

**Arrangements for:**  
**PDA in Office Management and  
Information Technology at  
SCQF level 8**

**Group Award Code: G8L7 48**

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## **Acknowledgement**

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of Higher National qualifications.

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# 1 Introduction

This is the Arrangement Document for the revised PDA in Office Management and Information Technology at SCQF level 8 which was validated in June 2007. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure, and guidance on delivery.

This Group Award replaces the PDA Certificate in Office Management and Information Technology (G7Y6 15) which was introduced in August 2005.

This award has been developed to meet the need of continuing professional development in the area of office management and advanced use of computer application software. The framework of Units not only offers depth and breadth but flexibility.

Depth is provided by the level of the Units that complete the PDA. All Units are at SCQF level 8 and candidates can achieve all 7 credits at this level, however, there is flexibility within the Unit Developing the Individual within a Team which can be achieved at SCQF level 7 or 8. In addition the PDA is not only valuable as a whole award but the individual Units also offer opportunities for those whose needs may be only to specialise in certain areas and there is a breadth of Units to choose from.

# 2 Rationale for the revision of the award

The rapid growth of information and communications technology and the increased emphasis given to information processing and management has led to the demand for new and greater flexibility with regard to workplace skills. There is also greater emphasis on continuing personal and professional development, problem solving and 'employability' or 'inter-personal' skills.

The framework of the PDA has been designed to build on the knowledge and skills contained in the HNC in Administration and Information Technology but will allow candidates the flexibility of taking only some core Units included in the HND and still formally recognise their achievements.

The PDA will allow many candidates in the working environment, who may not be able to commit to long term part-time study the opportunity to undertake a programme over the period of one year or less.

The award has been designed in accordance with the PDA Design Principles and is at SCQF level 8.

## 2.1 Market research, consultation and development processes

Consultation details are summarised in the following table:

Stakeholder	Method of consultation
HNC Graduates	◆ Letter
Employers	◆ Letter to HR Managers of companies in local area ◆ One-to-one interviews with companies at employment fair
Professional bodies	◆ Letter/telephone call to Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) and the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries (IQPS)

In addition extension use was made of current research data compiled for the Council for Administration (CfA). The undernoted CfA reports can be found on the Council's website at [www.cfa.uk.com](http://www.cfa.uk.com):

- ◆ Administration Skills Benchmarking in Scotland — report examining administration skills levels in Scotland — March 2002
- ◆ Consultative Workforce Development Plan — report examining workforce development issues in administration — March 2002
- ◆ Administration Skills Survey: Meeting Employer and Employee Demands — final report outlining the findings of the UK Administrative Skills Survey 2003
- ◆ Administration Skills Foresight Report — Issue 4

Futureskills Scotland also prepared a report on the occupational profile of Administrative and Secretarial Occupations. The kind of information analysed includes:

- ◆ total employment and historical trends
- ◆ prospects — projected employment and forecast demand for new employees
- ◆ pay and rewards
- ◆ age profile
- ◆ modes of working — full-time, part-time
- ◆ hours of work
- ◆ job tenure — time spend in current job
- ◆ qualifications profile of each occupation
- ◆ ethnic and gender profile of occupational employment
- ◆ vacancies, skill shortages, skills gaps

The key points from the Futureskills Scotland report are given below:

- ◆ the number of people employed within the administrative and secretarial occupational sector in Scotland is 288,000 — this figure is expected to remain stable between 2002–2007
- ◆ 88,000 job openings are expected in the period 2002–2007, mainly to replace retiring workers
- ◆ occupation dominated by female workers
- ◆ higher than average levels of part-time working
- ◆ over half qualified to SVQ level 3 (or equivalent) or above
- ◆ lower than average weekly earnings (£304–£329 compared with £383)

The full Futureskills Scotland report can be found at [www.futureskillsscotland.org.uk](http://www.futureskillsscotland.org.uk).

### 3 Aims of the award

The aims of the PDA in Office Management and Information Technology at SCQF level 8 are to provide a continuous professional development route in advancing management and IT skills to a more senior or professional level and to have more in-depth technical skills and knowledge. Successful people need more than just technical competence, they need the ability to analyse and use resources to develop appropriate solutions to problems.

#### 3.1 General aims of the award

- 1 To develop transferable skills.
- 2 To develop study and research skills.
- 3 To develop employment skills and enhance candidates employment prospects.
- 4 To enable progression within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
- 5 To provide academic stimulus and challenge.

