

# Guidance on Core Skills:

## Using the design principles for Higher National Certificates and Diplomas

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# Introduction

## Core Skills and the design principles for HNCs and HNDs

New design principles for Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) were agreed by SQA's Qualifications Committee in March 2003 (see Appendix 1).

The design principles for HNCs and HNDs that are relevant for Core Skills are:

- ◆ HNCs and HNDs shall incorporate opportunities for candidates to develop Core Skills.
- ◆ \*HNCs and HNDs should clearly include opportunities for candidates to develop Core Skills to levels required by the occupations or progression pathways the HNCs and HNDs support. This would normally mean all five Core Skills should be developed in every HNC and HND.

\* Qualification Design Teams must always conduct market research, particularly among candidates, employers, and Higher Education Institutions, to make sure that HNCs and HNDs continue to be fit for purpose. If, as a result, the design principles regarding Core Skills need to be re-interpreted or modified, the Qualification Design Team should contact SQA at the outset of the group award development/revision process to develop alternatives that are coherent with the other principles.

The validity of the market research, and the fitness for purpose of the proposed alternatives, which have been agreed by SQA, will be confirmed at validation.

## The Core Skills framework

The *Core Skills framework* underlies all Core Skills certification and opportunities for development. It is a set of definitions of each Core Skill, at five levels, from SCQF level 2 to SCQF level 6. It is a technical document, for use by those designing and revising qualifications. It has two main uses:

- ◆ auditing existing qualifications for Core Skills coverage
- ◆ designing Core Skills into new qualifications

Where certification is sought, both of these processes are subject to validation. Sections 4c – e have more details on auditing for Core Skills and submitting the audits for validation.

The Core Skills that have been agreed for National Qualifications, Higher National Qualifications, and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are: *Communication*; *Numeracy*; *Information Technology (IT)*; *Problem Solving*; and *Working with Others*.

Core Skills are subdivided into components, which are the smallest part of a Core Skill that can be certificated. Parts of Core Skills and components can be developed even though they are not certificated.

Core Skill	Components
Communication:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Oral Communication</li><li>◆ Written Communication</li></ul>
Numeracy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Using Graphical Information</li><li>◆ Using Number</li></ul>
IT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Using Information Technology</li></ul>
Problem Solving:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Critical Thinking</li><li>◆ Planning and Organising</li><li>◆ Reviewing and Evaluating</li></ul>
Working with Others:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◆ Working with Others</li></ul>

You can find the Core Skill framework on our website [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk). On the home page, go to the 'Choose a section' drop down menu, then click on 'Core Skills Catalogue and Frameworks' on the left hand menu.

## About this guide

This guide gives advice and guidance on ensuring opportunities to develop Core Skills are incorporated fully into revised HNCs and HNDs.

Key points in the guidance are highlighted, and look like this:

***HNCs and HNDs should clearly include opportunities for candidates to develop Core skills.***

## Terminology used in this guide

**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 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.

**NB** There are more details on embedded and signposting Core Skills in Section 1b and 1c.





# 1 Setting entry and exit levels

## 1a About entry and exit levels

Qualification Design Teams must indicate the recommended level of each Core Skill a candidate will need on entering an HNC or HND if they are to be reasonably expected to succeed. They must also indicate the level of each Core Skill that will be expected by employers or universities on completing the HNC or HND.

The exit level can be automatically certificated if all the evidence requirements for it are embedded in the Units of the HNC or HND. Otherwise, it will be a target at which candidates aim in their overall development. This can be done through **signposting** the opportunities to develop Core Skills within a Unit, Graded Unit or Group Award, which includes the numerous opportunities offered in teaching, learning, formative and summative assessment and independent study, and through other vehicles such as the HN Unit in Personal Development Planning (see also Section 1c).

## 1b Certificating Core Skills

Since August 2000, all candidates for SQA qualifications have been able to show what they have achieved in certificated Core Skills. This is detailed on the Scottish Qualification Certificate (SQC), and is updated each time they receive a new certificate. The SQC reports certificated Core Skills by component, so certification is available even to those who do not complete a whole Core Skill. With increasing emphasis being placed on Core Skills in education (including higher education), training, and employment, it is important that, as often as is possible, candidates are given the opportunity to be credited for what they can do.

There are different ways for candidates to be certificated for Core Skills. This includes:

- ◆ Dedicated Core Skills Units, which may draw on evidence generated in vocational or subject Units. Dedicated Core Skill Units can be incorporated in HNCs or HNDs as mandatory or optional Units.
- ◆ Through any SQA qualification (Unit, Course, or Group Award) that has been audited against the Core Skills framework and validated as fully and always covering one or more Core Skill component. This is called ‘embedding’ Core Skills, and a single Core Skill (or Core Skill component) can be ‘embedded’ in a subject Unit, a Graded Unit, or across a number of Units. Where a Core Skill is embedded in a subject Unit or Graded Unit, certification is automatic — neither the centre nor the candidate will need to enrol for the Core Skill.

