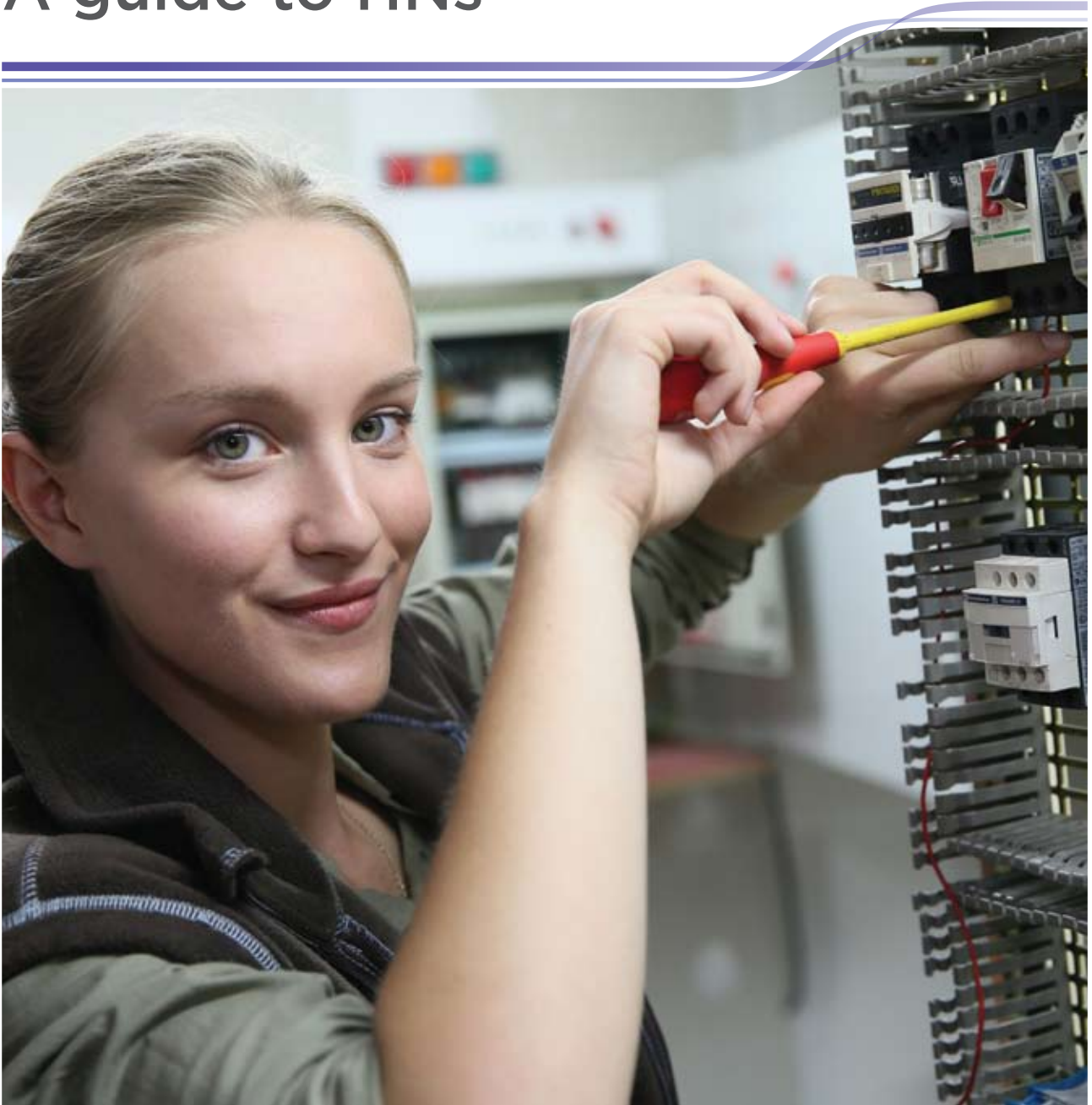


# A guide to HNs



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## What are HNs?

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**Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) have been well-respected qualifications since they were introduced in the mid-1920s. During that time they have been constantly updated to make sure that they're always relevant. They cover a huge range of occupations, and provide the skills and knowledge needed for employment at middle management and technician level.**

Each Higher National qualification has its own review and maintenance cycle, which looks for changes in the market, or technological and other developments that need to be addressed. This ensures that each qualification still meets employers' needs, and gives people the skills and knowledge they need for success in their chosen career.