#### 3.1.2 Vocational aims

- 1 To develop a range of specialist IT skills.
- 2 To develop project management, research and planning skills.
- 3 To develop an awareness of professional issues such as legal, data management and ethical considerations.
- 4 To develop the ability to work flexibly and co-operatively with others.
- 5 To develop critical and evaluative thinking.

#### 3.1.3 Realisation of the vocational aims by Unit

Unit title	Credit value	SCQF level	Vocational aims
IT in Business — Advanced Word Processing	1	8	1, 4, 5
IT in Business — Advanced Spreadsheets	1	8	1, 4, 5
IT in Business — Advanced Databases	1	8	1, 4, 5
Office Management	2	8	2, 3, 4, 5
Project Management	1	8	2, 3, 4, 5
Developing the Individual within a team	1	7 or 8	3, 4

### **3.2 Links to SVQ/NVQs**

Current consultation and research indicates secretarial and support staff now have more general responsibility though not always at a supervisory or managerial level and sometimes in order to maintain continuing professional development within the workplace another academic qualification is required. It is envisaged that the PDA would help the transition from SVQ level 3 to 4.

### **3.3 Links to Industry Standard Qualifications**

To ensure credibility within industry, the standards required for the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) foundation and advanced levels and Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) qualifications have been incorporated within the technology Units contained in the award and candidates would be able to attempt these qualifications.

### **3.4 Links to Professional Qualifications**

Successful graduates may apply for membership to the following organisations but may required to sit extra examinations.

- ◆ Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries
- ◆ Institute of Administrative Management
- ◆ Association of Secretaries

### **3.5 Credit transfer**

Credit transfer opportunities are available under existing SQA credit transfer arrangements.

Further information on credit transfer arrangements can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.6 Progression in employment**

It is hoped that as the award provides the skills and knowledge demanded in a modern work environment that more opportunities for using these skills will become available.

The role of a Personal Assistant will normally include duties such as:

- ◆ assisting with the selection and recruitment of new staff
- ◆ providing support to training managers
- ◆ production of monthly statistics
- ◆ secretarial duties
- ◆ keeping computerised records up to date
- ◆ assisting clients and customers of the organisation

The PDA will equip a candidate with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil such a role.

## 4 Access to award

The qualification has been developed to enhance administration training. Candidates will need previous experience of office administration and competence in the use of ICT.

As with all SQA qualifications, access will be at the discretion of the centre and the following recommendations are for guidance.

- ◆ HNC in Administration and Information Management or:
- ◆ HNC in Administration and Information Technology
- ◆ Two NQ passes at Higher but must be Administration or Business Management and English
- ◆ SVQ in Administration at level 3
- ◆ Scottish Group Award in Business at Higher
- ◆ Different combinations of relevant National Qualifications, Vocational Qualifications and equivalent qualifications from other awarding bodies may also be acceptable, as would suitable industry standard qualifications at an appropriate level.
- ◆ Mature candidates with suitable work experience may be accepted for entry provided the enrolling centre believes that the candidate is likely to benefit from undertaking the award.
- ◆ Overseas students whose first language is not English should have IELTS 5.5 or above

### Minimum entry requirements — IT Skills

The PDA makes no provision for advancing basic IT skills. The level of competence required is stated in the Unit specifications and it is expected that candidates will have achieved an intermediate standard of competence in the use of computer applications.

## 5 Award structure

The award has been designed to be delivered on a part-time basis over one year. All Units in the award are mandatory.

### Framework of Units

Code No	Unit	Description	Credit value	SCQF level
DE2G 35	IT in Business — Advanced Word Processing	Develops advanced word processing skills with the knowledge required to problem solve and make decisions on the importance of producing qualitative management information.	1	8
DE1V 35	IT in Business — Advanced Spreadsheets	Developing the spreadsheet skills to be able to make business decisions, forecasts, analyse and manage data effectively.	1	8
DE1W 35	IT in Business — Advanced Databases	To develop an understanding of complex database design and application in business decision making and problem solving.	1	8
DE1X 35	Office Management	To introduce the Core Skills required to effectively manage and organise an office environment including personnel and resources.	2	8
D76J 35	Project Management	To develop the theoretical concepts, principles, boundaries and scope of project management. To use appropriate project management software to solve a business problem.	1	8
DF46 35 or DF45 34	Developing the Individual within a Team	To enhance the individual's skills and knowledge of working with others and as part of a team exploring differing concepts and theories of working and communicating in teams.	1	Can be achieved at levels 7 or 8

## 6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

All of the Units listed may be delivered as stand-alone qualifications. Where they are delivered within the framework shown on the previous page they constitute a coherent, attractive and very relevant programme which will equip candidates with the knowledge and/or skills needed for today's working environment. There is also progression opportunities to an HND in Administration and Information Technology and then as previously agreed with universities there are articulation routes into Degree programmes.

