

# **National Qualification Group Awards (NQGAs)**

## **The Newsletter of the NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group**

*Issue 1*

*September 2006*

### **Welcome to the NQGA Newsletter**

We are delighted to introduce the first edition of the NQGA Newsletter which is a new briefing produced by SQA on behalf of the NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group's strategy for enhancing communication with key stakeholders.

The briefing is intended to provide an overview of matters discussed at the Key Partners' meetings, decisions taken and ongoing developments. This newsletter can also be accessed online in the NQ section of SQA's website.

Subsequent editions of the NQGA Newsletter will be published on SQA's website after each meeting of the Key Partners' Group, which meets four times a year. We would be grateful, therefore, if you could inform relevant people within your organisation of this newsletter.

With thanks for your support.

John Young  
Director of Qualifications  
Scottish Qualifications Authority

Brian Lister  
Chairman  
NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group

## **Who are the key partners in NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group?**

- ◆ Association of Scottish Colleges
- ◆ Colleges Open Learning Exchange Group
- ◆ Further Education Colleges
- ◆ Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- ◆ HMIE
- ◆ Learning and Teaching Scotland
- ◆ Schools/Education Authorities
- ◆ Scottish Enterprise
- ◆ Scottish Executive
- ◆ Scottish Funding Council
- ◆ Scottish Further Education Unit
- ◆ Scottish Wider Access Programme
- ◆ Sector Skills Development Agency
- ◆ SQA's Advisory Council
- ◆ SQA
- ◆ Other stakeholders

It is envisaged that membership of the NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group will be extended to other key partners as the remit of the Group requires. The NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group is a link between the major stakeholders and SQA on strategic issues related to NQ Group Awards.

## **What is the remit of the NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group?**

The remit includes:

- ◆ Providing advice on design principles for NQ Group Awards and guidance on how these should be implemented
- ◆ Helping to ensure that NQ Group Awards meet the needs of candidates, deliverers and users, identifying key issues for each of these groups
- ◆ Advising on the support required by deliverers, including support to help centres understand standards, and assess and quality assure qualifications effectively
- ◆ Advising on key messages to be communicated to stakeholders and providing advice on the most appropriate methods of communicating these

Acting in an advisory, consultative capacity, the NQ Group Awards Key Partners' Group meets four times a year, with smaller working groups taking forward particular issues

related to the growth and development of NQGs in Scotland. This newsletter will be your regular update on the outcome of these meetings.

## **Background to the NQ Group Award developments**

In late 2004, SQA carried out a review and consultation process. The aim of the review was to establish qualification titles and design principles which would fit together into a system of qualifications that is:

- ◆ fit for purpose and up-to-date
- ◆ simple to understand
- ◆ straightforward and cost-effective for centres and SQA to operate

Additionally, this system of qualifications will enhance progression opportunities for candidates who wish to continue with studying or who wish to move into employment.

Further consultation was carried out in February and March 2005 to clarify the design principles for non-advanced Group Awards (National Certificates and National Progression Awards). As a result of this, the following design principles have been agreed for National Certificates and National Progression Awards:

### **National Certificate Design Principles**

- ◆ National Certificates will be available at SCQF levels 2-6.
- ◆ At SCQF levels 2 and 3, a National Certificate will be made up of Units with a total credit value of 54 SCQF credit points.
- ◆ At SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6, a National Certificate will be made up of Units with a total credit value of 72 SCQF credit points.
- ◆ At least half of the credit points will be at the level of the National Certificate.
- ◆ National Certificates will have a mandatory section which makes up a minimum of half of the Group Award.
- ◆ National Certificates may contain alternative Units within the mandatory section but all alternatives must reflect the title of the National Certificate.
- ◆ National Certificates will have an optional section which makes up no more than half of the Group Award.
- ◆ National Certificates will provide opportunities for candidates to develop all five Core Skills.
- ◆ National Certificates will provide opportunities for candidates to be credited with Core Skills attainment, if appropriate to the Group Award area.

