

# SQA qualifications and what they mean

*Information for employers*



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*We all know that qualifications are a good thing – having a set of good, reliable qualifications is simply the best way for someone to prove that they have the skills they say they have. That's why the Scottish Qualifications Authority is in business – we're Scotland's national body for qualifications (other than university degrees and some professional qualifications).*

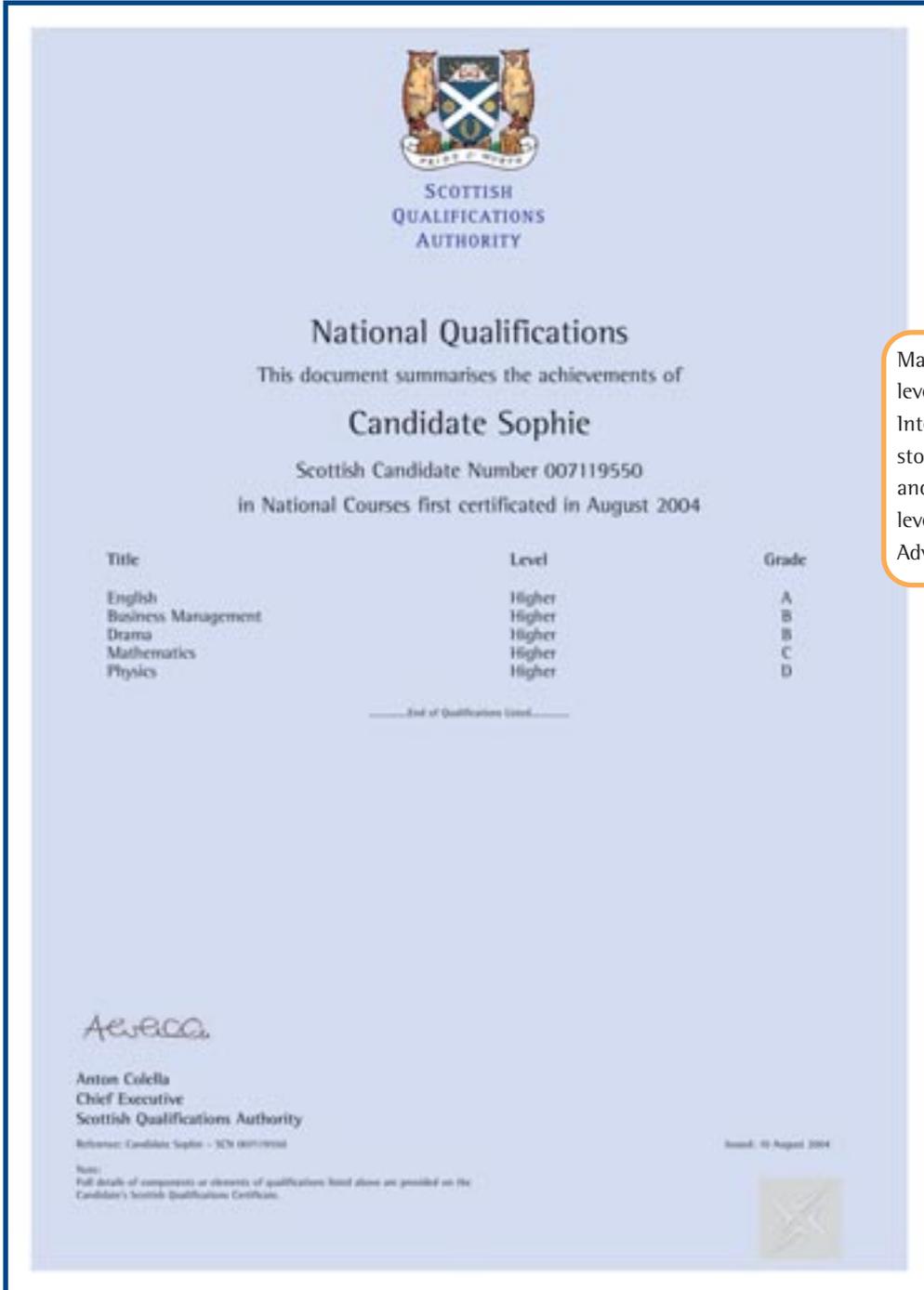
*The qualifications available in Scotland have changed over recent years though, and you may not be as familiar with all of them as you'd like to be or as you think you ought to be. They have almost certainly changed since you left school.*

*Perhaps you're thinking of recruiting someone to a new position in the next couple of months? Perhaps you've recently done so and found that there were one or two qualifications you were unfamiliar with?*

*This brochure tries to explain the qualifications you're most likely to come across on letters of application and on CVs. There is also a brief explanation of the new Scottish Qualifications Certificate. We hope that it helps.*

*If you'd like more information about the qualifications offered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, please telephone our Customer Contact Centre on 0845 279 1000.*

*This is the first page of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate of a young applicant who has just left school.*



Many candidates will use the new levels Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 as a stepping stone between Standard Grade and Higher level. After Higher level, they may then progress to Advanced Higher.

