



**Arrangements for:**  
**National Progression Award (NPA) in**  
**Construction Operations**  
**at SCQF level 5**

**Group Award Code: GM3R 45**

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## **Acknowledgement**

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of National Qualification Group Awards.



# Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Rationale for the development of the Group Award(s) .....	2
2.1	Progression .....	3
2.2	Objectives.....	4
2.3	National Progression Award .....	4
2.4	National Occupational Standards.....	5
2.5	Development .....	5
2.6	Sector Skills Council — ConstructionSkills .....	6
3	Aims of the Group Award .....	7
3.1	Principal aims of the Group Award.....	7
3.2	General aims of the Group Award.....	7
3.3	Target groups .....	8
3.4	Employment opportunities .....	8
3.5	Recommended access .....	8
4	Group Award structure .....	9
4.1	Framework.....	9
4.2	How the NPA Units map against the NOS .....	11
4.3	Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer .....	12
5	Approaches to delivery and assessment .....	13
5.1	Content and context.....	13
5.2	Delivery .....	14
5.3	Core Skills .....	14
5.4	Assessment.....	15
6	General information for centres .....	15
7	General information for candidates.....	16
8	Glossary of terms .....	17

# 1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the National Progression Award (NPA) at SCQF level 5 in Construction Operations, which was originally validated in March 2009, and updated in December 2011 to reflect changes to the National Occupational Standards (NOS). This document includes: background information on the development of the Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Award structure, and guidance on delivery.

This NPA at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 5 is designed, as a stand-alone qualification, to equip candidates with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for employment, or for progression to further academic and/or professional qualifications.

This award is aimed at candidates who are interested in pursuing a career in any occupations related to the above area, but who do not necessarily have any prior experience. The progression diagram in section 2.1 shows how the NPA sits with other qualifications for the sector.

It is also intended that the NPA in Construction Operations becomes a component of the level 2 Modern Apprenticeship (MA) in Scotland. As indicated by ConstructionSkills<sup>1</sup>, the MA will consist of three elements:

- ◆ a relevant SVQ
- ◆ Core Skills
- ◆ industry specific training

It is intended that the Award will satisfy the industry-specific training requirement of the MA.

The NPA has been designed to fit with the SCQF and, by including it in the MA framework, contribute towards embedding the SCQF into the MA programme.

As part of the MA programme the NPA also supports the goal of providing '*...security of employment for the trainee whilst developing skills that are relevant within the workplace.*'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Modern Apprenticeship in Construction, Framework Qualifications and Registration Requirements Guidance Document for Training Providers/Modern Apprenticeship Centres in Scotland, January 2009 (update).

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, 'Skills for Scotland, A Lifelong Learning Strategy,' September 2007, p.35.

## 2 Rationale for the development of the Group Award(s)

Construction is a labour-intensive industry that relies heavily on the skills of its workforce to continually adapt to different projects, teams and changing site conditions, so attracting and retaining a high-quality, qualified workforce is essential.

As the majority of workers lack formal qualifications, the introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship, of which this NPA is a component part, will aim to bridge that gap by contributing to the up-skilling of the sector. Gaining an SVQ also enables workers to obtain a card from the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) or other affiliated scheme.

The award is not designed to train people to full industrial competence. The NPA is aimed at those who do not necessarily have any prior experience of the construction industry and are therefore classed as 'new entrants'. Candidates can then build on the skills and knowledge gained from achievement of the NPA when working towards an SVQ, should they wish to do so. This approach aligns with the goal of the sector qualification strategy to ensure that there is a clear differentiation between training for experienced workers and new entrants<sup>3</sup>.