## **National Progression Awards Design Principles**

- ◆ National Progression Awards will be available at SCQF levels 2-6.
- ◆ National Progression Awards will be made up of Units with a minimum credit value of 12 SCQF credit points. This must be made up of at least two Unit credits.
- ◆ National Progression Awards will be made up of mandatory and/or optional Units which reflect the title of the Group Award.
- ◆ National Progression Awards may contain alternative Units within the mandatory section but all alternatives must reflect the title of the National Progression Awards.
- ◆ National Progression Awards will be linked to the National Occupational Standards, as appropriate to the Group Award area.

SQA has now embarked upon a major programme of work to review its current portfolio with a view to incorporating a cohesive set of new National Certificates and National Progression Awards, with relevant links with Skills for Work and progression to HNs and SVQs. The aims of this project include the following:

- ◆ develop or revise nationally recognised SQA National Certificates and National Progression Awards
- ◆ review, update, revise and rationalise the NQ Unit Catalogue
- ◆ develop or revise servicing Units
- ◆ develop assessment support materials.

SQA has carried out initial occupational sector profiling exercises which cover qualifications from SCQF level 2-6 and takes into consideration what currently exists in SQA's portfolio, key competitor qualifications and developments and trends within the sectors. These have resulted in determining gaps within the current SQA portfolio and recommendations as to which qualifications should be developed, updated or deleted.

Occupational sector profiling has been carried out in the following areas:

- ◆ Art & Design
- ◆ Care
- ◆ Communication & Media
- ◆ Computing
- ◆ Construction
- ◆ Hairdressing & Beauty
- ◆ Hospitality
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Drama

- ◆ Sport & Leisure
- ◆ Travel & Tourism
- ◆ Business Administration (including Financial Services)

A similar exercise has been carried out for the following Servicing Units:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Computing (IT)
- ◆ Finance
- ◆ Numeracy
- ◆ Personal & Social Education (PSE)
- ◆ Science
- ◆ Language
- ◆ Supervisory Management
- ◆ Project Planning

Work is now underway within Qualification Design Teams (QDTs) to develop National Certificates and National Progression Awards in these areas.

### **Developments for 2006-2007**

In addition to the above areas, it has been agreed that during 2006-2007 occupational sector profiling should be carried out for the following areas:

Landbased  
Arts and Sciences  
Retail and Logistics  
Public Services

### **NQGA development schedule**

Based on the published development schedule for Higher National Modernisation, the NQGA Development Schedule is a dynamic document which will be updated monthly on SQA's website. It aims to provide summary information on each individual development and users can apply filters to the schedule to search for specific information, i.e. can select a certain subject type to list all planned developments or list all awards validated and/or when.

It is envisaged that the NQGA Development Schedule will provide SQA's stakeholders with early, regular and straightforward communication on developments in National Certificates and National Progression Awards

Should you wish to find out more information about NQGA developments, please visit **SQA's website** — under NQ news there is an item on NQ Group Awards: National certificates and NPAs. This in turn, links to the NQGA Development Project: Development Schedule

### **NQGA out and about**

As part of SQA's overall communication strategy for National Qualification Group Awards, we are currently visiting Scottish colleges. The purpose of these visits is to deliver a session on the forthcoming plans for the National Certificate and National Progression Awards developments to curriculum planners and other interested staff in colleges. To date, there has been a very positive response from those colleges which have accepted the invitation for these sessions. If you would like us to come to your college to deliver a session on NQGA developments which will last approximately two hours (including questions), please contact Hilary Rutherford at **hilary.rutherford@sqa.org.uk** or John Allan at **john.allan@sqa.org.uk**.

### **NQGA Conference: National Qualifications Mean Business — a date for your diary**

The first annual NQGA Conference will be held on 26 January 2007. Look out for further details in both subsequent editions of the Newsletter and SQA's website under the NQ page.

### **Problems/Queries?**

If you encounter any problems with this e-mail, please contact us at:

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