician, practitioner, and supervisor or manager level? What level of autonomy is the person expected to exercise? Compare this to the Level Descriptors for autonomy and working with others

- Look at entry requirements and/or the expected exit point eg does the SVQ Unit prepare learners for another component/ unit/qualification which already has an SCQF level?

The Ready Reckoner on page 7 indicates where the notional levels for SVQs sit within the SCQF.

Having established a rough level for the SVQ Unit, look in more detail at the Level Descriptors for the closest levels, ie if you think the SVQ Unit may be around SCQF level 7 then have a close look at the descriptors for SCQF levels 6 and 8 as well.

If you have a number of SVQ Units to be mapped where the learning outcomes are repeated, you may find it useful to map a few key components and use them to create your own benchmarks. This could equally apply to elements which are repeated within the Unit descriptor.

Having decided on a level for the SVQ Unit, the next thing to do is to test this view by looking at the SCQF Level Descriptors for the levels immediately above and immediately below the level of your initial decision. Ask why the component is not at these levels. This will assist you in confirming whether you have selected the most appropriate SCQF Level Descriptor for the SVQ Unit.

Allocating an SCQF level to an SVQ Unit

You should be looking for the 'best fit' between the SVQ Units and the SCQF generic descriptors for the Characteristics. You shouldn't use the Level Descriptors as a checklist, expecting to find all the examples given in the Level Descriptors in your SVQ Unit. Instead, you should match examples from the SVQ Unit to the relevant Characteristics. Not all Characteristics will be relevant to every SVQ Unit descriptor. As you look at each Characteristic, record your comments — this is can be done using the SVQ Unit Grid below:

SVQ Unit Grid — Level Recommendations — Part 1		
SVQ Title:		
SVQ Level (if applicable)		
SVQ Unit Title:		
SVQ Unit Number (if applicable):		
SVQ Rater Name: Awarding Body:		
SCQF Characteristics	Best fit level	Comments
Knowledge and understanding		
Practice/applied knowledge		
Generic cognitive skills		
Communication/ ICT/numeracy		
Autonomy/working with others		
Estimated level (best fit)		
Remember that not all Characteristics may be relevant. Knowledge and understanding and Practice will be core to most SVQ Units, but not all SVQ Units will include all five Characteristics. Your SVQ Unit may also only cover part of a Characteristic eg Communication may be an important skill, but Numeracy or IT may not be required.		

You may find that the best match for each Characteristic gives different SCQF levels — this is illustrated here:

SCQF Characteristics	Best fit level
Knowledge and understanding	6
Practice/applied knowledge	6
Generic cognitive skills	7
Communication/IT/numeracy	5
Autonomy/working with others	6
Estimated level (best fit)	6

You may find that the best match for Autonomy/working with others is split over two SCQF Level Descriptors and that there is no clear match to one SCQF level for a particular Characteristic — this is illustrated here:

SCQF Characteristics	Best fit level
Knowledge and understanding	5
Practice/applied knowledge	5
Generic cognitive skills	6
Communication/IT/numeracy	6
Autonomy/working with others	5/6
Estimated level (best fit)	5

In the case of Autonomy/working with others above, you can indicate that you believe that it has aspects of both levels, but you should select one level as your final best fit before submitting the Scorecard. Please ensure you record your rationale for this selection on your Scorecard.

You should try to find the level that has the greatest proportion of its descriptors reflected in the SVQ Unit. The level of the SVQ Unit will normally be the most common level — the estimated best fit in the example above would be 5.

If the above processes do not lead to a conclusive result, you can rank the Characteristics in order of importance. In the following example, the two most important aspects have been identified as Knowledge and understanding and Autonomy/working with others. These Characteristics have been mapped to the SCQF Level Descriptors for level 7. Although SCQF levels 5 and 6 have been allocated to the other Characteristics, these are less important to the SVQ Unit as a whole. Using this methodology, the best fit for this SVQ Unit would be SCQF level 7.

SCQF Characteristics	Best fit level	Rank order
Knowledge and understanding	7	1
Practice/applied knowledge	6	3
Generic cognitive skills	6	5
Communication/ICT/numeracy	5	4
Autonomy/working with others	7	2
Estimated level (best fit)	7	

If you have used the ranking method to allocate an SCQF level to the SVQ Unit then you must clearly indicate this in the Notes to Approach Section of Part 1 of your Scorecard (see page 23 and 24 for an example).