# Alok Mistry

44 John Hart Street

Glasgow

CV

CV

## Education

1996-2002: Penfold High School, Glasgow

### National Qualifications

#### ■ Standard Grades

|                |         |
|----------------|---------|
| English        | Credit  |
| Maths          | Credit  |
| Physics        | Credit  |
| Chemistry      | Credit  |
| Art & Design   | Credit  |
| Modern Studies | General |
| French         | General |

#### ■ National Courses

|             |        |   |
|-------------|--------|---|
| English     | Higher | A |
| Chemistry   | Higher | B |
| Mathematics | Higher | C |
| Physics     | Higher | C |

#### ■ Scottish Group Award Science at Higher

## Employment

June 2002 to present: Tasco Supermarket, Peel Road, Glasgow

#### ■ Stock control supervisor

This is a responsible position. My duties include supervising display shelving units including gondola ends, and I have packed cheese and other dairy items.

## References

Mr Gerald Horsely  
Dundrennan  
44 Campsiefell Road

Mrs I Khan  
44 Fothergill Road  
Partick

After Standard Grades (see opposite), many candidates move on to do further National Qualifications. These can be taken at any of five levels:

- Access
- Intermediate 1
- Intermediate 2
- Higher
- Advanced Higher

**National Courses** are groups of normally three Units at the same level (a Unit takes roughly 40 hours of study to complete, and is marked on the basis of coursework, projects or assignments) plus an exam at that level. The exam (or exams) covers everything that has been studied in the Units, and determines the grade (A to C) that the candidate achieves. A National Course at Higher has the same value as one of the old-style Higher Grades.

**Scottish Group Awards** are large-scale achievements which bring together a coherent programme of study followed over one year, or more usually, two years. This person has an SGA in Science – one of many subjects that are available – at Higher level. To get the SGA at Higher he had to pass 17 National Units (at least nine of which had to be at Higher level), pass three exams at Higher level with at least grade C and satisfy a set of Core Skills requirements. The fact that he has done so shows that he can apply himself consistently over a period of time.

*This CV belongs to a young job applicant who left school at 18 in June 2002, following the exams that year. He is now looking for a job, though increasing numbers of young people go on to college or university at this stage of their careers.*

# Curriculum Vitae

## Mandy Cornwall

Date of Birth: 25 July 1975

Marital Status: Single

Address: 138 Main Street, Irvine, Ayrshire, PA24 7QJ

### Qualifications Obtained

Secondary Education: Park Main High School, Erskine (1987-1993)

#### Standard Grades:

Chemistry 4

Computing 2

French 3

#### National Certificate Modules:

Mathematics (Core 3)

Mathematics (Core 4)

#### Higher Grades Obtained:

English B

Geography B

Modern Studies B

Physics B

#### Further Education:

Glasgow Newton University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow (1993-1997)

BA (Hons) Business Studies (Results: Second Class Upper Division (2.1))

#### Previous Employment

September 95 - August 96

Glasgow Newton University

This employment was a requirement of my University programme (placement experience). I joined the department of Marketing and Public Relations within Newton University through which I was given the title of Marketing Assistant. Through this work I was able to develop skills in areas of marketing, advertising, marketing and communication and market research. In addition I was able to develop excellent interpersonal and communication skills as well as extensive computer skills in packages such as Corel Draw, Excel, Filemaker Pro and Word.

October 93 - July 96

Makro

My title at Makro was that of General Assistant. The duties performed as a result included stock control, and rotation, till and customer service.