Higher National qualifications have been developed by SQA in partnership with colleges, universities and industry — so employers recognise that they provide sound evidence of ability.



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# Who can do an HN?

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Higher National courses provide both the practical skills you need to do a job and the theoretical knowledge an employer will expect you to have.

HN qualifications are available through colleges, training providers and some universities. Typically, an HNC takes one year to complete and an HND takes two years. HNs are suitable for a wide range of learners including:

- school leavers
- adult returners to education
- individuals in employment who wish to enhance their career prospects
- people who wish to start their own business

## How they work

All the courses are made up of Higher National Unit credits (one credit represents roughly 40 hours of timetabled learning and 40 hours of self-guided learning and study).

- HNCs are made up of 12 credits and usually take one year to complete (some centres may offer 15 credits)
- HNDs are made up of 30 credits and usually take two years to complete

Higher National qualifications don't just qualify you for work. HNCs should allow direct entry into the second year of a degree programme, and many HNDs allow direct entry to third year.

Higher National qualifications can also give you the knowledge and understanding required for Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs).

Holding an HNC or HND can also give you entry to a number of professional bodies. So whether you want to go straight into a job, or continue your studies, getting a Higher National qualification is a good place to start.

HNs are internationally recognised and more than 1,000 courses are on offer in popular areas like:

- Business Administration
- Information and Office Management
- Travel and Tourism
- Engineering
- Broadcasting
- Agriculture
- Computing and Craft subjects
- Social Sciences



Find out more about HNs at [www.sqa.org.uk/hn](http://www.sqa.org.uk/hn)

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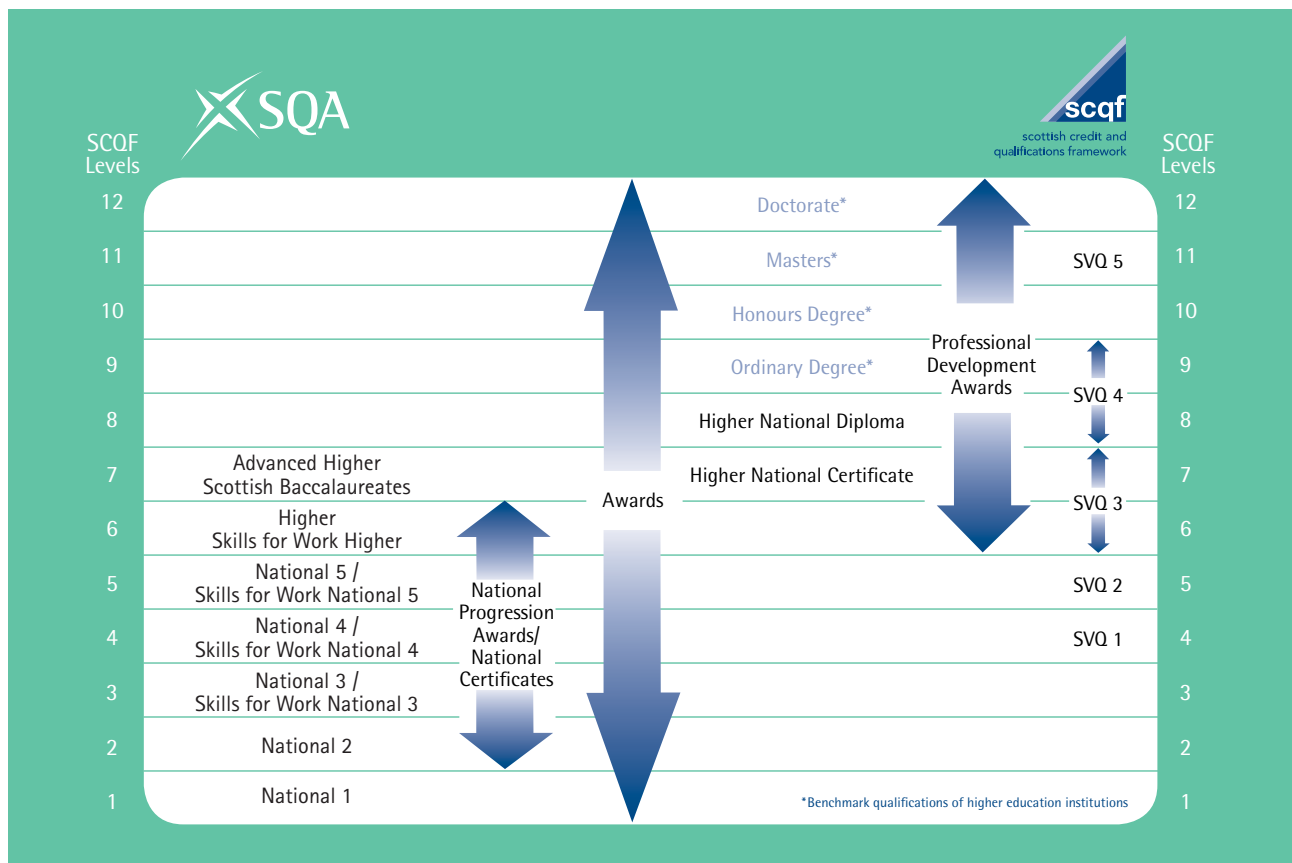
# Benefits of doing HNs