Please do not add up the five levels assigned to the Characteristics and divide by five. This process is not about finding the mean SCQF level for the SVQ Units.

Rationale for the SCQF unit level

Determining level against the SCQF Level Descriptors involves interpretation — in other words, it is a subjective decision and requires your professional judgement. This means it is important to explain and record how you made your decision. This will also assist in any audit process.

You should:

- record your reasons for selecting the final level

- justify your choice with reference to levels above and below

- record quotes/extracts from the component to support your selection

The four examples which follow are examples of rationale statements that address the first two points. This section should be more than just a couple of statements and should give a clear picture of how you have reached your decision.

These examples are for guidance but do cover the types of rationale SQA Accreditation would expect to see as justification for the SCQF level which has been allocated.

Example 1

This SVQ Unit is judged to be at level 6 for the following reasons:

1   Factual and theoretical knowledge is required.

2   The learner is applying skills and knowledge in familiar situations but is able to deal with limited unpredictability.

3   The learner carries out unsupervised but clearly directed work.

This SVQ Unit goes beyond level 5, which does not require theoretical knowledge, does require work to have minimum supervision, and where the candidate should be operating within a familiar situation. However, it does not match the Level Descriptor for SCQF level 7, which requires embedded theoretical knowledge, ability to deal with routine and non-routine situations, and where initiative and independence are expected in work. The SVQ Unit was benchmarked with the SVQ Unit xxxxxx, which had a similar content but different assessment strategy.

Example 2

This SVQ Unit is deemed to be at SCQF level 7 because it is a Practice SVQ Unit where the key task is to undertake mainly unsupervised work with clients. The SVQ Unit also requires a good level of knowledge and understanding of the principles that underpin practice. Candidates are expected to apply knowledge in a number of situations that are both familiar and unfamiliar.

This SVQ Unit goes beyond level 6, which suggests closer supervision of work and application of knowledge in familiar situations. This SVQ Unit does not match the level 8 descriptor, which demands high levels of knowledge and application and adaptation of complex knowledge in practical situations.

This SVQ Unit was benchmarked against Unit xxxxxx.

Example 3

A level 8 should be assigned to this SVQ Unit because the knowledge and understanding covers a range of theories that are applied and adapted to a number of key social areas. The assessment demands analysis, a synthesis of knowledge, and a high level of written work. The entry level to this SVQ Unit is xxxxxx, which has been levelled at SCQF level 7.

This SVQ Unit goes beyond the demands of SCQF level 7 in that it requires the candidate to know a range of theories that must be applied and adapted to a number of areas. However, it does not match Level Descriptors for SCQF level 9 as it does not demand specialist knowledge of forefront developments and candidates are not required to apply professional judgements.

There were no benchmark units for this Unit.

Example

Allocating an SCQF level to SVQ Units

SVQ Unit Grid — Level Recommendations — Part 1		
SVQ Title: SVQ Credit and Level		
SVQ Level: (if applicable) 3		
SVQ Unit Title: Allocate SCQF Level		
SVQ Unit Number (if applicable): CL12 23		
SVQ Rater Name: George S Brown Awarding Body: Example Awarding Body		
SCQF Characteristics	Best fit level	Comments
Knowledge and understanding	6	In this unit factual and theoretical knowledge is required within this unit. Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding and be able to define, explain, evaluate and make recommendations along with the use of terminology, practices and techniques.
Practice/applied knowledge	6	Familiar and new/routine and non-routine tasks. A good level of knowledge and understanding required of the practice. There is a need to obtain, organise and use factual and problem solving to draw conclusions and make predictions or recommendations.
Generic cognitive skills	6	Familiar context using different types of information. The use of report writing is essential and being able to provide clear and concise information.
Communication/ ICT/numeracy	6	A range of recording and reporting information is needed in all outcomes for this unit and recorded accurately. The skills and terminology widely used. Numerical skills are also required for this unit in a routine context.
Autonomy/working with others	6	Candidates undertaking this unit are expected to take supervisory responsibility for themselves and for reporting any issues and outcomes of the allocation of SCQF level to the unit.
Estimated level (best fit)	6	
Summary of rationale for recommended SVQ Unit level including reasons for final level selected (if different levels identified for Characteristic); justification of selection with reference to levels above and below; quotes/extracts from component (unit/module) to support selection.		