The entry on the Core Skills will be generated automatically by SQA when the candidate achieves the relevant Unit, Course, or Group Award.

## **1c Other opportunities for meeting Core Skills exit levels**

During the pilot phase of establishing the design principles for HNCs and HNDs, alternative approaches (other than certification) to developing Core Skills within HNCs and HNDs were devised. One approach is through **signposting** and the other is the use of Units such as Personal Development Planning.

### **Signposting**

‘Signposting’ refers to the identification of opportunities for Core Skills development that lie outwith those that can be summatively assessed and certificated. This allows for more opportunities to develop Core Skills through teaching and learning, and highlights them for the people delivering and managing the Units.

**All** opportunities for Core Skills development in mandatory or optional Units and in Group Awards should be signposted in Unit specifications, Validation Documents, and Arrangements Documents.

Candidates will be able to choose whether they want to use the evidence gathered through these development opportunities towards certification — they might wish only to enhance their Core Skills.

For existing or unrevised Units, the qualifications design team should produce separate guidance in the HN Group Award Arrangements Document on where and how the appropriate Core Skills might be developed.

Further advice and guidance on signposting is given in Section 5.

### **The Personal Development Planning Unit**

The HN Unit in Personal Development Planning (DE3R 34) is designed to offer candidates the opportunity to identify the Core Skills that have to be developed, and to plan ways of meeting these. The Unit in itself does not embed Core Skills, but it does enable the development of Core Skills required by the candidate.

Candidate and tutor support materials are available for this Unit (see [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)). The Unit can be incorporated as part of the mandatory or optional parts of HNC and HND frameworks, and is worth 8 SCQF points at level 7.

**Candidates can achieve Core Skills in different ways.**

## 1d Setting the recommended entry level

The recommended Core Skills entry level agreed by the validation panel must include **all five Core Skills**. Each Core Skill can be specified at any level. It is unlikely that all the Core Skills will be specified at the same level, because validation panels should consider the levels of the particular Core Skill a candidate would need:

- ◆ as preparation for beginning the HNC or HND
- ◆ to have a reasonable chance of completing the HNC or HND
- ◆ to be equipped for progression in the area
- ◆ to be prepared for the broad range of activities required by the HNC or HND

### What levels of Core Skills to set?

It is important to set a recommended entry level that adequately prepares candidates for study in the area, but it is equally important not to set the level unnecessarily high, creating a barrier to entry. SCQF level 5 is the same level as Standard Grade at Credit — this is the highest level you would expect the ablest candidates in the country to achieve after 11 years of compulsory education.

The relative importance of the five Core Skills will vary across areas — one HNC or HND may require a high level of *Numeracy* and *IT* skills but a low level of *Communication* and *Working with Others*, while another HNC or HND might require a completely different balance of levels.

There is more about the Core Skills and how they sit at SCQF levels 4, 5, and 6, in Section 1f.

A good place to start determining the recommended entry level is by examining current entry requirements for the HNC and/or HND you are revising, or for a similar one if you are devising a new qualification. If these are expressed in terms of Standard Grades, Highers, or other qualifications, you can check the Core Skills coverage of those qualifications in *Automatic Certification of Core Skills* (see [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)). For example, if Standard Grade English at Credit level is currently required, it would make sense to specify *Communication* at SCQF level 5.

## 1e Setting the recommended exit level

The recommended Core Skills exit level must include **all five Core Skills**. It is unlikely that there is any occupation, or higher education programme, that would not require a particular Core Skill at some level.

### What levels of Core Skills to set?

You should choose the levels of each Core Skill to include once you have carried out market research with the users of the qualification — principally employers in the sector, but also others such as Higher Education Institutions and professional bodies. For a useful indication of what might be expected, you could look at a benchmark qualification in the same area, eg a Modern Apprenticeship at SVQ levels 3 or 4, which would indicate the sort of level the industry expected its future managers, technicians, or craftsmen to attain.

Where the recommended exit level is not the same as the entry level, the difference should not normally be more than one level. Setting a recommended exit level that is two or more levels above the recommended entry level is likely to produce a barrier to achievement of the HNC or HND, unless the Core Skill plays a significant role in the area and thus forms a large part of the HNC or HND. In this case, dedicated Core Skills Units would be the preferred approach.

Employers, and other stakeholders not directly concerned with education, will not necessarily understand the technical aspects of Core Skills specifications or SCQF levels. They will, however, be very clear as to what their needs are. You should take care when consulting with them that you have examples of the Core Skills at various levels available. To do this, you will need to translate the Core Skills framework into understandable market research questions and map respondents' answers on to the Core Skills framework. For example, in ascertaining the range and complexity of communication that a future employee might need, a market research question might ask the mode of communication (eg face to face, by telephone) most often used. The range might be explored through such questions as immediate team, people in the company, external personnel, type of people, grade of posts, etc.

