Group Award Specification for:

Professional Development Award (PDA) in Learner Support

at SCQF level 7

Group Award Code: GG3J 47

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Acknowledgement

History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualification, and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below.

Version number	Description	Date	Authorised by

Contents

1   Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the Group Award PDA in Learner Support at SCQF level 7 which was fully revised in 2013. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the revised Group Award structure and guidance on delivery.

The PDA in Learner Support is designed for those already working as a learning assistant and also those who work with and support learners with additional support needs within learning environments.

2   Rationale for the revision of the Group Award

This PDA was developed as a result of consultation by SQA with staff in further education colleges and local authorities in the West of Scotland. The revision was prompted by feedback from sector representatives in Scotland who felt that the PDA required updating to reflect current practice. Feedback from the original consultation had identified the diverse skills required to support learners with specific tasks such as note-taking and scribing and prompting and also more general tasks such as providing assistance with time management and enabling learners to become more independent through the application of assistive technology.

Feedback from the sector in 2012 highlighted the need to revise and update the PDA to remove duplication and to more accurately:

♦   reflect current practice in support for learning (particularly for those working with school leavers and adult learners with varying additional needs).
♦   recognise the time pressures and resource constraints facing employers seeking suitable CPD for staff in educational support roles.
♦   respond to the demand from those providing this support in a range of educational settings for a relevant accredited qualification.

In addition, the need for candidates to have the opportunity to develop skills in managing the behavior, including difficult and/or unacceptable behavior, of the learners they work with was highlighted in the rationale for revision of the Group Award.

The sector has identified the need for a recognised qualification which would enhance career prospects for individuals working on special programmes or in mainstream Further Education with learners who require support for learning.

2.1 The original development was influenced by the following factors:

♦ The response of the Further Education sector to the Equality Act 2010 and the predecessor Disability Discrimination Act 1995
♦ The increasing number of students with additional support needs participating in FE programmes and courses
♦ The increase in the number of learning assistants in colleges, and the need to provide a qualification for them and recognise their role
♦ The FENTO Report which identified gaps in the provision of support roles for the FE sector, and is particular how support staff could help young people with additional support needs in a learning environment
♦ The needs of the learner in making the transition from school to college
♦ The responses to the original consultation exercise organised by SQA in collaboration with the Development Team

3 Aims of the Group Award

The PDA in Learner Support is designed to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills required for their role of learning facilitator/assistant working with learners who require additional support.

3.1 Principal aims of the Group Award

The principal aims of the PDA are to:

(a) Develop candidates' knowledge and understanding of the key functions, responsibilities and values expected of a learning facilitator/assistant and to develop the skills to be able to apply these in a range of situations.

(b) Develop skills in how to communicate effectively with the learner and to carry out tasks such as scribing, note-taking and proof-reading.

(c) Develop skills to identify and use appropriate assistive technologies with learners.

(d) Develop candidates' understanding of specific relevant legislation.

(e) Help candidates to understand support strategies that could help manage difficult behaviour, overcome barriers to learning and could encourage and develop the independence of the learner.

3.2 General aims of the Group Award

The general aims of the PDA are to:

(i) Provide a nationally recognised qualification which would enhance career prospects for Learning Facilitators/Assistants.

(ii) Provide Learning Facilitators/Assistants with opportunities to progress within the SCQF framework.

(iii) Develop staff so that they have more self-esteem, are more professionally confident and better informed.

(iv) Provide opportunities for candidates to develop their communication and interpersonal skills.

(v) Provide increased quality of support for learners with additional support needs.

(vi) Provide underpinning value-base that is anti-discriminatory and encourages independence in the learners being supported.

(vii) Help the candidates identify ways to help the learners overcome barriers to learning.

(viii) Develop candidates' core and transferable skills.

3.3 Target groups

This PDA is designed for Learning Assistants and Facilitators who are working in some capacity to support learners with disabilities and/or additional support needs within a formal learning environment.

Candidates will normally be engaged in supporting learners with additional needs on mainstream courses or special programmes. They could be working in a classroom situation or within a library or a designated support base.

Candidates will normally be employed in work of this nature but in occasional circumstances may be not be in post and may be seeking employment in a learner support role.