(Expand section as required)
This SVQ Unit is deemed to be at SCQF level 6 because it is a Practice SVQ Unit where the key task is to allocate SCQF level to a unit. The SVQ Unit also requires a good level of knowledge and understanding of the principles that underpin practice. Candidates are expected to apply knowledge in a number of situations that are both familiar and unfamiliar.
This SVQ Unit does not go beyond level 6, which suggests application of knowledge in familiar situations. This SVQ Unit does not match the level 7 descriptor, which demands higher levels of knowledge and application and adaptation of knowledge in practical situations.
This SVQ Unit was benchmarked against Unit xxxxxx.
Notes on approach used plus who was consulted, discussions points, issues raised, etc
Consulted with centres currently delivering this Unit to check the SCQF level allocated.
Experience of delivering SVQ level 3 and working in areas where this work is carried out.

Calculating SCQF credit points for SVQ Units

Credit points

Qualifications in the SCQF are described in terms of the number of SCQF credit points they attract.

One credit point equates to a notional 10 hours of 'learning time'. Learning time has been defined as the 'average time judged to be required by an average learner at a particular level to achieve defined learning outcomes'. Using the term 'average' or 'typical' recognises that the amount of time actually taken by individuals to achieve these learning outcomes will vary — for example, with motivation, experience and ability.

> *It is good practice to work from the perspective of a candidate who has met the typical entry requirements for the qualification if applicable.*
>
> *For lower levels of qualification, candidates may have no previous knowledge.*
>
> *For higher levels, candidates may enter with prior experience or qualifications.*

Average candidate

The 'average' candidate is about finding the candidate in the middle, not the high performing candidate who completes the qualification quickly, and not the candidate who requires additional time to complete. It is mainly about the 'average' capability of a candidate at a given level. The 'average' candidate is the person who undertakes the qualification at an 'average' pace. It is about reviewing the candidates who have taken or are undertaking the SVQ Unit and working out the profile of the average candidate.

If the credit rating is for a new SVQ Unit then it may be more complex to work out the SCQF credit points for the Unit(s) in question. It would be important to benchmark against similar Units and also to investigate, via the awarding body experts, how long they would estimate it would take to achieve the SVQ Unit.

To assist you in this task we have produced an Average Candidate Profile Form (see appendix 2).

Average Candidate Profile Form

You can use this form to build up a profile of the 'average' candidate to help you identify that person's characteristics.

To develop a profile of the average candidate for an SVQ Unit, look at the full range of candidates who will undertake the SVQ and consider the key Characteristics.

This could be an amalgam of the different types of candidates who undertake the SVQ. For Domestic Plumbing in Scotland the average candidate will be a school leaver undertaking an apprenticeship. For Business Administration the average candidate will be more difficult to define because of the multiple settings in which this SVQ can be delivered. But participants still need to agree the profile overall for the average candidate.

It is good practice to work from the perspective of a candidate who has met the typical entry requirements for the qualification (if applicable). For lower levels of qualification, candidates may have no previous knowledge. For higher levels, candidates may enter with prior experience or qualifications.

Remember this process is not a science — it is about applying your professional judgement and knowledge in relation to SVQ Units.

Collect and make full use of available information to guide your estimation.

The calculation of credit is based on the amount of time that your agreed 'average' candidate (at a specified level) might expect to take to achieve the Outcomes of the SVQ Unit — ie to prove their competence. At all times the calculation of SCQF credit points is about the time taken for the agreed average candidate to prove their competence.

This, in turn, will assist you in allocating notional learning hours and credit points.

- The agreed description of the 'average' candidate must be used when calculating the notional learning time

- Base your estimates only on the content of the SVQ Unit. How long would you estimate it would take to achieve competence in the areas it describes based on the agreed 'average' candidate?

- Once you have calculated the notional learning time, ask yourself whether it feels the right amount of hours for the agreed 'average' candidate to achieve this Unit. Use the benchmarks to moderate your first calculation.

- It is essential that you record your determinations. This will provide the evidence to support the credit value you allocate to the Unit.

Average Candidate Profile Form

SVQ Credit Rating	Average Candidate Profile
SVQ Title:	
SSC/SSB:	
Type of Person	
Skills/Qualifications	
Likely Age Range	
Previous Knowledge and Understanding	
Entry Requirements	
Work-based-	
College	
Training Provider	
Any regulatory or legislative requirements	
SSC definition of a candidate undertaking the SVQ (if available)	

The above profile form will help you focus on the Characteristics of the average candidate.