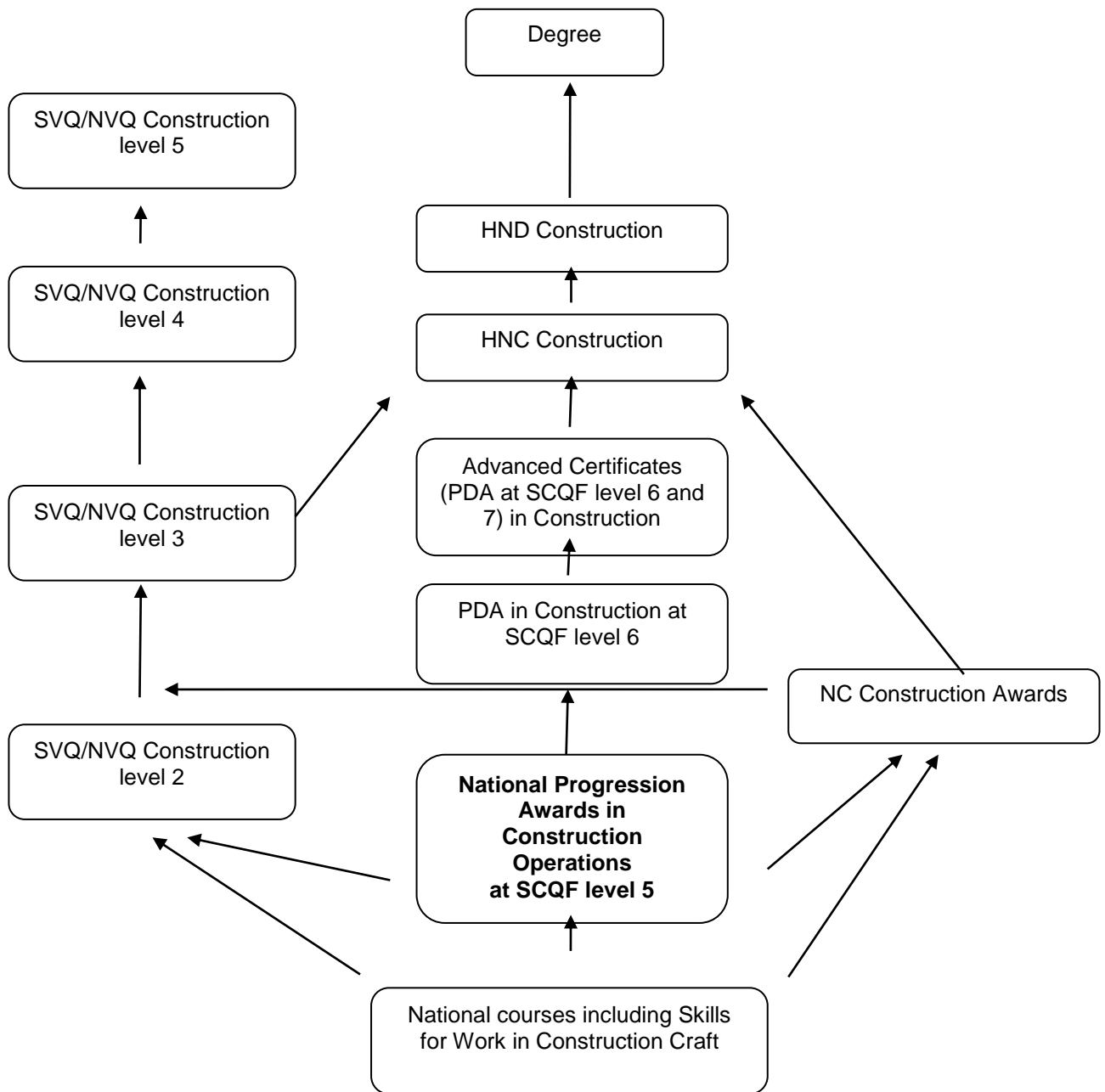
It is intended that the NPA will allow candidates to develop a broad appreciation of topics based on accepted and recognised industrial practices. The award will provide a sound basis for working in construction for a range of potential candidates (please see section 3.3 on target candidate groups).

The diagram on page 3 illustrates how NPA fits with the existing qualifications framework for the Construction industry at a range of levels. Progression routes between qualifications are also identified.

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<sup>3</sup> ConstructionSkills, Construction Qualification Strategy (CQS) Action Plan- Scotland, February 2007.

## 2.1 Progression



Note: The term 'construction' is used here in a general context.

## 2.2 Objectives

The NPA at SCQF level 5 will provide structured opportunities for candidates to experience work and enterprise activities whilst still enjoying the benefits of close contact with their training/education provider.

The NPA is designed to provide:

- ◆ National Construction Qualifications with detailed common standards and learning Outcomes which are recognisable to centres, candidates, employers and professional bodies
- ◆ Common mandatory elements of study for various vocational pathways
- ◆ Choices of optional Units appropriate to the main career disciplines of each occupation
- ◆ Flexible approaches within a national framework
- ◆ The opportunity to preserve and build upon existing good practice
- ◆ Compatibility with feeder qualifications, in particular Construction Crafts Skills for Work (SfW)
- ◆ Compatibility with progression qualifications, eg Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) in related disciplines
- ◆ A response to changing training and educational needs
- ◆ Preparation for employment
- ◆ A contribution to the skills, knowledge and understanding required to underpin relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS)
- ◆ A focus on the development of candidates' practical skills, knowledge and understanding which underpins performance in the workplace

## 2.3 National Progression Award

NPAs are vocational qualifications, which provide practical opportunities for developing real skills that are valid and relevant to the world of work.