***The exit level should be determined by employers and other relevant stakeholders.***

***Where they exist, benchmark qualifications would indicate the levels required.***

## 1f Setting Core Skills levels

When setting levels for the recommended exit level it is important that you bear the following points in mind:

- ◆ As in the recommended entry level, progression is a key factor.
- ◆ The exit level should equip candidates for progression into employment or further study (professional body qualifications and degrees) in the area.

It may be tempting to set an exit level that requires Core Skills at SCQF level 6, but this could become a barrier to achievement of the HNC or HND. Core Skills at SCQF level 6 represent the optimum level of performance for any candidate. SCQF level 5 is the level expected of the ablest pupils after 11 years of compulsory education. SCQF level 4 may well be the Core Skill level most commonly needed — though this would be used to underpin *specialist* vocational or subject skills at higher levels.

As well as increases in technical skills required at each level, there are general differences between the Core Skills at the different levels:

#### **SCQF level 4**

When using a particular Core Skill, the candidate will have some responsibility for taking decisions about putting the skill into action. Often the Core Skill will be used in a managed environment, but sometimes the candidate will need to use the skill without close supervision.

#### **SCQF level 5**

When using a particular Core Skill, the candidate will need to take decisions about how to select and apply the skill to meet the demands of activities, which might sometimes be complex.

#### **SCQF level 6**

When using a particular Core Skill, the candidate will be given responsibility for making decisions about how to use the Core Skill within the context, which will often be a challenging or unfamiliar one. The candidate will analyse, plan, and manage his/her own use of the Core Skill in complex activities.

***Core Skills entry and exit levels should be set at a realistic level for the sector and the target candidates.***

***Core Skills should only be included at SCQF level 6 where that particular skill is vital in the sector.***

## **1g Progression in Core Skills from HNC to HND**

It is possible to set the Core Skills exit level of HNCs and HNDs at the same level, though it is important to consider the needs of candidates. This approach is most likely to be appropriate when centres and

candidates use the HNC as the first year of the HND programme. However, you must take care to avoid disadvantaging candidates. The level should meet the progression needs of candidates who complete the HND, without creating a barrier to achievement for those candidates who wish to leave study after completing the HNC. These levels should only be different if the market research among employers, etc, clearly requires this.

Usually, the entry level of the HND will be the same as the exit level of the HNC. The candidate may be required to show Core Skills progression (shown by →) within the HNC only, within the HND only, in both, or in neither. The possibilities are:

HNC entry → HNC exit = HND entry = HND exit

HNC entry → HNC exit = HND entry → HND exit

HNC entry = HNC exit = HND entry → HND exit

HNC entry = HNC exit = HND entry = HND exit

When deciding on the progression pattern for an HNC or HND, Qualification Design Teams and validation panels should consider:

- ◆ the needs of the sector
- ◆ common (or likely) patterns of uptake and use
- ◆ possible aspirations of target candidates
- ◆ common (or likely) progression routes from the HNC and HND

## **1h The process of setting Core Skills entry and exit levels**

The process of setting Core Skills entry and exit levels will depend on other aspects of the Group Award development. This means there will be a certain amount of revisiting the same ground. It should be considered at the initial stages of development, and preliminary decisions should be made at that time. Those preliminary decisions may need to be revised in the light of experience as Qualification Design Teams go through the process of developing Group Award frameworks, Units, and Graded Units.

Reconsidering the Core Skills levels at each stage in the development process will help to ensure that the levels set are realistic for the qualification, and do not prove to be unnecessary barriers to achievement.

## **Summary**

***All HNCs and HNDs need Core Skills entry and exit levels.***

***The exit level will include all five Core Skills at some level.***

***All candidates must have opportunities to develop Core Skills to the levels required by employers.***

***Candidates can achieve the level in different ways, though they may not wish to seek formal certification.***

***Exit levels can be the same as entry levels, or can be one level higher.***

***An initial level should be set early in the development process, and revisited at key stages throughout the process.***

***The Core Skills level will be an important aspect of design and will be fully explained in Validation Documents and subsequent Arrangements Documents.***





## 2 Routes to the recommended exit level

### Introduction

Since the Core Skills entry level is only a recommendation, and centres will be free to accept entrants who have not achieved the recommended entry level, all HNCs and HNDs will have to include a means for candidates to achieve the recommended exit level.

***All HNCs and HNDs must include ways to achieve the recommended Core Skills exit level.***

It may make sense to provide ways of achieving the exit level through the mandatory section of the qualification. This is helpful to candidates, and makes the Core Skill achievements of individual candidates easier to track. Of course, this might not always be feasible, in which case you should clearly signpost the optional Units in which Core Skill development is possible.