The headings provided in the Average Candidate Profile Form are examples based on the experience of others who have undertaken SVQ Credit Rating for the SCQF and are not exclusive.

The Average Candidate Profiles below were developed for Customer Service at SVQ level 3, Child Care Learning and Development at SVQ level 2 and Mechanical Engineering Services: Domestic Plumbing at level 3.

These examples give you an opportunity to view previous profiles — however, they are not exclusive. Each SVQ which is being credit rated should be looked at individually.

SVQ Level 3 Customer Service

- Technical skills

- Customer service skills

- Autonomy

- More non-routine on the technical side

- Problem solving

- Mature enough to take on responsibility

- Confidence to make decisions

- Demonstrate experience

- Career advancement

- Not necessarily a level 2 candidate

SVQ Level 2 Child Care Learning and Development

- Disclosure Scotland

- SSC codes of practice

- Little experience in occupational area

- Always under supervision

- No entry requirements

- Employed or a volunteer in a child care setting

- Have people skills

- Want to work with children

SVQ level 3 Mechanical Engineering Services: Domestic Plumbing

- 16 +

- Motivated, money, self-employment

- Not in a routine job, not sitting behind a desk

- Enjoys working with his/her hands

- School leaving certificates (possible 3 Standard Grades)

- Does not suffer from colour blindness

- Low level awareness of the sector

- Would be in employment (on the job)

- Pre-employment test

- Average candidate will be college based

Notional learning time for SVQ Units

One SCQF credit point represents a notional 10 hours of learning and this is the minimum credit value that can be allocated.

Many national qualifications have defined 'learning time' as part of their structure. For example, a Higher National Diploma is made up of 30 x 40-hour components (total of 120 credit points). However, at Higher National level, learners are required to be more responsible for their own learning and will conduct learning activities outside of the structured scheduled learning time. The design rules for HN qualifications take this into account and allow an additional 30 x 40 hours of learning outside of the structured learning time total of 120 credit points. Therefore a Higher National Diploma has 240 credit points — 2400 hours of notional learning time.

Workplace qualifications, such as SVQs, have not previously been defined in terms of the time it takes the average candidate to achieve them. To determine the SCQF credit value of individual SVQ Units, a number of factors need to be considered, in addition to the time that a learner spends with a trainer or assessor.

In addition to participating formal learning/training sessions, learners could be expected to spend time on other learning activities such as:

- personal and informal learning

- research and study time

- practical work and work experience

- preparation for training, mentoring

- assessment

The mix of activities may vary — for example, a very practical SVQ Unit may require considerable time allocated to work experience/developing practice before the person could be expected to achieve the required 'outcome'. At the higher levels, learners are likely to undertake individual study, research, benchwork, and application of skills well beyond the amount of time available through formal classes.

There are a couple of benchmarks which can assist in ensuring your calculations for SCQF credit reflect the number of hours available to any SVQ candidate in a given year.

SQA has developed a formula for the number of hours available to a candidate in a year. The notional learning hours can't exceed this total, but can be less. Not all the hours available will be used for learning; many learners will also be in employment.

220 working days a year (Monday to Friday)

220 days at 7 hours a day = 1540 hours

If you divide 220 by 5 (5 days Monday to Friday) it gives you 44 weeks

Another benchmark is the 120 credit points allocated for one year of full time academic study.

Calculating SCQF credit points for SVQ Units

How long would it take your agreed 'average' candidate to achieve competence in the areas described? Base your estimate only on the content of the SVQ Unit.

The agreed description of the 'average' candidate must be used when calculating the notional learning hours.

It is the SVQ Units that are being credit rated and not the National Occupational Standards.

Make use of all available information to guide your calculation of notional learning hours. For example, this information can clarify the number of times a task has to be demonstrated, if there is a multiple choice to complete, etc.

- Assessment guidance for the SVQ
- Assessment strategy for the SVQ
- Candidate portfolios
- Candidate support packs
- Qualification structures
- Discuss your calculations with centres currently offering the SVQ Unit
- Discuss your calculations with other subject experts

In order to calculate the notional learning time for each of the SVQ Units, you need to breakdown the Unit to attribute time. There are two suggested methods for doing this:

Method One:

Please ensure you read the SVQ Unit descriptor in full before commencing SCQF credit rating. Do not assume you know the content of the SVQ Unit descriptor.