This NPA has been developed at SCQF level 5. This means that it is comparable with Credit level Standard Grade and SVQ level 2 in terms of the demand it makes on candidates and the effort required to achieve it. It also means that activity and attainment outwith traditional qualifications can now be recorded and awarded.

The NPA is composed of National Units and stipulates a minimum number of guided learning hours of 380 hours.

The NPA consists of a core of generic, mandatory Units which introduce the candidate to Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare, Productive Working Practices and Setting out Secondary Dimensional Work Controls.

The award has been designed for candidates to gain or develop their skills within the construction environment by demonstrating their knowledge of the respective principles, legislation and specifications, as well as developing their ability to carry out given practical tasks in specialised construction areas.



## 2.4 National Occupational Standards

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) for all construction trades are developed and owned by the Sector Skills Council, ConstructionSkills. They detail the standards of knowledge and performance that practitioners are expected to meet in order to be considered competent in their job role. They form the basis of SVQs, which have in turn been used as a foundation for the development of this award.

The NPA has been revised to take into account recent updates to the NOS — most specifically in relation to recent changes to the ‘core mandatory’ Units concerned with Health and Safety and Productive Working Practices.

The NOS therefore act as a useful benchmark against which to measure occupational competence and for the assembly of a range of development tools, including qualifications.

The NPA Units have been set at a slightly lower level than the SVQ Units — and by association the NOS — to allow for progression to the full SVQ, and are designed to develop and assess defined sets of skills and knowledge in this subject area.

## 2.5 Development

The procedures involved in the original development of this Award included the writing, vetting and editing of Unit specifications followed by the validation of the Units and Group Award.

A number of organisations were contacted as part of the development process, some providing training materials, and/or reviewing the NPA Units and qualification structures in their respective specialist subject areas. The organisations included private training providers and Further Education colleges who deliver and assess construction related programmes; employers, trade bodies and the Sector Skills Council.

Following the drafting of the Units and structures the proposed documentation was circulated to the above organisations for review and comment. A brief questionnaire was developed to capture feedback on the drafts. The centres contacted offer a mixture of taught and assessed provision, with respondents drawing on their industry experience and knowledge of delivery.

The findings were overall positive, revealing that the Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements were clear, achievable and appropriate.

Since this NPA was first developed, the relevant NOS on which it is based have been updated by ConstructionSkills. For the English market SQA has also recently developed QCF qualifications, based on these NOS.

The NPA has therefore been reviewed against these two sources to ensure that they are up to date with the latest NOS and associated revisions to recommended qualification structures. In general very few aspects of the structure, or the detail of the NOS, have changed; the most notable differences however are the replacement of the 'generic core mandatory' Units.

These have been updated in terms of content, to reflect greater detail on productive working practices, welfare, sustainability and low/zero carbon. The Unit titles have also changed as a consequence, as follows:

Old NOS reference	Old NOS title	Old NPA/PDA Title
VR01	Conform to general workplace safety	Construction Safety Practices: An Introduction
VR02	Conform to efficient work practices	Efficient Construction Practices: An Introduction
VR03	Move and Handle Resources	Moving and Handling Materials: An Introduction

New NOS reference	New NOS title	New NPA/PDA Title
VR641	Conform to general workplace health, safety and welfare	Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare
VR642	Conform to productive work practices	Conform to Productive Work Practices
VR643	Move, handle or store resources	Move, Handle and Store Resources

## 2.6 Sector Skills Council — ConstructionSkills

ConstructionSkills is the Sector Skills Council with strategic responsibilities for education and training in the construction industry. They have been strong supporters of the development of recognised vocational and pre-vocational qualifications and have endorsed the development of the NPA at SCQF level 5.

ConstructionSkills is an employer-led organisation, which means that it identifies and responds to the needs of the industry, acting as an employer voice. ConstructionSkills is leading the way in the development of the level 2 MAs for the Construction industry in Scotland, having identified a clear requirement and demand from the sector for their introduction.

Industry experts at the Sector Skills Council contributed to the development of the NPA, ensuring that it meets the needs of the industry and that it is aligned with the corresponding SVQs.