Hobbies & Leisure Activities

My main hobbies and leisure activities include Fishing, Music, Football and Golf. In addition to these interests I am extremely interested in furthering my education perhaps through a part time programme

### Standard Grades

Standard Grades are usually taken in the fourth year of secondary school. The grade awarded (1-7) is based on how well the person does in an exam and in an internally-assessed element involving coursework and projects – grades 1 and 2 are known as ‘Credit’, grades 3 and 4 are known as ‘General’, and grades 5 and 6 are called ‘Foundation’. Standard Grades can lead on to National Qualifications at Intermediate or Higher level, or to employment. Many of the people leaving school at 16 will have Standard Grades. Standard Grades replaced ‘O’ Grades from 1986 onwards.

### National Certificate Modules

Sometimes known as ‘Scotvecs’, modules have now been re-branded as National Units.

### Highers

This applicant, who left school in 1993, achieved the old style SCE Higher Grade. Highers have now been reformed. Higher, though it has exactly the same value as it had in the past, is now one of five levels, allowing for a broader scope of candidate achievement. Like the other levels, Highers are now made up of National Units, with an exam at the end of the year. As you can see from her CV, this applicant went on to university – Highers are the most common means of meeting entry requirements, but they are also useful qualifications for employment.

*This is a CV from a graduate job applicant in her late twenties. As you would expect, she has not had a great deal of work experience, but she does have a range of qualifications to prove that she has the skills and knowledge you might be looking for.*

## C u r r i c u l u m V i t a e

### Celia McLaren

198 Queen Anne Street, Aberdeen, 01224 686877

Nationality: British  
Marital status: Single  
Driving licence: Full

#### Education:

1984-1988 Hazeldean Academy  
1988-1991 Aberdeen College  
Standard Grades: French 3  
'O' Grades: English 2; Mathematics 3; Secretarial  
Highers: Secretarial Studies (Audio) C; Secretarial  
SCOTVECs: Word Processing  
SVQs: Business Administration level 1  
Business Administration level 2  
Business Administration level 3  
Scottish Ambulance Service: First Aid at Work Course 1

#### Employment:

1991-Present: Sta-dri Rainwear Ltd  
Huntly Road Ind Est  
Aberdeen

Administration Assistant

Joined the Company on a Youth Training Scheme, and on completion of the two year course was given employment status. Specific responsibilities include: Typing, Word Processing, Filing (manual and computerised), Desk Top Publishing, Stock Handling and Control, Reprographics, Reception, Telecommunication and Data Transmission, Mail Handling, Customer/Colleague Liaison, Information Processing, Information Supply, Goods Inward

1989-1991: The Doric Hotel  
Old Aberdeen

Waitress, Housekeeping  
General waitressing and bar duties; helping the Housekeeper with accommodation duties.

#### Hobbies/Pass Times

I enjoy swimming, cycling, badminton, ten-pin bowling and listening to an assortment of music.

SVQs are qualifications which are done in the workplace (or in workplace conditions at a training centre or college). They prove that the holder is competent in the job role covered by the qualification.

There are five levels of SVQ:

**Level 1** covers jobs which involve tasks which fall into a set pattern, with little variation.

**Level 2** involves some variation and complexity, and there may be an element of individual autonomy and collaboration with others.

**Level 3** covers complex and non-routine activities – people working at this level may have control or guidance of others.

**Level 4** involves a broad range of complex, technical or professional activities. People working at this level will have substantial autonomy, and will often be responsible for the work of others and for allocating resources.

**Level 5** involves a high degree of complexity and strategic direction, often in unpredictable contexts. People working at this level will have substantial personal autonomy, responsibility for the work of others and for allocation of resources, and will usually be personally accountable for aspects of an organisation's operations.

There are no longer any Youth Training Schemes. **Skillseekers** and **Modern Apprenticeships**, the modern replacements, are much more focused on the needs of both industry and the trainee. Trainees gain real work experience while doing a recognised qualification in workplace conditions – an SVQ – which means that they have proof of the skills they have gained.

*This applicant for an administration job has a variety of qualifications which are relevant. She has a balance of 'academic' and 'vocational' qualifications from her school career, and has carried on getting qualifications during her working life. This demonstrates not only that she has the skills which the qualifications recognise, but that she has the drive and determination to carry on with what she starts, that she's not a 'quitter', and that she will work hard to further her career.*

**109 Battery Park Road, Gourrock, PA19 2OX, Tel: 01475-641555**

**Human Resource Management Unit  
ScotPrint  
24 Douglas Street  
EDINBURGH EH2 7NQ**

Dear Sir/Madam 27th June 2002

I am writing with reference to the position of operator as advertised in The Herald on 27th June 2002. As you will see from the enclosed CV I am a highly qualified individual with the skills and qualities required.