The award may be delivered on a Day Release, infill, Open/Distance Learning basis. Under all circumstances, delivering centres will be responsible for ensuring authenticity of candidate's work.

## **6.1 Assessment strategy**

The overall assessment strategy under the new HN Design Principles is to encourage a more holistic approach to assessment. The new HN Unit specification places the emphasis on assessing the whole Outcome or a combination of Outcomes rather than on Performance Criteria. There is also the intention to reduce the assessment loading for both candidates and centres and therefore 'sampling' of the knowledge and/or skills is encouraged in the new Unit specifications.

Re-assessment of Units will normally be left to professional judgement and college/centre policy. Where assessment is holistic and incorporates Core Skills, centres will have to ensure that re-assessment covers all necessary criteria. An overview of the Assessment Strategy for the Award is provided on the next page.

## PDA in Office Management and Information Technology

### Assessment Strategy

Unit	Assessment			
	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4
IT in Business — Advanced Word Processing	Practical Exercise  Open-book +  Controlled conditions	Report and documentation from Stimulus material  Open-book		
IT in Business — Advanced Spreadsheets	Portfolio of evidence supported by a report based on a case study.  Open-book			
IT in Business — Advanced Databases	Portfolio of evidence supported by written explanation based on files and existing database material.  Open-book			
Office Management	Extended response  Closed-book	Report from case study  Open-book	Practical Exercises and short responses  Closed-book	Case study  Open-book
Project Management	Extended response  Open-book	Extended response  Open-book	Practical exercise for the development and planning of a project  Open-book	
Developing the Individual within a Team	Written and recorded performance evidence  Open-book	Written and recorded performance evidence  Open-book		

## 7 General information for centres

### Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

### Internal and external moderation

All instruments of assessment used within this/these Group Award(s) should be internally moderated, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External moderation will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external moderation can be found in SQA's *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## 8 General information for candidates

This award has been designed in consultation with practitioners and colleges. It will give you the specialist knowledge and IT skills required for employment within a medical administration environment. The framework consists of 8 credits – 5 mandatory and 3 optional.

## 9 Glossary of terms

**SCQF:** This stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which is a new way of speaking about qualifications and how they inter-relate. We use SCQF terminology throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

**SCQF credits:** One HN credit is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points. This applies to all HN Units, irrespective of their level.

**SCQF levels:** The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HN Units will normally be at levels 6–9. Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8.

**Subject Unit:** Subject Units contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

**Graded Unit:** Graded Units assess candidates' ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

**Dedicated Core Skill Unit:** This is a Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills, eg HN Units in Information Technology or Communications.

**Embedded Core Skills:** This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the re

**Signposted Core Skills:** This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie outwith automatic certification.

**Qualification Design Team:** The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the HNC/D from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

**Consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs** are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

**Specialist single centre and specialist collaborative devised HNCs and HNDs** are those developments or revisions led by a single centre or small group of centres who provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area. Like consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs, these developments or revisions will also be supported by SQA.

## 10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Higher National Certificate —  
HN Administration and Information Technology  
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## Higher National Certificate — HN Administration and Information Technology

### Credit transfer arrangements

New Unit title	New Unit code	Old Unit title	Old Unit code	Credit transfer conditions
Office Administration	DE1P 34	Office Administration	A6G9 04	Full credit transfer
Office Technologies	DE1R 34			There is no credit transfer for this Unit. However, candidates may be able to do accelerated assessment.
Recording Financial Transactions	DP9F 33			There is no credit transfer for this Unit.
Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Communication	DE3N 34	Communication: Presenting Complex Communication for Vocational Purposes	D5P3 34	There are opportunities for credit transfer. The Core Skill of Oral Communication at Higher is embedded in both Units. Additional evidence in respect of the Core Skill of Written Communication will be required.
IT in Business — Word Processing and Presentation Applications	DE1L 34	Presenting Business Information and Presenting Complex Business Information	A6GB 04 A6GC 04	Candidates holding PBI and PCBI may be able to do accelerated assessment for this Unit.  Outcome 2 of the HN Unit Presentation Skills (DE20 35) will overtake Outcome 3.
IT in Business — Spreadsheets	DE1M 34	Using Information Technology in Business: Spreadsheet and Word Processing Applications	A6GE 04	To gain credit transfer to the new Unit candidates will have to provide additional evidence as specified in the Unit's Evidence Requirements in respect of Outcome 3. However, evidence for this Outcome may be gained from the Unit Business Statistics 1.