### **3 Aims of the Group Award**

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is a vocationally-related qualification which will provide practical opportunities for developing real skills that are valid and relevant to the work environment.

This Award has been developed at SCQF level 5 in order to fill identified gaps in the qualifications framework for the sector, to link to the appropriate SVQ and form a component part of the Modern Apprenticeship.

This means it is comparable with other provision on the SCQF at the same level in terms of the demands made on candidates and the effort required to achieve the Award.

#### **3.1 Principal aims of the Group Award**

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will develop candidates’:

- ◆ employability
- ◆ practical skills
- ◆ problem-solving ability
- ◆ transferable skills — eg punctuality, appropriate workplace behaviour
- ◆ ability to work with others and be flexible
- ◆ responsibility for own learning
- ◆ planning, organisational and evaluation skills
- ◆ health and safety awareness
- ◆ basic technical skills
- ◆ oral, written and communication skills
- ◆ numerical and graphical skills
- ◆ resource management abilities
- ◆ flexibility, knowledge, skills and motivation as a basis for progression.

#### **3.2 General aims of the Group Award**

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will:

- ◆ prepare candidates for career progression in the relevant occupation
- ◆ provide specialised studies which are directly relevant to the respective occupation
- ◆ enable candidates to make an immediate contribution in employment in the relevant occupation
- ◆ provide opportunities for progression within the SCQF (please refer to the diagram in section 2)

### 3.3 Target groups

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF Level 5 is suitable for:

- ◆ S5 and S6 candidates
- ◆ school-leavers
- ◆ candidates wishing to progress (eg Skills for Work)
- ◆ adults returning to education
- ◆ candidates in employment who wish to enhance their career prospects
- ◆ candidates not in employment who wish to enhance their job prospects

### 3.4 Employment opportunities

The NPA at SCQF level 5 can lead to employment within the construction industry, particularly through Modern Apprenticeships. There are a large number of Modern Apprentices in the construction sector and each year brings a significant increase in the number of apprentice registrations. All available research and projections indicate that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future.

As well as the traditional crafts, the NPA at SCQF level 5 will provide invaluable practical experience and knowledge to candidates who aspire to the more technical professions which exist in construction, such as Civil Engineering and Management.

The NPA at SCQF level 5 is also suitable for those returning to work or transferring from other sectors and could be delivered on a full-time, part-time or block-release basis.

This award is based on existing standards and has been developed in order to ensure that UK-wide companies can access suitable and appropriate provision in Scotland.

### 3.5 Recommended access

Access to the NPA is at the discretion of the centre. There are no specific requirements for prior qualifications, knowledge and skills and/or previous experience. It is assumed that the level of experience of those undertaking the NPA is that of a 'new entrant'.

However, when the NPA is taken as a component of the Modern Apprenticeship the candidate must be in active employment.

The assessments for the NPA at SCQF level 5 will be challenging and meaningful, but nonetheless still achievable for all candidates. They are designed to familiarise candidates with a culture of attainment where assessments will challenge them, but do not put unreasonable obstacles between them and successful completion.

For all Units, assessment is based primarily on practical activities and, where possible, holistic assessment is encouraged — particularly the integration of assessment for the mandatory Units covering Health and Safety and Productive Working Practices with those covering practical activities.

## Core Skills

<i>Numeracy</i>	SCQF 3
<i>Communication</i>	SCQF 3
<i>Working with Others</i>	SCQF 3
<i>Problem Solving</i>	SCQF 3
<i>Information and Communication Technology</i>	SCQF 3

SCQF level 3 is the minimum exit level as stated by ConstructionSkills; however, upon commencement of the NPA, the entry level of candidates may be lower than this.

## 4 Group Award structure

### 4.1 Framework

To achieve the full award, learners must gain 9.5 credits (380 hours), including three mandatory (M) Units. The remaining 7 credits should be made up of optional (O) Units, with at least 5 credits from Option Block 1.