The Validation Document and Arrangements Document should make clear the implication of Core Skill development using Units from the optional section of frameworks.

***Where possible, Core Skills should be covered in the mandatory section of the HNC or HND.***

There are several ways to build Core Skills into HNCs and HNDs:

- 1 Including Units (HN Units in IT or Communication) that have been designed to embed certain Core Skills and for which the candidate is certificated. This is the most straightforward way to include Core Skills in a Group Award, and you should use it where appropriate and feasible. You should consider using Unit assessment exemplars to advise on how to integrate these Units with the subject or vocational Units for your Group Award.
- 2 Building opportunities for Core Skills achievement into the vocational or subject Units of the HNC or HND. These would include both embedded and signposted Core Skills development. Sections 4 and 5 explain how this can be done.
- 3 For an HNC or HND with a relatively simple structure, it may be feasible to build in Core Skills across the whole Group Award. This can be done for embedded Core Skills and those that are signposted. However, the more routes to the Group Award there are, the more difficult this becomes, as all routes must carry the same Core Skills.

- 4 Building opportunities for Core Skills achievement (embedded and signposted) into the Graded Unit assessments of the HNC or HND. Do remember, though, that the Graded Unit is already a substantial piece of work, and building in too many Core Skills could create barriers to achievement.

Where Core Skills are embedded for automatic certification, this will have to be audited and validated by SQA. If the claim for Core Skills coverage is successfully validated, candidates will be able to achieve Core Skills credit with no requirements other than those of the HNC or HND. Similarly, there will be no additional requirements on the centre. Evidence for Core Skills will be collected and assessed naturally as part of the carrier Units, and certification will take place automatically. There is more on auditing and validating Core Skills coverage in Sections 4c–e.

***There are several ways to build Core Skills into HNCs and HNDs.***

***Where Core Skills are embedded for automatic certification, this must be audited and validated by SQA.***

## **Further considerations**

- 1 If certification is sought, each Core Skill need only be *assessed* once, even though the development of all Core Skills should be encouraged throughout the delivery of a Unit or programme.
- 2 A Core Skill component is the smallest ‘element’ of Core Skills that can be built in for automatic certification but, where possible, whole Core Skills should be considered.

### ***Summary***

***All HNCs and HNDs must include ways to achieve the recommended Core Skills exit level.***

***Where possible, Core Skills should be covered within the mandatory section of the HNC or HND.***

***There are several ways to build Core Skills into HNCs and HNDs.***

***Where Core Skills are embedded for automatic certification, this must be audited and validated by SQA.***

## 3 Getting started

The development of all five Core Skills is important to candidates taking HNCs and HNDs and opportunities to develop these (whether certificated or not) should be offered to candidates as part of good practice.

### Key questions

When deciding how to incorporate opportunities to develop Core Skills in a subject Unit, Graded Unit, or Group Award, the first questions you should ask are:

- ◆ What are the recommended Core Skills entry and exit levels for the HNC or HND?
- ◆ What are the Qualification Design Team's initial decisions on how to provide routes to the recommended exit level? This would include decisions on which Core Skills should be certificated and which signposted (there is more about this in Sections 4 and 5). This will provide a starting point for Unit writers for Core Skills. However, it is likely to be an iterative process, and final decisions may be made nearer the end of the development of a Unit specification. Even when a Core Skill has been embedded and can be certificated, this should not exclude opportunities for other Core Skills development being signposted in Units or Group Awards.

Other important questions to ask when deciding whether or not to try to build Core Skills into a subject Unit of the HNC or HND are:

- ◆ Would candidates for this HNC or HND be better motivated by learning this Core Skill in a contextualised way?
- ◆ Is the Core Skill especially important in this vocational area?
- ◆ Is one or more component of this Core Skill already included in the HNC or HND?
- ◆ Does it make sense to complete the Core Skill here?

Weighing up these factors will give you an initial indication of whether or not it is useful to try to include the Core Skill in a subject Unit and whether this can be embedded or signposted. The next step is to decide whether it is feasible. This involves deciding whether the Core Skill:

- ◆ components are likely to form a natural part of the Unit, eg knowledge and skills, assessment, teaching and learning. Remember that parts of components can be signposted even though they are not certificated.
- ◆ is likely to be consistent with the Outcomes of the Unit, particularly in cases where certification of the Core Skill is sought

- ◆ can be reasonably included without distorting the Unit or creating unnecessary barriers to achievement of the Unit, particularly in cases where certification of the Core Skill is sought

If the answer is 'no' to any of these questions, you should not try to build the Core Skill into the Unit.