New Unit title	New Unit code	Old Unit title	Old Unit code	Credit transfer conditions
IT in Business — Databases	DE1N 34	Using Information Technology in Business: Database and Word Processing Applications	A6GD 04	<p>To gain credit transfer to the new Unit candidates will have to provide additional evidence as specified in the Unit's Evidence Requirements in respect of Outcomes 2 and 3.</p> <p>Outcome 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All Core Skill requirements</li> <li>◆ Creating forms/using forms</li> </ul> <p>Outcome 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All Core Skill requirements</li> <li>◆ Selection of appropriate data sources is effective</li> <li>◆ Apply an efficient and effective search strategy</li> <li>◆ Propose possible solutions to a business problem based on search results</li> </ul> <p><i>This could be best evidenced if the candidate was to undertake an extra timed assessment covering all of Outcome 3 and the form element of Outcome 2 for the new Unit. During the assessment the tutor should observe the candidate using the observation form for Outcome 2.</i></p>

<b>New Unit title</b>	<b>New Unit code</b>	<b>Old Unit title</b>	<b>Old Unit code</b>	<b>Credit transfer conditions</b>
Developing Skills for Personal Effectiveness	DF4D 33 DF4E 34 DF4F 35	Developing Personal Effectiveness	A6G7 33	There are opportunities for credit transfer. The Core Skill of Problem Solving is embedded in the new Units — at Intermediate 2 in the level 6 Unit and at Higher in the level 7 and 8 Units. The Core Skill of Problem Solving at Intermediate 2 is embedded in the old Unit.

## HND Units

<b>New Unit title</b>	<b>New Unit code</b>	<b>Old Unit title</b>	<b>Old Unit code</b>	<b>Credit transfer conditions</b>
Office Management	DE1X 35	Office Management	A6GA 04	To gain credit transfer to the new Unit candidates will have to provide additional evidence as specified in the Unit's Evidence Requirements in respect of Outcomes 1 and 2.  Candidates who have gained a pass in the HN Unit Managing Change may obtain credit transfer for Outcome 2.
Business Information Management	DE1Y 35	Business Information Management	A6GF 04	Full credit transfer
Project Management	D76J 35			If Project Management software was used in the Unit Business Information Management (A6GF 04) there will be an opportunity to gain some credit transfer.
Presentation Skills	DE20 35			There is no credit transfer for this Unit.
IT in Business — Advanced Word Processing	DE2G 35			There is no credit transfer for this Unit.
IT in Business — Advanced Spreadsheets	DE1V 35			There is no credit transfer for this Unit.
IT in Business — Advanced Databases	DE1W 35			There is no credit transfer for this Unit.
Developing the Individual within a Team	DF45 34 or DF46 35	Developing the Individual within a Team	A6G8 04	There are opportunities for credit transfer. The Core Skill of Working with Others at Higher is embedded in the new Unit.

**Optional Units (within Verification Groups 363 and 256)**

<b>New Unit title</b>	<b>New Unit code</b>	<b>Old Unit title</b>	<b>Old Unit code</b>	<b>Credit transfer conditions</b>
Shorthand as a Skill (Introductory)	DE27 34	Shorthand as a Skill (Beginners — 60 wpm)	A4YE 04	Full credit transfer
Shorthand as a Skill (Speed Development 1) Shorthand as a Skills (Speed Development 2) Shorthand as a Skill (Speed Development 2) Shorthand as a Skill (Speed Development 4)	DE28 35 DE29 35 DE2A 35 DE2C 35	Shorthand as a Skill (70–100 wpm)	A4YF 04	Credit transfer can be given from the old Unit to a maximum of <b>two</b> new Units.
Medical Terminology for Administration Staff	DM6C 34	Medical Terminology in the Medical Environment	A75W 35	To gain credit transfer to the new Unit candidates will have to provide additional evidence as specified in the Unit's Evidence Requirements for Outcome 1.
Hospital Patient Administration	DL51 34	Hospital Administration in Practice	A75V 34	To gain credit transfer to the new Unit candidates will have to provide additional evidence as specified in the Unit's Evidence Requirements in respect of Outcomes 3 and 4.
GP Medical Administration	DJ4H 34	GP Medical Administration in Practice	A75T 34	To gain credit transfer to the new Unit candidates will have to provide additional evidence as specified in the Unit's Evidence Requirements in respect of Outcomes 2 and 3.

Credit transfer details for Units within the HN Business, Financial Services and Accounting frameworks can be found in the appropriate Arrangements Documents