Unit title	Status	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points	SQA Credit Value	SQA Unit Code
<b>Mandatory Units — 2.5 credits required</b>					
Workplace Health Safety and Welfare	M	5	6	1	H0TD 11
Conform to Productive Work Practices	M	5	6	1	H0T4 11
Set Out Secondary Dimensional Work Controls: An Introduction	M	5	3	0.5	H0TC 11
<b>Option Block 1 — minimum of 5 credits required</b>					
Install Road Drainage	O	5	12	2	H0SK 11
Lay Kerbs and Channels	O	5	6	1	H0TA 11
Lay Modular Pavement	O	5	12	2	H0TB 11
Form Concrete Structures	O	5	12	2	H0T5 11
Reinstate Ground Conditions	O	5	12	2	H0TF 11
Lay Domestic Drainage	O	5	12	2	H0T9 11

Unit title	Status	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points	SQA Credit Value	SQA Unit Code
<b>Option Block 2 — minimum of 2 credits required</b>					
Prepare and Operate Machinery to Compact Materials	O	5	9	1.5	H0S4 11
Excavate Holes and Trenches	O	5	6	1	H0SD 11
Arrange and Secure Loads	O	5	12	2	H0PT 11
Lay and Finish Concrete	O	5	12	2	H0T8 11
Guide Moving Loads or Machinery	O	5	12	2	H0R0 11
Install Street Ironwork	O	5	6	1	H0SM 11
Provide Temporary Excavation Support	O	5	12	2	H0SP 11
Operate a Powered Tool and Equipment	O	5	3	0.5	H0R5 11
Sling and Signal the Movement of Loads	O	5	9	1.5	H0SJ 11
Sign, Light and Guard the Work Area	O	5	6	1	H0SY 11
Search for Underground Services	O	5	3	0.5	H0SV 11
Prepare and Operate Machinery to Receive and Transport Loads	O	5	9	1.5	H0S9 11
Appreciation of Access Platforms and Equipment	O	5	6	4	F6MF

All Units have been subject to the validation process using standard SQA procedures, including review by a representative external to the Steering Group.

## 4.2 How the NPA Units map against the NOS

NPA Unit	Status in NPA	SVQ Unit title	Construction Skills NOS reference
Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare	M	Conform to General Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare	VR 641
Conform to Productive Work Practices	M	Conform to Productive Work Practices	VR 642
Set Out Secondary Dimensional Work Controls	M	Set out Secondary Dimensional Work Controls	VR 401
Install Road Drainage	O	Lay Domestic Drainage	VR 43
Lay Kerbs and Channels	O	Lay Kerbs and Channels	VR 368
Lay Modular Pavement	O	Lay Modular Pavement	VR 367
Form Concrete Structures	O	Pour Concrete to Form Structures	VR 371
Reinstate Ground Conditions	O	Reinstate Ground Conditions	VR 172
Lay Domestic Drainage	O	Installing Mains Drainage Systems in the Workplace	VR 369
Prepare and Operate Machinery to Compact Materials	O	Operate Plant or Machinery to Compact	VR 394
Excavate Holes and Trenches	O	Excavate Holes and Trenches	VR 373
Arrange and Secure Loads	O	Arrange and Secure Loads	VR 397
Lay and Finish Concrete	O	Place and Finish Non-specialist Concrete	VR 45
Guide Moving Loads or Machinery	O	Provide Temporary Excavation Support	VR 370
Install Street Ironwork	O	Direct and Guide the Movement of Plant or Machinery	VR 396
Provide Temporary Excavation Support	O	Install Street Ironwork	VR 366

<b>NPA Unit</b>	<b>Status in NPA</b>	<b>SVQ Unit title</b>	<b>Construction Skills NOS reference</b>
Operate a Powered Tool and Equipment	O	Operate Specialised Powered Tools and Equipment	VR 400
Sling and Signal the Movement of Loads	O	Operate Plant or Machinery to Receive and Transport Loads	VR 391
Sign, Light and Guard the Work Area	O	Slings and Signalling the Movement of Loads	VR 402
Search for Underground Services	O	Segregate the Area for Highways Works	VR 365
Prepare and Operate Machinery to Receive and Transport Loads	O	Locating and Protecting Utilities Apparatus and Sub-structures in the Workplace	VR 372
Appreciation of Access Platforms and Equipment	O	Erecting and Dismantling Access/Working Platforms in the Workplace	VR 250

### **4.3 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer**

#### **Articulation**

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 has been designed as a progression route to the full range of Construction SVQs, particularly the SVQ level 2 in Construction Operations. It was also designed as an articulation route from the Skills for Work Construction awards. This is the first time there has been a clearly defined pre-vocational/vocational route for candidates to follow, and for centres to deliver within this construction area.

#### **Credit transfer**

There are no current National Units against which credit transfer might be considered.



## **5 Approaches to delivery and assessment**

### **5.1 Content and context**

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is designed to equip students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for success in employment within the construction industry. It is mainly aimed at candidates who are interested in pursuing a career in Construction Operations.