## Using the Core Skills framework

When writing new Units, you will be able to use your knowledge and experience of your subject area to identify opportunities for Core Skills coverage. Before you do this, you will have to familiarise yourself with the Core Skills framework. This can be found on the SQA's website [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

***The Core Skills framework is the document you should use when designing in Core Skills to subject Units or Graded Units.***

For each Core Skill at each level, there are Specific Skills statements and Further Information sections, which give details of the nature and range of abilities candidates are expected to have to develop that Core Skill at a particular level. If you intend to embed the Core Skill in the subject Unit (and claim credit and certification), you will have to ensure that the subject Unit covers each component of the Core Skill to be embedded.

Including Core Skills does not affect the credit value or the overall level of the subject Unit.

### **Summary**

***The incorporation of Core Skills development into Units and Group Awards is part of good practice.***

***The Core Skills framework is the document you should use when designing Core Skills into subject Units or Graded Units.***

***Core Skills should only be embedded into Units where this is natural, and consistent with other Outcomes, and does not distort the Unit or create unnecessary barriers to achievement.***

***Including Core Skills does not affect the credit value or the overall level of the subject Unit.***

## 4 Embedding Core Skills

### 4a Criteria for inclusion of Core Skills

Having clearly identified the Core Skills you expect to be able to incorporate, you now have to decide how they can be included in the Unit specification.

If you decide that the Core Skill should be embedded to enable certification, the key points here are that assessment of the Core Skills must:

- ◆ **be consistent with the other essential outcomes of study**, eg interpreting and processing data in graphical form is an aspect of Numeracy that features in many current Units and their assessment arrangements as a natural and accepted outcome of study
- ◆ **not distort the reporting of attainment**, eg many Units may aim to promote students' abilities in oral communication, but it might distort reporting of attainment in a particular Unit to require a student to demonstrate this ability as part of the assessment arrangements
- ◆ **not create unacceptable barriers to success in the Unit**, eg many Units, as part of their methodology, offer opportunities to use IT tools; in some Units it might be reasonable to require students to demonstrate word processing skills, say, as part of the assessment arrangements, while in other Units such a requirement might create an unacceptable barrier to success

***Core Skills should only be embedded into Units where this is natural, consistent with other Outcomes, and does not distort the Unit or create unnecessary barriers to achievement.***

Remember: if you build in complete Core Skills, or Core Skill components, it must be at a specified level.

### 4b Designing-in Core Skills assessment

You can incorporate assessment of Core Skills into the assessment arrangements for the Unit in a number of ways.

You will need to consider the nature of the skill to be assessed, the extent and nature of the assessment instrument envisaged, current assessment practices, and experience in the area, and, of course, the implications for assessors' workloads. Initial judgements and proposals may need to be revisited and amended as you work through the implications.

Core Skills assessments must conform to the requirements made by the Core Skills framework:

- ◆ The overall skill, as described in the Skill Statement, must be included in the evidence requirements for the Unit.
- ◆ The Unit assessment must cover the evidence required for each of the Specific Skills statements — the amount and nature of evidence is not prescribed.
- ◆ Any further requirements described in Further Information must be met.

An example of an HN subject Unit covering Critical Thinking is given in Appendix 2.

## Guidelines

- 1 Stick to whole Core Skills if possible.
- 2 In general, you should use each Core Skill component as a separate Outcome (see below).
- 3 You should use the wording of the Core Skills framework where possible. If it is necessary to contextualise this wording, take care to ensure that the new wording fully meets the requirements of the Core Skills framework.

Core Skills will usually be built into the following sections of the new Unit specification:

Section of Unit specification	Use of Core Skills framework
<b>Knowledge and/or Skills</b>	Information from the Core Skills Further Information should be used when writing this section of the Unit.
<b>Evidence Requirements</b>	The Core Skills Specific Skills statement should be included in the Evidence Requirements for the relevant Outcome.  Evidence Requirements should make clear that evidence of the Core Skill must be gathered for all candidates — sampling Core Skills is not acceptable.
<b>Assessment Guidelines</b>	Where information in the Core Skills Further Information is clearly given as guidance or exemplification, this can be included in the Unit Assessment Guidelines.
<b>Support Notes</b>	The support notes should be used to add information on delivery methods of Core Skills within subject Units.

The following table gives more detailed information on how each Core Skill should be embedded:

<b>Core Skill</b>	<b>Guidance on Embedding</b>
<b>Communication</b>	<p>Likely to be spread across three separate Outcomes. For coverage across a mandatory section or whole Group Award, the three Outcomes could be in three separate Units.</p> <p>If evidence required by the carrier Unit can be either oral or written, neither aspect of Communication can be automatically certificated.</p>
Oral Communication	All Specific Skills statements must be assessed in one Outcome.
Written Communication (Writing)	All Specific Skills statements must be assessed in one Outcome.
Written Communication (Reading)	All Specific Skills statements must be assessed in one Outcome.
<b>Numeracy</b>	The two components could be integrated in a single Outcome, or split across two or three Outcomes, as detailed below. For coverage across a mandatory section or whole Group Award, the three Outcomes could be in three separate Units.
Using Number	All Specific Skills statements are likely to be integrated in one Outcome.
Using Graphical Information	The Specific Skills statements could be integrated in one Outcome, or assessed in two separate Outcomes.
<b>Information Technology</b>	Some Specific Skills statements could be integrated in one Outcome or these could be assessed in separate Outcomes.
<b>Problem Solving</b>	Each component is likely to be assessed in a separate Outcome, as detailed below. For coverage across a mandatory section or whole Group Award, Critical Thinking can be assessed on its own but Planning and Organising, and Reviewing and Evaluating should be assessed in the same Unit. Ideally, all three components should be assessed in the same Unit, as they should form part of a single process.
Critical Thinking	<p>Widely used and easy to embed.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> demonstrating knowledge is <b>not</b> Critical Thinking — analysis is required.</p>

Core Skill	Guidance on Embedding
Planning and Organising	This skill is often developed by teaching/learning approaches, but needs to be made explicit in assessment arrangements.
Reviewing and Evaluating	<p>This vital step is not often formally assessed at present, and may have to be deliberately built in.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the candidate’s own problem-solving activities should be reviewed. This component must follow Planning and Organising.</p> <p>Some kinds of reviewing (eg reviewing a film, an IT package, a piece of music) are more properly aspects of Critical Thinking — see Core Skills framework for more detail on this point.</p>
<b>Working with Others</b>	<p>This is likely to be spread across two or three Outcomes in a Unit. It cannot be split across more than one Unit.</p> <p>The reviewing stage is often missed in existing assessment arrangements.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> the candidate must plan a co-operative task with others, and carry out the task with others — this means that some kinds of working with others, eg a professional working with a client, do not fall within the definition.</p>

## 4c Finalising decisions for automatic certification

In all cases, Unit writers will need to ensure that the requirements of the Unit are consistent with the detailed Core Skills framework. If you are claiming automatic Core Skill certification on the basis of the Unit, it is essential that you can demonstrate that the Unit assessment includes assessment of all the embedded Core Skill components. Ask yourself at all points: have I ensured that this Unit will generate evidence for each of the requirements of the Core Skills framework? It is not enough to say that evidence might be generated, or to assert that it will be generated in practice. The Unit specification must **ensure** that all candidates will generate the Core Skills evidence while generating the evidence for the Unit. Qualification Design Teams, may wish to consult with Core Skills specialists throughout the development process to ensure that they have met the requirements for embedding Core Skills within Units and Group Awards.



## 4d Documenting decisions

You should also complete the accompanying Form CSD (see Appendix 3) to document the decisions you have made, and to indicate where and how you believe Core Skills have been incorporated for automatic certification.

Complete Form CSD, showing where the skill component, Specific Skills, and context/task statements are met. It will be helpful to the auditors if you enter precise references to relevant sections of the Unit, and, where appropriate, quote relevant text from these sections. You should complete a separate Form CSD for each Core Skill component you believe to be covered by the Unit.

In documenting where you believe you have incorporated Core Skills for automatic certification, you should refer to the mandatory sections of the Unit. Supplementary evidence might come from the assessment guidelines or Unit support notes. The supplementary evidence should help to explain or exemplify statements in the Unit standards.

Be as specific as possible. Forms that are vague are not helpful to the auditors and are likely to result in them missing the relevant information. The purpose of the form is to give the auditors the benefit of your expertise on your subject. The more help you can give, the more the auditors are likely to be able to find the places where Core Skills are assessed in the Unit. Any additional explanatory comments you need to make can be noted on a separate page.

There is an example of a completed Form CSD in Appendix 4.

***Complete Form CSD to document how and where you believe the Unit covers a Core Skill for automatic certification. Give as much detail as possible.***

## 4e Core Skills validation

Claims for Core Skills coverage for automatic certification in subject Units will be subject to Core Skills validation by SQA. Core Skills validation is an independent check that claims for the automatic certification of Core Skills in Units are justified. Core Skills validation is carried out by a Core Skills auditor and a Core Skills Validation Group. The Qualification Manager responsible for the Unit will submit a claim for validation to the Core Skills Team based on the completed CSD form. This ensures that the Unit will produce sufficient evidence of the right type to cover the Skill, Specific Skills, and Further Information for each Core Skill component claimed.

After validation, the documentation for the Unit will clearly signal those Core Skills that are included for automatic certification.

***All claims for automatic certification of Core Skill will be subject to independent validation.***

***Summary***

***Complete Form CSD to document how and where you believe the Unit covers a Core Skill. Give as much detail as possible.***

***All claims for automatic certification of Core Skill will be subject to independent validation.***

## 5 Signposting Core Skills

### 5a What is signposting?

‘Signposting’ means identifying opportunities for developing Core Skills (or components) other than those that can be summatively assessed and certificated. This allows the range of opportunities to develop Core Skills through teaching and learning to be utilised and highlights these opportunities to those delivering and managing the Units.