Taking each section of the Unit and, based on your knowledge and experience of the Unit, review the Outcomes, knowledge and understanding etc, and what is required of the candidate, and assign notional learning hours to each. This in turn will provide you with notional learning hours for this Unit.

Once this task is complete, review the outcome and consider if the number of hours is realistic for the agreed average candidate to become competent in this Unit.

Method Two

Please ensure you read the SVQ Unit descriptor in full before commencing SCQF credit rating. Do not assume you know the content of the SVQ Unit descriptor.

Take the whole Unit descriptor and, based on your knowledge and experience of the Unit, review the contents of the whole Unit and what is required of the candidate, and estimate the notional learning hours. This in turn will provide you with the notional learning hours for this Unit.

Once this task is complete, review the outcome and consider if the number of hours is realistic for the agreed average candidate to become competent in this Unit.

Calculating SCQF credit points for SVQ Units

You should apply your professional judgement in the calculation of SCQF credit for SVQ Units. The following points can assist with this process:

- Calculate the notional hours of learning, then ask yourself if this 'feels' the right amount of hours for the agreed 'average' candidate to achieve this Unit. Use the benchmarks to moderate your first calculation.

- You must record your determinations so that there is evidence to support the credit value you allocate to the Unit.

- If you use any ratios or formula in calculating the SCQF credit points then you must indicate these in Form Part 2.

Your credit rating calculations can be recorded using the grid on page 64.

Completion of SVQ Unit grid — Credit point recommendations — Part 2

The form for recording SCQF credit points is divided into five columns. Each of these columns provides you with the opportunity to record your decision.

Column 1 — SVQ Unit breakdown

This column is designed to assist you in breaking down the SVQ Unit into topics or sections to assist you in attributing SCQF credit points. This section is most commonly completed by using the following headings:

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Activity

These headings in the main sum up what the candidate is required to do to achieve the SVQ Unit. If for example the SVQ Unit you are credit rating is a knowledge-based unit you may not attribute any time to the Activity section.

The examples below are of Column 1 – SVQ Unit breakdown developed by Food Manufacture, Mechanical Engineering Services: Domestic Plumbing and Construction. These examples are provided to give you an opportunity to view previous examples and are not exclusive. Each SVQ should be looked at individually.

Example 1: Food Manufacture

SVQ Unit breakdown — if relevant (eg topics/sections from the SVQ Unit)	Formal input off the job (eg contact time with tutor, acquisition of knowledge/ understanding) (hours)	Additional activities on the job (eg developing practice, reflection, research/study time) (hours)	Assessment (eg planning, completion of assessment tasks) (hours)	Total time
Knowledge and Understanding				
Activity				
Craft Skills (where applicable)				
Total hours				

Example 2: Mechanical Engineering Services: Domestic Plumbing

SVQ Unit breakdown (if relevant) eg topics/sections from the SVQ Unit	Formal input (eg contact time with tutor, acquisition of knowledge/ understanding) (hours)	Additional activities (eg developing practice, reflection, research/study time) (hours)	Assessment (eg planning, completion of assessment tasks) (hours)	Total time
Knowledge and Understanding (theory) Direct Learning Workbase Learning				
Practice/Experience (Practical)				
Planning, Evaluation Tutorial				
Portfolio/Logbook				
Total hours				

Example 3: Construction

SVQ Unit breakdown (if relevant) eg topics/sections from the SVQ Unit	Formal input (eg contact time with tutor, acquisition of knowledge/ understanding) (hours)	Additional activities (eg developing practice, reflection, research/study time) (hours)	Assessment (eg planning, completion of assessment tasks) (hours)	Total time
Knowledge and Understanding				
Activity				
Total hours				

Column 2 – Formal Input

This column is about contact time with tutor, lecturer, trainer, acquisition of knowledge and/or understanding. This time would normally be off the job, classroom, training room, etc.

Column 3– Additional Activities

This column is about the time spent developing practice, reflection, research/study time, etc. This time would normally be on the job.

Column 4 – Assessment

This column is about the time spent on planning, completion of assessment tasks, assessment time, portfolio building, etc.

Column 5 – Total Time

This column is for recording the overall time for each of the columns.