In most cases candidates will undertake the full programme for the Group Award. However, the Units are free-standing Units and may be taken as such for purposes of Continuing Professional Development.

3.4 Employment opportunities

Candidates will normally be working as a Learning Assistant or Facilitator in a learning environment, however there may be opportunities for those working in related areas to access the Units and Group Award to further their own skills and development.

4   Access to Group Award

Access will be at the discretion of the Centre. Candidates will normally be working or intending to work as a Learning Assistant or Facilitator in a learning environment.

5   Group Award structure

The PDA in Learner Support at SCQF level 7 is comprised of 5 single credit Units in total. Two of these are mandatory. Candidates must successfully complete the two mandatory Units and also one optional Unit from a choice of three.

The Group Award (ie the PDA) has a total credit value of 3 credits and will therefore be awarded upon successful completion of three Units.

5.1 Framework

Mandatory Units — both Units to be completed

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Facilitator/Assistant	H367 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Key Support Functions	H366 34	8	7	1

Optional Units — a minimum of one Unit to be completed

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Learner Support: Managing Behaviour in a Support Setting	H368 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Barriers to Learning	DP9E 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning	DP9A 34	8	7	1

5.2 Mapping information

Relationship of Units to Principal Aims

The grid below indicates where the principal aims of the award may be covered by successful completion of the Units.

Unit title	Code	Aims
Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Facilitator/Assistant	H367 34	a, d, e
Learner Support: Key Support Functions	H366 34	a, b, c, e
Learner Support: Managing Behaviour in a Support Setting	H368 34	a, b, e
Learner Support: Barriers to Learning	DP9E 34	a, b, c, d, e
Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning	DP9A 34	a, c, e

5.3 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer

There is at present no direct articulation, professional recognition or credit transfer relating to this PDA.

5.3.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), also known as **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL),** is the process which allows a candidate to receive formal recognition through certification of their prior learning, training or work experience. It is a method of assessing whether a candidate's experience and achievements, which may or may not have been developed through a course of learning, meet the Evidence Requirements (ie the standard) of SQA Units(s).

SQA encourages the provision of a clear and accessible Recognition of Prior Learning process to recognise the skills and knowledge that candidates have gained previously. This can allow candidates to 'fast-track' assessment and gain a nationally certificated qualification. Given the nature and purpose of the PDA, RPL may be an important addition to the assessment methodology.

SQA recognises that candidates develop knowledge and skills through experience and achievements. This includes knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non- formal and informal learning contexts.

♦ Formal Learning is learning certificated by a recognised awarding or professional body (eg SQA)
♦ Non formal learning is, for example, an employer's in-house training course, which may or may not be assessed and certificated
♦ Informal learning is learning based on experience from a variety of environments and has not been assessed or certificated

There may be opportunities for partial RPL in the following Units. This will be at the Centre's discretion.

2005 Unit title and code	2013 Unit title and code
Learner Support: Principles and Practice of the Learning Assistant/Facilitator in Supporting Learners with Diverse Needs DP9C 34 Learner Support: Related Legislation DP99 34	Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Facilitator/Assistant H367 34
Learner Support: Support Strategies — Key Functions DP9D 34 Learner Support: Assistive Technology in Support of Learners with Additional Support Needs DP98 34	Learner Support: Key Support Functions H366 34

6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

6.1 Approaches to delivery of Units

Candidates undertaking Units in the PDA will normally be working towards gaining the Group Award — the PDA in Learner Support at SCQF level 7. However, the Units are free-standing Units and candidates may take them as such for purposes of continuing professional development.

Those delivering the qualification will require to support and mentor the candidates on an on-going basis to ensure that they get access to learners, facilities and materials to support the generation of evidence for this Group Award.

Where possible the evidence for knowledge and skills should relate to real-life practice, and candidates should be given opportunities to apply their skills in real-life settings.

Teaching methods and resources could include exposition, discussion, question and answer, exemplars, videos, articles from journals and other publications, extracts from legislation and appropriate websites. There may be opportunities for guest speakers and for visits to other learning organisations. Case studies could be used to enhance the learning experience and to provide opportunities for assessment.

The qualification is candidate-centred and the delivery model should ensure that candidates develop the skill of independent learning.