Employers are very aware of HNs and appreciate their value. Likewise, admissions staff in colleges, universities and the armed services will take them into account. Each HN is recognised on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

The SCQF helps to make the relationships between qualifications clearer. Qualifications in the SCQF are compared using two measures: level and credit. The level of a qualification shows how difficult the learning is, and the amount of credit shows the size of the qualification (how much learning is involved, or how long it will take).



This table shows SQA Qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework



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# HNs for Learners

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HNs are developed by SQA in partnership with Scottish colleges, universities, industry and commerce. They focus on different occupational areas and prepare learners with the knowledge and some experience to work in these areas. There are over 250 HN courses covering traditional subject areas such as accounting, engineering and hospitality — to the newer areas such as creative industries, paralegal, sports and leisure.

HNs are very practical qualifications, so it's not just theory. Assessment is ongoing during the course and includes questions, essays, presentations and projects.

## What do I need to study for an HNC or HND?

Acceptance on a course is down to an individual college. Recommended entry is by formal qualifications or relevant work experience.

Look at college websites or contact the college for specific information. Even if you are not quite ready for an HNC there are other courses available to get you there.

## Where do they lead?

- Achieving an HNC provides suitable entry to matching HNDs
- An HN graduate ready for first level employment in the relevant specialism/industry
- Many HNCs and HNDs provide suitable entry to second or third year matching university courses



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# HNs for Employers

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Employers are interested in employing people who have HN qualifications, because they realise the potential they can bring to their organisation. HN courses are predominantly practical courses that result in experienced employees, who have developed their employability skills. The HN courses are a good mix of knowledge with hands-on experience, graduates get the right balance of the analytical, practical and systematic approach skills that makes them an asset to a business.

## Based on standards and professionally recognised

The qualifications are based on industry standards, which means employers can have professional peace of mind employing HN graduates. In many areas, HN graduates can then gain entry to relevant industry bodies.

Whilst you will have heard of HNCs and HNDs, are you really aware of the skills an HN graduate can bring to your organisation? HN graduates have specific occupational

## What are the advantages of employing an HN graduate?

- A more rounded employee ready to hit the ground running
- They will understand the practical side of the job
- They will be able to demonstrate analytical, logic and systematic approach skills

knowledge along with employability skills, giving them a better understanding of the workplace.

## How do I find out more?

HN qualifications can also work for staff development. Find out more about HN qualifications by speaking to your SQA Regional Manager.



Find out more about which sectors have HN qualifications at [www.sqa.org.uk/mysector](http://www.sqa.org.uk/mysector)

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# MYSECTOR — an easy search for qualifications



MySector is an interactive area on SQA's website which allows you to browse available SQA qualifications by sector and by qualification level. Find the ideal qualification for your future. [www.sqa.org.uk/mysector](http://www.sqa.org.uk/mysector)

it can  
be done  SQA

# Find out **more**

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Further information on Higher National qualifications can be found at [www.sqa.org.uk/hn](http://www.sqa.org.uk/hn)

## Get in touch

If you would like to speak to someone, call our Business Development team for further information on HNs.

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[www.sqa.org.uk/businessdevelopment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/businessdevelopment)