Calculating credit points for SVQ Units

This table provides a simple format for calculating notional time and credit points:

SVQ Unit GRID — Credit Point Recommendations — PART 2				
SVQ Title:				
SVQ Level (if applicable)				
SVQ Unit Title:				
SVQ Unit Number (if applicable):				
SVQ Rater Name:	Awarding Body:			
SVQ Unit breakdown (if relevant) eg topics/sections from the SVQ Unit	Formal input (eg contact time with tutor, acquisition of knowledge/ understanding) Off the job (hours)	Additional activities (eg developing practice, reflection, research/study time) (hours) On the job	Assessment (eg planning, completion of assessment tasks) (hours)	Total time
Knowledge and Understanding				
Activity				
? ? ? The choice here is made by the participants if required				
Total hours				
			Credit points (hours/10)	

Individual SVQ Units need not be the same size. For example, one SVQ Unit may be very demanding in terms of both skills and knowledge, whilst another may be less demanding and hence take less time for the average candidate to achieve.

Remember that 1 credit point equates to 10 hours of learning. Fractions of hours should be rounded up or down as appropriate, for example:

- 43 hours would be 4 SCQF credit points

- 57 hours would be 6 SCQF credit points

- 25 hours would be 3 SCQF credit points

0 to 4 hours you round down and 5 to 9 hours you round up

Example: Calculating SCQF credit points for SVQ Units

SVQ Unit GRID — Credit Point Recommendations — PART 2				
SVQ Title: Credit and Level				
SVQ Level (if applicable) 3				
SVQ Unit Title: Calculate SCQF credit				
SVQ Unit Number (if applicable): CL12 23				
SVQ Rater Name: George S Brown Awarding Body: Example Awarding Body				
SVQ Unit breakdown (if relevant) eg topics/sections from the SVQ Unit	Formal input (eg contact time with tutor, acquisition of knowledge/ understanding) (hours)	Additional activities (eg developing practice, reflection, research/study time) (hours)	Assessment (eg planning, completion of assessment tasks) (hours)	Total time
Knowledge and Understanding	10	27	2	39
Activity	5	20	3	28
? ? ? The choice here is made by the participants if required	0	0	0	0
Total hours				
	15	47	5	67
			Credit points (hours/10)	7
Notes on Approach				
This is a Unit which requires a lot of knowledge input. Developing the knowledge into practice is required. The knowledge and understanding is in-depth and requires practice to gain competence. There is some opportunity for research. Discussed the credit value for this Unit with my peer reviewer. After discussion, alterations were made and the final credit points are as detailed above.				

SVQ Unit summary grid

Use this form to record the SCQF credit points and levels for the Units within your allocation of SVQ Units.

The form must be completed for every Unit that you credit rate.

SVQ Unit summary grid

Scottish Qualifications Authority			
RECOMMENDATION FOR SVQ LEVEL AND CREDIT			
SVQ UNIT SUMMARY GRID			
SVQ Title:	Credit and Level		
Rater Name	George S Brown	Awarding Body	Example Awarding Body
Vetter Name	Carole Brown	Awarding Body	Example Awarding Body
SSC	Example Sector Skills Council		
SVQ Unit Title		Mandatory Unit (M) Optional Unit (O)	SCQF level	SCQF credit points
Calculate SCQF credit		M	7	7
Allocate SCQF level		M	7	7
Communicate effectively with colleagues in relation to SCQF credit		O	6	5
Communicate effectively with colleagues in relation to SCQF level		O	6	5

Unit sign-off form

This form is an essential document in the credit rating process.

At the end of the training session the participants divide the Units which form the SVQ(s) amongst the panel members, who form pairs. Timelines are agreed by which time the pairing should complete the process and submit their findings. The participants then work on the calculation of the SCQF credit points and the allocation of the SCQF level for their allocated SVQ Units.

The pairs are asked to swap over the units which they had SCQF credit-rated this is a vital part of the process as it ensures the allocation of SCQF credit points and level is vetted.

During this swap stage, the pairs communicate with each other to reach agreement on the SCQF Credit and SCQF level for the individual SVQ Units. Sometimes agreement on the SCQF credit points and level is reached quite quickly, and sometimes the unit goes back and forth until agreement is reached between the pairing. A SVQ Unit sign-off form is required to be completed by the pairing to confirm the agreed findings.

Participants may also work together in groups meeting at a central venue to undertake the credit rating. This maybe more time efficient for all those involved.