This award is not designed to train people to full industrial competence. There is an emphasis on developing the basic skills normally taught to an apprentice at the very early stages of time-serving and these basic skills will be very attractive to employers. Candidates can then build on these skills when working towards achieving an SVQ.

The programme should be delivered in the context of familiarisation with terminology, basic concepts and working practices and disciplines, including Health and Safety and Sustainability. It is intended that the NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 will develop a broad appreciation of topics based on accepted construction practices.

Candidates may go on to work as general labourers, ground workers or builders' labourers. They will require skills and knowledge in general workplace safety, the use of efficient working practices, protecting working areas, laying domestic drains, placing and finishing concrete.

## **5.2 Delivery**

The structure of this qualification allows for a high degree of flexibility in its delivery. Owing to the very practical nature of the award, it is recommended that each teaching/training session should be of a reasonable duration — perhaps three hours.

This award could be offered full-time, part-time, block-release, day-release or evening. Combination of delivery is also a possibility. Such combined study may enable candidates to complete the award within a shorter time period.

There are many opportunities for integrated delivery of Units within the award. Teaching and learning for Construction Safety Practices and Productive Working Practices Units should always be integrated with technical/practical Units as much as possible, and assessment should be encouraged to be within the application of these technical/practical Units. The Unit Specifications will identify specific opportunities for integration with other Units.

It is recognised that the NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 focuses on the development of the candidates' practical skills. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities for the introduction of e-learning during the teaching and delivery of the award. The learning and assessments of the knowledge-based Outcomes can be conducted by either using e-learning methods, or by traditional teaching techniques. For example, formal assessments may make the use of IT systems and facilities when available, or alternatively can also use the standard mode of supervising candidates during classroom paper-based assessments.

It is further recognised that health and safety considerations and the age-profile of candidates may present a challenge to centres. However, in order that the quality and integrity of assessments are maintained, centres are reminded that all practical assessments should take place in a realistic working environment with appropriate use of simulation where health and safety considerations are key.

## **5.3 Core Skills**

There are opportunities to integrate Core Skills into the delivery and assessment processes. These opportunities are identified in each of the Unit specifications.

## 5.4 Assessment

The assessment strategy for the NPA in Construction Operations is designed to ensure an appropriate level of rigour whilst not imposing excessive demands on centres or candidates. The design principles for the award encourage an holistic approach to assessment and this has been adopted in each Unit specification for the award.

Each Unit Specification includes guidance on delivery and assessment and, where appropriate, any potential opportunities for integrated delivery and assessment with other Units.

Centres can decide the order in which Units are delivered, based on candidate recruitment patterns, mode of delivery, resource issues and logical progression dictated by topics and Unit content and level.

Throughout all Units emphasis should be placed where appropriate on the application of Health and Safety. Safe working practices should be looked at in accordance with current safety codes of practice and regulations.

## 6 General information for centres

### **Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

### **Internal and external verification**

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

External verification 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 verification can be found in *SQA's Guide to Assessment* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## 7 General information for candidates

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is a practical-based qualification that requires you to undertake training in a controlled working environment.

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 is designed to equip you with the knowledge, understanding and skills to gain employment in the construction industry, or to progress further such as to the SVQ in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5.

The NPA in Construction Operations at SCQF level 5 requires you to achieve a minimum of 9.5 Credits. There is a variety of ways to do this, which can be clearly understood by making reference to the award framework

You will be assessed on your knowledge and skills developed in each Unit. The assessment may take a number of forms, including multiple choice questions, practical tasks with checklists, and other practical activities when working in teams. The practical Units will provide you with the basic skills and knowledge needed to carry out practical work and will then require you to complete these practical tasks in order for you to demonstrate your range of abilities.

You will learn skills and develop knowledge in general workplace safety, the use of efficient working practices, protecting working areas, laying domestic drains, placing and finishing concrete.

Occupations are available with a wide variety of construction companies within the building industry. If you wish to investigate career opportunities in the building industry you can contact ConstructionSkills at [www.cskills.org](http://www.cskills.org)

## 8 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 credit points:** One SCQF credit point equates to 10 hours of learning. NQ Units at SCQF levels 2–6 are worth 6 SCQF credit points, NQ Units at level 7 are worth 8 SCQF points.

**SCQF levels:** The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. National Qualification Group Awards are available at SCQF levels 2–6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2–7.

**Dedicated Unit to cover Core Skills:** This is a non-subject Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills.

**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 requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

**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 National Certificate/National Progression Award 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 National Certificates/National Progression Awards** are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.