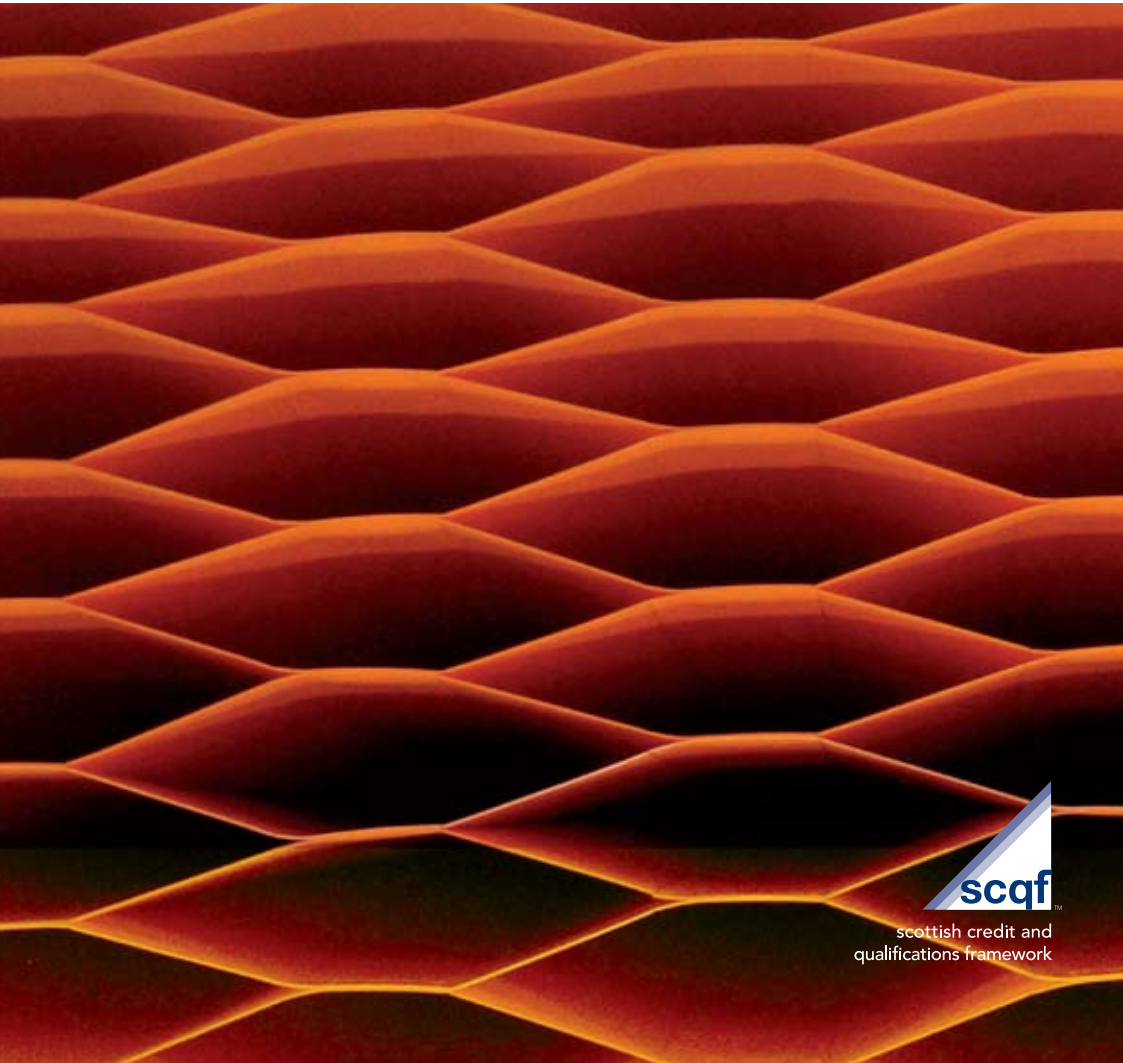
SCQF Credit Rating Service Guide

Credit for your Learning



scqf™
scottish credit and
qualifications framework

What is the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)?

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) provides a national vocabulary for describing learning. It makes the relationships between qualifications clearer.

The aims of the framework are:

- to help people of all ages and circumstances to get access to appropriate education and training so they can meet their full potential
- to help employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how qualifications relate to each other and to other forms of learning, and how different types of qualification can contribute to improving skills

All Scottish mainstream qualifications are included in the framework.

The framework has 12 levels, ranging from Access 1 to doctorate. The level increases as the complexity of the learning and demand of the learning outcomes increases.

The credit points allocated to credit rated qualifications or learning programmes show the volume of learning required to achieve the learning outcomes.

For further information, see the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk.

What is credit rating?

Credit rating involves allocating an SCQF level and SCQF credit points to a qualification or learning programme. Only an official credit rating body – such as SQA – is permitted to do this.

The **level** of a qualification or learning programme describes the knowledge, skill or competence required to achieve it. This does not mean that all qualifications or learning programmes on the same level are equal – it shows that they make similar demands on the learners.

Credit points describe the volume of learning required to achieve the qualification or learning programme. The time that an 'average' learner will spend achieving the learning outcomes is referred to as 'notional learning time' and can include activities such as formal teaching, informal learning, study time, assessment time and work-based learning. One credit point is allocated for each 10 hours of notional learning time.

