



Administration

National Qualifications Group Awards Development Programme

Introduction

Background

SQA has identified the need for increased parity and consistency in National Qualifications Group Awards (NQGAs). Currently Group Awards are designed and labelled differently by FE colleges and many such locally-devised Courses offer very similar content. SQA has identified the need for consistency in what are commonly termed 'NC programmes' within FE colleges for the following reasons:

1. To create national provision and parity of Group Awards
2. To allow candidates to be formally certificated by SQA for Group Award attainment
3. To provide colleges with a National Assessment Bank from which to access resources for internal assessment purposes

Stage 1

In late 2004, SQA carried out a review and consultation process to establish qualification titles and design principles for these new NQ Group Awards which would fit together into a system of qualifications which is:

- ◆ Fit for purpose and up-to-date
- ◆ Simple to understand
- ◆ Straightforward and cost-effective for centres and SQA to operate

This system of qualifications aims to enhance progression opportunities for SQA candidates who wish to continue studying and/or wish to move into employment.

The new provision falls into two Group Award categories:

- ◆ National Certificates
- ◆ National Progression Awards

National Certificates are designed to develop a range of knowledge and skills (including Core skills) and have specific aims relating to a subject/occupational area. They are primarily aimed at 16-18 year olds and adults in full time education, normally at college. They prepare candidates for more advanced study or employment.

National Progression Awards are designed to assess a defined set of skills and knowledge in a specialist subject/occupational area. They are mainly used by colleges for short programmes of study, such as return to work programmes or as part-time programmes.

At present, non-advanced provision in Scotland's FE colleges accounts for the highest percentage of college activity in terms of qualifications and courses. Most FE college non-advanced provision is either through SQA or locally-devised college programmes. In addition, there are around 40,000 candidates registered with other awarding bodies.

In order to ensure that colleges' requirements continue to be met, SQA has to ensure that NQGA developments take cognizance of the needs of colleges and their candidates.

Stage 2

Further consultation was carried out in February - March 2005 to clarify the design principles for non-advanced Group Awards, and SQA has now embarked on the review of its current NQ Group Award portfolio. The aims of this review are to:

- ◆ develop a new suite of NQ Group Awards in the form of National Certificates and National Progression Awards
- ◆ review, update, revise and rationalise Units within the NQ Unit Catalogue
- ◆ develop or revise servicing Units
- ◆ develop assessment support materials, including e-learning and e-assessment

Establishing the Need

SQA has carried out an initial occupational sector profiling exercise which covers qualifications from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 2 to 6, and takes into account what currently exists in SQA's portfolio, key competitor qualifications and developments and trends within the sector. This has resulted in the identification of gaps within the current SQA portfolio and recommendations have been made as to which qualifications should be developed/updated/deleted.

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

- ◆ Art and Design
- ◆ Care
- ◆ Communication and Media
- ◆ Computing
- ◆ Construction
- ◆ Hairdressing and Beauty
- ◆ Hospitality
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Drama
- ◆ Sport and Leisure
- ◆ Travel and Tourism
- ◆ Business Admin (including Financial Services)