These opportunities include:

- ◆ Knowledge and skills — which should be indicated in the knowledge and skills section of the Unit specification, eg producing a report, graph production. You could then expand the way the knowledge and skills cover Core Skill development in the Support Notes section.
- ◆ Formative assessment — which should be indicated in the Support Notes in a Unit as part of learning and teaching strategies.
- ◆ Summative assessment — this might meet the requirement for part of a Core Skills component but either is not sufficient to gain a whole component or only meet the requirement at general skill level. Opportunities to achieve partial Core Skills through summative assessment using a particular instrument of assessment should be indicated in the assessment guidelines and/or in the Support Notes.
- ◆ Teaching and delivery — this has the potential to cover many aspects of Core Skills depending on the subject taught. This may also be closely related to student work and learning. Opportunities provided by teaching and delivery should be indicated as suggested activities in the support notes in Unit specifications, eg the use of group work in the classroom or seminar presentations by students.
- ◆ Student work/learning — independent research, additional work in library, working with others in groups. This may be closely related to teaching and delivery. Opportunities provided by student work/learning should be indicated as suggested activities in the support notes in Unit specifications.

***There are numerous opportunities within teaching, learning, and assessment for candidates to develop Core Skills.***

### 5b Using the Core Skills framework

When considering Core Skills for signposting, it is important that you are familiar with the Core Skills framework, which sets out the standards for acquiring a particular Core Skill at a specific level. Even though no claim is being made for certification, it is important to how the teaching, learning, and assessment in the Unit meet a particular Core Skill at a specified level. The most recent framework is available on our website

**www.sqa.org.uk**. On the portal page, click on ‘Core Skills’ on the menu on the left-hand side, then click on ‘Core Skills Catalogue and Frameworks’ on the left-hand menu.

## 5c The strength of signposting

The strength of opportunities to develop Core Skills will vary depending on three factors. These are:

- ◆ volume and consistency of the opportunities (eg once only, all through the Unit)
- ◆ the ways the opportunities are developed (eg formative assessment, teaching, student research)
- ◆ how closely the opportunity matches the Core Skills framework, at which part (eg general skills, specific skills), and which level.

These factors will overlap and therefore will affect the *relative* strength of opportunities to develop Core Skills. For example, is it a one-off formative assessment that matches the general aspects of a Core Skills; is it a consistent approach in teaching and learning (eg group work) that matches a specific skill in the framework; or is it intensive student research that matches suggested tasks in the framework? The relative strength of opportunities could be mapped on a grid or through descriptive statements. Grids or descriptive statements should be included in the support notes.

***The strength of signposted Core Skills opportunities will depend on volume, consistency, method, and match to the Core Skills framework.***

## 5d Indicating opportunities to develop Core Skills in subject Units, Graded Units, and Group Awards

### Signposting in subject Units

Where Core Skills are signposted, the Core Skills and levels should be indicated in three places:

- ◆ the Core Skills statement on the first page of the specification
- ◆ the Support Notes
- ◆ if applicable, in the Assessment Guidelines section

Section of Unit specification	Information required for signposting
<b>Core Skills Statement</b>	The Core Skills statement on page 1 of the Unit specification gives details of any Core Skills that are automatically certificated. If there are opportunities to develop Core Skills that are not automatically certificated, the Core Skill and its level should be indicated in this section. For example, ‘There may be opportunities to develop Written Communication at SCQF level 5 and Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6’. Information on how this might be done should be given in the support notes and, if applicable, in the Assessment Guidelines.
<b>Support Notes</b>	The support notes should give details of the Core Skills that might be developed and their levels. They should give details of the way they might be developed, eg through particular teaching or learning strategies, student self-study, formative assessment. This information could be in text and/or in a grid.
<b>Assessment Guidelines</b>	Opportunities to develop Core Skills can be described in the Assessment Guidelines if a particular Instrument of Assessment or an Assessment Strategy lends itself to candidates developing a particular skill or generating evidence towards a Core Skill. For example, a report might contribute towards the development of Written Communication. The Core Skill and level should be indicated.

See Appendix 5 for examples of signposting Core Skills in text form in the support notes.

### Signposting at Group Award level

Core Skills must also be signposted at the Group Award level. This information will come from the Units, and should give an overview of the development of Core Skills throughout the Group Award. This should be shown in Validation Documents (and therefore in the subsequent Arrangements Documents). The following guidance will help to draw together the information required at Group Award level:

- ◆ Ensure the Core Skills information is in the HN Units. This includes information on embedding and signposting.
- ◆ Have a strategy for mapping Core Skills development — this could be through a subgroup or a dedicated person being responsible for drawing information together, or through the use of a consultant to

carry out this work. Sometimes these approaches are combined, eg a subgroup oversees the work of a consultant.