I have excellent project management skills and I am able to get systems up and running efficiently and effectively. My SVQ level 4 in Supervisory Management is proof of this – I did the SVQ while setting up a new stock control system which involved a complete reorganisation of the company's operating procedures.

I was required to establish an administration system for Resource Centre and Training Plan activities including financial reporting systems and monthly reports to line management and Board. I co-ordinated the delivery of the Training programme with both internal customers and external organisations. I have excellent PC skills including knowledge of Microsoft Project which I use in my current role.

I have first-hand knowledge of vocational training having delivered an SVQ Programme at Palliser & Cade including: SVQ Food & Drink Manufacturing Operations (level 2) and SVQ Administration (level 2). I am a registered SVQ assessor with D32 and D33 awards.

I would be delighted to discuss my application further and look forward to meeting you at interview.

Yours faithfully

Graham Dignan

**Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)** are work-based qualifications which set the level of occupational competence for each sector of the economy. These standards define what employees (or potential employees) must be able to do, how well, and in what circumstances, to show that they are competent in their work.

The D32 and D33 awards were the previous national standards for workplace assessors – the people who judge whether SVQ candidates have successfully demonstrated their competence. D32 and D33 have now been replaced by the Assessor/Verifier (A/V) Units.

*This is a letter from a 32 year-old manager with a lot of experience (detailed on his CV) which is relevant to the post he is applying for. He has drawn your attention to the skills and knowledge he has gained by mentioning that he has an SVQ, which proves that he is competent to nationally-defined standards of performance in management.*

# Ross Cromartie

28/6 Macdonald Street, Edinburgh, EH3 5TT

Tel: 0131-553 5555

Date of Birth: 12 November 1974

Marital Status: Single

## Education

1986-92 Boroughmuir High School,

Higher Accounting C  
Higher Mathematics B  
Standard Grade Arithmetic 3  
Standard Grade Accounting 3  
Standard Grade Modern Studies 2  
Standard Grade Economics 3  
Standard Grade English 3

1993-95 Xavier College, Edinburgh  
HND Computing

Higher Accounting C  
Higher Mathematics B  
Standard Grade Arithmetic 3  
Standard Grade Accounting 3  
Standard Grade Modern Studies 2  
Standard Grade Economics 3  
Standard Grade English 3

1993-95 Xavier College, Edinburgh  
HND Computing

## Current Position:

June 1995-present

Standard Mutual Amicable, 166-72 George St, Edinburgh

Programmer/analyst

I joined as junior/trainee programmer, and have been promoted twice: to programmer, then to my present position as programmer/analyst. My duties include complex programming, systems maintenance, systems design etc.

I have also completed my PDA Certificate in Advanced Programming on SMA's Staff Development programme.

## Interests

I am interested in music of all kinds, am a keen ornithologist, and regularly play football and golf.

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are advanced vocational qualifications in specialised areas. They cover the majority of occupations in Scotland. Both HNCs and HNDs are qualifications at technician or junior to middle management levels. HNCs focus on a narrower range of subject area, whereas HNDs are wide-ranging in what they cover. An HND can also be an acceptable qualification for entry to the second or third year of a university degree course.

*As well as having started a successful career at Standard Mutual Amicable, Ross has also been on the company's Staff Development Programme, emerging with a PDA (Professional Development Award) in the area of computing he specialises in. PDAs are advanced qualifications for people who are already established in their careers. Some organisations use them (sometimes PDAs which have been specially designed for the organisation) for their in-house training and development schemes.*

### *The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)*

Increasingly, in literature about qualifications, and in applications from candidates themselves, you will see references to the SCQF level of a qualification.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework is a new way of understanding and comparing qualifications in Scotland. Its main purposes are to:

- make the relationships clearer between the various qualifications that are available
- make progression and transfer between qualifications easier by clarifying entry and exit points and routes for progression

The framework currently includes all Scottish qualifications from Scottish universities and SQA. They are described in terms of level and credit.

The level a qualification is assigned to in the framework is an indication of how hard it is to achieve. There are 12 levels, from level 1 for Access 1 to level 12 for doctorates.

The amount of credit attached to a qualification indicates how big it is, in terms of the amount of learning required. Credit is expressed in terms of SCQF credit points – one point represents a notional 10 hours of learning required of the learner to achieve the outcomes contained in the qualification.

SCOTTISH  
QUALIFICATIONS  
AUTHORITY



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EH22 1LE

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