6.2 Approaches to assessment of Units

Advice on methods of assessment for each Unit is given in detail in the individual Unit Specifications. An Assessment Grid which summarises this information is provided at Section 6.2.1.

Aspects of the Units which deal mainly with Knowledge are assessed by a number of varied assessments, eg short or extended response questions or reports. Aspects of the Units that deal with Practice are assessed by observation of performance of tasks and by a portfolio of evidence which includes candidate generated accounts of the tasks undertaken and some reflection and self-evaluation.

6.2.1 Summary of Assessment Guidance

Unit title	Assessment
Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Support Assistant/Facilitator H367 34	Outcome 1, 2 and 3 may be assessed by extended response questions. Outcome 4 would benefit from being assessed holistically with candidate evidence gathered and stored in a Portfolio. The portfolio should include a reflective report/diary of the personal practice which includes a description of the impact on the learner of the support given and a self-evaluation which could include a training needs analysis. The portfolio should also include at least one observational report of the candidate's practice within a setting, which would authenticate the work.
Learner Support: Key Support Functions H366 34	All Outcomes may be assessed holistically, evidence should be stored in a Portfolio and should include; A minimum of two pieces of accessible written material for two learners with different additional support needs, a minimum of two pieces of proof read work for two learners with different additional support needs, a minimum of two different styles of note taking for two learners with different additional support needs and a minimum of two pieces of scribing written notes (one of which should include graphical or tabular formatting) applicable to two learners with different additional support needs. It is strongly recommended that one of the pieces is also observed.
Learner Support: Managing Behaviour in a Support Setting H368 34	Outcome 1, 2 and 3 could be assessed by extended response questions. It is recommended that Outcome 4 is assessed through a portfolio, which records and analyses a minimum of two incidents of differing behaviours within a support setting.
Learner Support: Barriers to Learning DP9E 34	Outcome 1 is assessed by a series of structured questions which cover 5 barriers to learning and 5 additional support needs and how these might be addressed. Outcome 2 should be assessed by a report in an appropriate format. Outcome 3 is assessed by observation of the candidate's presentation and by assessment of the planning brief, using an assessment checklist.
Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning DP9A 34	This Unit is assessed holistically and will include a portfolio and work practice observation. The portfolio will include evidence of knowledge and skills, plans for support sessions, self-evaluation of tasks and a summary report of session. At least one Outcome should form part of an observed assessment supported by plans, an evaluation of the task and summary report.

7 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**.

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)**.

8 General information for candidates

The PDA in Learner Support at SCQF level 7 is relevant to you if you are currently working as a learning assistant or facilitator in a learning environment, or if you are aspiring to undertake such work.

The PDA provides opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills required to support learners who need additional support.

The qualification has five Units, two of which are mandatory. You will then successfully complete one further Unit from a choice of three to achieve the PDA.

The Units are:

Learner Support: Values and Practice of the Learning Support Assistant/Facilitator

In this mandatory Unit you will cover current legislation and policies related to additional support needs and how the legislation is applied in a learning and/or cared for environment. It will also enable you, in your role as a learning facilitator/assistant, to develop an understanding of the values and responsibilities of such a role, whilst undertaking practice.

Learner Support: Key Support Functions

This mandatory Unit is designed to enable you, in your role as a learning facilitator/assistant to understand and apply four key support functions; adapt written material, proof read, record notes and scribe, to aid a learner with additional support needs.

Learner Support: Managing Behaviour in a Support Setting

This optional Unit is designed to enable you in your role as a learning facilitator/assistant to better manage the behaviour of the learner(s) you are working with. You will develop your knowledge and understanding of types of behaviour, including unacceptable behaviour, and influences which may affect the learning setting.

Learner Support: Barriers to Learning

This optional Unit is designed to develop your ability to access and evaluate information on additional support needs and barriers to learning from a variety of sources. You will be able to use this ability in the planning, delivery and presentation of your research results.

Learner Support: Support Strategies for Promoting Independence in Learning

This optional Unit is designed to enable you to develop skills in assisting learners with additional needs by using support strategies which promote independence in learning.

The Units are free- standing so you can also undertake them on an individual basis for purposes of Continuing Professional Development.

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**

SCQF credit points: 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 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 HNC/HND 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.