

Appendix 2: General guidance on SCQF levels

SCQF levels

The levelling of HN Units will be carried out by SQA as part of the validation process. However, if you are writing Units, you should be aware of the SCQF levels shown in tabular format in this appendix, and you should be suggesting the appropriate SCQF level for any Units you write when you send the Unit in to SQA for validation.

All parts of the Unit specification are equally important for allocating an SCQF level but particular attention should be paid to the Statement of Standards including the Outcome, Knowledge/skills and Evidence Requirements.

You should approach levelling by doing the following:

- ◆ Read the generic level descriptor carefully.
- ◆ Select the criteria most relevant to the subject matter of the Unit you are writing.
- ◆ You may find it helpful to look at some Units in your subject area which have already been allocated to an SCQF level — not just at the level you intend your Unit to be but at the level above and below.
- ◆ Write the Outcome, knowledge/skills and Evidence Requirements and check that these do meet the criteria indicated at the level descriptor. You should pay particular attention to the verbs used.

Remember you are not expected to meet all the criteria in the generic level descriptors.

SQA qualifications and the SCQF

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has been developed by a Partnership composed of: the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the Scottish Executive Departments of Education, and Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (SEED and SEELD), the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Universities Scotland and a wide range of other organisations.

The SCQF is a 12-level framework designed to include everything from Access 1 Units to PhDs. It brings all SQA qualifications (eg National Qualifications, Higher National Qualifications and SVQs) into a single unified framework along with qualifications offered by Scottish Universities.

The levels of the Framework occupied by SQA qualifications are as follows:

SCQF level	National Qualification level	HN level	SVQ level
12*			
11*			SVQ 5
10*			
9*			
8*		HND	SVQ 4
7*	Advanced Higher	HNC	
6	Higher		SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2		SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1		SVQ 1
3	Access 3		
2	Access 2		
1	Access 1		

* Levels 7 to 12 contain the five levels of Scottish degree studies

The SCQF includes degrees; HNCs and HNDs; SQA National Qualifications; and SVQs. Each SQA Unit is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at a specific level. 1 SCQF point = 10 hours of notional learning. HN candidates are normally expected to input a further number of hours, matched to the credit value of the Unit, of non-contact time or candidate-led effort to consolidate and reinforce learning. This, therefore, means each HN Unit has 8 SCQF credit points.

The SCQF is intended to make the overall system of Scottish qualifications easier to understand by making the relationships between qualifications clear. It should also make it easier to establish links between qualifications and make it easier for learners to transfer credit from one course of study to another. Over the next few years SQA will increasingly adopt the use of SCQF levels and credit points to describe its qualifications.

SCQF Level 6 — (Higher, SVQ 3 are examples of qualifications at this level)

Note: The descriptors set out the characteristic generic Outcomes of each level. They are intended to provide a general, shared understanding of each level and to allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning at different levels. They are not intended to give precise nor comprehensive statements and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic cognitive skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic Outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ generalised knowledge of a subject/discipline ◆ factual and theoretical knowledge ◆ a range of facts, ideas, properties, materials, terminology, practices, techniques about/associated with a subject/discipline Relate the subject/discipline to a range of practical and/or everyday applications.	Apply knowledge and understanding in known, practical contexts. Use some of the basic, routine practices, techniques and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline in routine contexts which may have non-routine elements. Plan how skills will be used to address set situations and/or problems and adapt these as necessary.	Obtain, organise and use factual and theoretical information in problem solving. Make generalisations and predictions. Draw conclusions and suggest solutions.	Use a wide range of skills — for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ produce and respond to detailed and relatively complex written and oral communication in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts ◆ select and use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information ◆ use a wide range of numerical and graphical data in routine contexts which may have non-routine elements 	Take responsibility for the carrying out of a range of activities where the overall goal is clear under non-directive supervision. Take some supervisory responsibility for the work of others and lead established teams in the implementation of routine work. Manage limited resources within defined and supervised areas of work. Take account of roles and responsibilities related to the tasks being carried out and take a significant role in the evaluation of work and the improvement of practices and processes.