In addition to allocating a credit rating to a qualification or learning programme, a credit rating body will also check that the SCQF guidelines, as detailed in the *SCQF Handbook*, have been met.

To be eligible for credit rating, a qualification or learning programme must:

- be based on learning outcomes
- be formally assessed, with the results recorded
- have a documented process of external quality assurance of the assessment
- have a minimum of 10 hours of notional learning time

What will SQA's credit rating service offer my organisation?

SQA's credit rating service has been in operation since 2005 following a pilot in 2004. Because of the significant contribution that it has made in the area of credit rating, SQA is a respected and experienced credit rating body.

Having your qualification or learning programme credit rated by SQA brings many advantages:

- Once a qualification or learning programme is credit rated, your organisation can use the SCQF logo and refer to SQA as the credit rating body on certificates or transcripts and promotional literature.
- By credit rating your learning provision you are contributing to the lifelong learning agenda and providing recognition of your learners' achievements. Learners will be able to see where the learning they have completed sits within the framework, which will help them to identify development opportunities and progression routes. Learners who complete a credit rated qualification or learning programme will also be able to maximise their opportunities to transfer credit to other qualifications.
- Having your qualifications or learning programmes credit rated demonstrates to your customers that your qualifications have been confirmed, by a recognised credit rating body, as meeting the guidelines detailed in the *SCQF Handbook*.
- The SCQF is a key theme in the Scottish Government's lifelong skills strategy. The Scottish Government's vision is for a smarter Scotland with a globally competitive economy based on high value jobs, with progressive and innovative business leadership. To achieve this the skills strategy says that there will be focus on challenging employers, learning providers, awarding bodies and others to use the SCQF as a tool to support learning, specifically to facilitate the recognition of learning and for enabling individuals to move smoothly through learning environments, getting credit for learning they have already achieved.

Can my organisation make a submission for credit rating?

As long as you have ownership of the qualification or learning programme, and it meets the key criteria detailed on page 2, you can submit it for credit rating.

If you are not sure whether your learning provision meets the criteria, or if you would like advice on how to meet the criteria, please contact the credit rating service. We will be happy to meet you to discuss this.

Anyone who delivers their own learning provision can consider making a submission. The SCQF does not differentiate between different types of qualifications; academic and vocational qualifications sit side by side within the SCQF.

Many types of organisations can make a credit rating submission. These include:

- employers
- training providers
- professional bodies
- awarding bodies
- schools
- colleges

Any type of learning that meets the key criteria can be submitted. This includes:

- short learning programmes or training programmes
- single units or modules
- groups of units or modules
- work-based learning
- full qualifications such as certificates or diplomas
- informal learning
- formal learning

How does credit rating work?

When your organisation makes a submission to the credit rating service, you will be allocated a named Credit Rating Officer (CRO), who will act as your contact during and beyond the submission process. The CRO will liaise with you, provide clear and expert advice on completing the submission forms, and explain the methods used to allocate credit ratings.

This is how the process works:

In response to your enquiry, SQA will provide an application pack.

On receipt of your completed application, a Credit Rating Officer will be allocated. The CRO will scrutinise your submission to see whether the four key requirements have been met. In addition, the submission will be checked against the SCQF guidelines.

If your submission is ready to progress, subject experts will be appointed to evaluate the credit ratings you have allocated to your submission.

The aim is that within six weeks of all information being submitted and any issues having been resolved, the Credit Rating Officer will notify you in writing of the decision reached.

On completion of the evaluation, your submission will be presented to the Credit Rating Decision Group who will confirm the credit rating outcome.

You will receive notification of the decision and the associated documentation.

Key points

- The term 'credit rating' refers to the allocation of both level and credit points. This used to be referred to as either 'credit and levelling' or 'credit rating and levelling'.
- Once your submission is credit rated, your certificates or transcripts should show the SCQF credit rating and specify SQA as the credit rating body.
- Once your submission is credit rated, you can use the SCQF logo on your certificates and promotional documentation for the credit rated qualification or learning programme.
- The qualification or learning programme remains under your ownership – it does not become an SQA qualification.
- SQA does not carry out the quality assurance of the qualification or learning programme – this remains your responsibility and should be carried out as specified in the submission (subject to any conditions that may apply).
- SCQF credit rating does not result in accreditation or validation by SQA. SQA's role is as the credit rating body.
- The SCQF is not an equivalence framework. It allows qualifications and learning programmes to be broadly compared by describing them using a common language of level and credit. You cannot claim that your qualification or learning programme is equivalent to another at the same SCQF level.
- The credit points allocated refer to general credit and not specific credit. The decision whether to accept the credit towards a qualification (making it specific) remains with the receiving institution.
- Your organisation does not need to become an SQA approved centre to make a submission.
- The maximum credit rating period that will be applied is five years, and we will request a report each year detailing any changes to the programme, and copies of external quality reports.
- Details of the fees for credit rating can be obtained by contacting the credit rating service.

Contact information

If you would like to know more about the credit rating service, or are interested in making a submission, please contact us:

Telephone: 0845 279 1000
E-mail: creditratingservice@sqa.org.uk
Website: www.sqa.org.uk/creditrating

Customer Contact Centre
T: 0845 279 1000 E: customer@sqa.org.uk W: www.sqa.org.uk
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