Occasionally agreement is not reached by the pairing on what the SCQF level and or credit points should be, so the unit(s) is/are brought back to the whole group at the standardisation event for views and confirmation of the SCQF credit points and level.

The sign-off form can go back and forward between the rater and vetter on several occasions before agreement is reached. This form should record the discussion and issues between them both.

Unit sign-off form

SVQ CREDIT RATING SIGN-OFF FORM					
RECOMMENDATION FOR SCQF LEVEL AND CREDIT POINTS OF AN SVQ UNIT					
SVQ Unit Title:	Allocate SCQF Level				
Recommended SCQF level:	6			Recommended SCQF credit points:	7
Name:	George S Brown				
Awarding Body:	Example Awarding Body				
Signature:	George S Brown				
Date:	1 February 2008				
CREDIT RATER / VETTER'S COMMENTS (x as appropriate)					
Levelling	Agree	x	Disagree	Queries to be addressed	
Credit rating	Agree	x	Disagree	Queries to be addressed	
Comments/ queries	I have reviewed the documentation supplied in relation to this unit and I am satisfied that the SCQF credit and level allocated to this unit is appropriate for the agreed average candidate.				
Name:	Carole Brown				
Signature:	Carole Brown				
Date:	5 February 2008				
FINAL DECISION					
SCQF level:	7			SCQF credit points:	7
Comments	Both the rater and vetter for this unit are content with the credit rating decisions reached.				

Allocating SVQs to a level in the SCQF

This is SQA's suggested methodology for allocating SVQs a level in the SCQF.

Once you have allocated levels to the individual Units within an SVQ, you then have to decide how to derive a level for the SVQ as a whole.

Research indicates that, in general, most mandatory Units are at the same level as the whole qualification, with optional Units varying by no more than one level above or below that point.

If all of your SVQ Units have been mapped against one SCQF Level Descriptor, then you can generally assume that the SVQ will be mapped against that level as well.

Users of the Scorecard are asked to match a Unit against the statements which are the 'best fit' description of that dimension, and to provide evidence to justify that match.

The overall SVQ level is a function of the levels of the Units which make up the qualification and the amount of credit attached to Units.

The level for a qualification is normally the most common, or modal, level of the units which make it up. Thus a five unit qualification with units which sit at levels 6, 6, 7, 7 and 6 respectively, would be assigned to level 6.

However, it is important to also note the SCQF credit points attached to each of the units. In the example above, if the credit points attached to each of the five units are 20, 25, 60, 20, and 15 respectively then the candidate would have 60 credit points at level 6 and 80 credit points at level 7. As the greatest volume of learning is at level 7, the qualification would be levelled at level 7.

Coming to a conclusion on the overall SCQF level of the SVQ

Once you have come to a view on the level of your qualification/learning programme using one of these models, you will have to test your conclusions. You do this by matching your qualification/learning programme to the SCQF Level Descriptors as a whole.

Concentrate on the levels around which your qualification/learning programme sits. So, for example, if from the work you have already done you have assessed your qualification/learning programme as sitting at SCQF level 6, start by looking at the levels around SCQF level 6, ie 5 and 7.

You should ask why the qualification/learning programme is not at the levels immediately above and immediately below the level of your initial decision.

Once you are satisfied with your level selection, record your recommended level and the rationale for your decision, ie how did you decide on the level, what factors did you consider?

Your recommendations will be formally reviewed by SQA, so it is important to include enough information so that someone who is not familiar with your qualification/learning programme can make a judgement on whether they can confirm your recommendations.

Full guidance on reaching an overall level can be found in Appendix 3 of this guidance document.

Recommendation for Overall SCQF Level and for Minimum and Maximum SCQF credit values for SVQs.

SQA ACCREDITATION			
RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERALL SCQF LEVEL AND FOR MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SCQF CREDIT VALUES FOR SVQS			
SCQF LEVEL AND MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM SUBMISSION			
SVQ Title			
SVQ Level (if applicable)			
SSC/SSB name			
Recommended overall SCQF level			
Rationale for recommendations of the overall SCQF level			
Recommendations for minimum SCQF Credit Value		**Recommendation for maximum SCQF Credit Value**	
Rationale for recommendations of the minimum and maximum SCQF credit values of SVQs			
Name and job title			
Organisation			
Signature			
Date			