SCQF Level 7 — (SHE level 1, Cert HE, HNC, Advanced Higher are examples of qualifications at this level)

Note: The descriptors set out the characteristic generic Outcomes of each level. They are intended to provide a general, shared understanding of each level and to allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning at different levels. They are not intended to give precise nor comprehensive statements and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic cognitive skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic Outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a broad knowledge of the subject/discipline in general ◆ knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles ◆ an awareness of the evolving/changing nature of knowledge and understanding ◆ an understanding of the difference between explanations based in evidence and/or research and other forms of explanation and of the importance of this difference 	<p>Use some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts.</p>	<p>Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas which are routine to the subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a range of approaches to addressing defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts.</p>	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with the subject/discipline — for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form ◆ use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and new contexts ◆ use standard applications to process and obtain a variety of information and data ◆ use a range of numerical and graphical skills in combination ◆ use numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets 	<p>Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level</p> <p>Take supervision in less familiar areas of work.</p> <p>Take some managerial responsibility for the work of others within a defined and supervised structure.</p> <p>Manage limited resources within defined areas of work.</p> <p>Take the lead in implementing agreed plans in familiar or defined contexts.</p> <p>Take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities in carrying out and evaluating tasks.</p> <p>Work with others in support of current professional practice under guidance.</p>

SCQF level 8 — (SHE level 2, Dip HE, HND, SVQ 4 are examples of qualifications at this level)

Note: The descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each level. They are intended to provide a general, shared understanding of each level and to allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning at different levels. They are not intended to give precise nor comprehensive statements and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
<p>Characteristic Outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:</p> <p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a broad knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of a subject/discipline ◆ detailed knowledge in some areas ◆ understanding of a limited range of core theories, principles and concepts ◆ limited knowledge and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms ◆ an outline knowledge and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes 	<p>Use a range of routine skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline, a few of which are advanced or complex.</p> <p>Carry out routine lines of enquiry, development or investigation into professional level problems and issues.</p> <p>Adapt routine practices within accepted standards.</p>	<p>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues which are within the common understandings of the subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a range of approaches to formulate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues.</p> <p>Critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues.</p>	<p>Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills associated with a subject/discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ convey complex information to a range of audiences and for a range of purposes ◆ use a range of standard applications to process and obtain data ◆ use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets 	<p>Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level.</p> <p>Take significant managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work.</p> <p>Manage resources within defined areas of work.</p> <p>Take the lead on planning in familiar or defined contexts.</p> <p>Take continuing account of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions in carrying out and evaluating tasks.</p> <p>Work in support of current professional practice under guidance.</p> <p>Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices under guidance.</p>

SCQF level 9 — (SHE level 3, Ordinary degrees are examples of qualifications at this level)

Note: The descriptors set out the characteristic generic Outcomes of each level. They are intended to provide a general, shared understanding of each level and to allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning at different levels. They are not intended to give precise nor comprehensive statements and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope, main areas and boundaries of a subject/discipline ◆ a critical understanding of a selection of the principal theories, principles, concepts and terminology ◆ knowledge that is detailed in some areas and/or knowledge of one or more specialisms that are informed by forefront developments 	<p>Use a selection of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a few skills, techniques, practices and/or materials that are specialised or advanced.</p> <p>Practise routine methods of enquiry and/or research.</p> <p>Practise in a range of professional level contexts which include a degree of unpredictability.</p>	<p>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues.</p> <p>Identify and analyse routine professional problems and issues.</p> <p>Draw on a range of sources in making judgements.</p>	<p>Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ make formal and informal presentations on standard/mainstream topics in the subject/discipline to a range of audiences ◆ use a range of IT applications to support and enhance work ◆ interpret, use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to achieve goals/targets 	<p>Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level.</p> <p>Take some responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources.</p> <p>Practise in ways which take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Work under guidance with qualified practitioners.</p> <p>Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices, seeking guidance where appropriate.</p>