- ◆ Ensure that the level of Core Skills development is based on market research that has been carried out as part of the Group Award development.
- ◆ The mapping of Core Skills at Group Award level should draw together information from the Units and give a clear indication of:
  - the Core Skill or component
  - the SCQF level of each Core Skill or component
  - whether it is embedded or signposted
  - the Units each relates to
  - how the Unit will provide opportunities to develop the Core Skill or component
- ◆ The mapping could be in text and/or diagram form, but it must be detailed enough for validation panel members to clearly identify and be satisfied that the Group Award will provide the opportunities to develop the Core Skills to the levels required by the market research. This information will also form the basis of the section on the delivery of Core Skills in the Arrangements Document. Examples of signposting in text form are given in Appendix 6. An example of signposting using a grid is given in Appendix 7.
- ◆ Best practice in terms of writing a Core Skills section in a Validation Document/Arrangements Document would be to include:
  - an introductory paragraph on the importance of developing Core Skills and transferable skills in the Group Award
  - information on the market research on Core Skills and what employers and universities would be expecting in terms of Core Skills and levels
  - what would be expected in terms of recommended entry and exit levels, as a result of the market research. It could be useful to supplement any text with a diagram
  - information on how the Core Skills will be delivered in relation to Units in the Group Award. This information could be provided through explanatory text supported by a detailed diagram. Whatever format is used, the information has to give sufficient detail on how the delivery of the Units will provide the opportunities to develop all five Core Skills

**Summary**

***There are numerous opportunities in teaching, learning and assessment for candidates to develop Core Skills***

***The strength of signposted Core Skills opportunities will depend on volume, consistency, method and match to the Core Skills framework***

***Details of opportunities to develop Core Skills should be given in the Core Skills statement, support notes and Assessment Guidelines in the Unit specification.***

***Signposted Core Skills development should be included in Unit specifications, Validation Documents and Arrangements Documents***





# Appendix 1: 2003 HN Design Principles

To continue to uphold the tradition of Higher National Certificates and Diplomas as the leading qualifications for technician, technologist and first line management occupations, qualification design teams should adhere to the design principles and develop or revise qualifications which ensure the continuing fitness for purpose of those qualifications.

It should be noted, however, that these are principles rather than rules and are designed to ensure that all HNC/Ds are developed and validated to a consistently high standard. Therefore, where market research, particularly among candidates and employers, clearly indicates that any design principle needs to be re-interpreted or modified, SQA will work with the qualification design team to develop alternatives, which are coherent with the other principles. In particular, this applies to those marked with an asterisk. Any re-interpretation or modification of design principles needs to be indicated and negotiated at the outset of development. Design principles cannot be challenged at the point of validation.

The validity of the market research and the fitness for purpose of the proposed alternatives will be confirmed at validation.

Further considerations for qualification design teams are also indicated.

## **a Design principles**

### **SCQF level and credit points**

- 1 HNCs shall be designed to be at SCQF level 7 and shall comprise 96 SCQF credit points.
- 2 HNDs shall be designed to be at SCQF level 8 and shall comprise 240 SCQF credit points.
- 3 HNCs should incorporate at least 48 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7.
- 4 HNDs should incorporate at least 64 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8.

### **Core Skills**

- 5 HNC and HND programmes shall incorporate opportunities for candidates to develop Core Skills.

- 6 \*HNCs and HNDs should clearly include opportunities for candidates to develop Core Skills to levels required by the occupations or progression pathways the HNs support. This would mean all five Core Skills should be developed in every HN programme.

### **Mandatory Section**

- 7 \*HNCs should include a mandatory section of at least 48 SCQF credit points including a Graded Unit. (See Principles 9 and 10 under '*Graded Units*' below).
- 8 \*HNDs should include a mandatory section of at least 96 SCQF credit points, including Graded Units.

### **Graded Units**

- 9 \*HNCs should include one Graded Unit of 8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7.
- 10 \*HNDs should include one Graded Unit of 8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7, plus 16 SCQF credit points of Graded Unit(s) at SCQF level 8.

The purposes of Graded Units are to assess the candidate's ability to integrate and apply the knowledge and/ or skills gained in the individual HN Units to demonstrate that they have the principal aims of the Group Award, and grade candidate achievement.

## **b Further considerations**

### **HN Unit and Graded Unit Specifications**

SQA produces guidance on how to write HN Unit and Graded Unit Specifications. These include templates and examples of how the specifications should be laid out. This guidance should always be used in developing new or revised HN Unit or Graded Unit Specifications. The minimum change to current Unit specifications would be to remove the merit statement and to add an SCQF level and SCQF credit points.

### **Validation of HN Unit Specifications**

A key part of validation is to confirm the proposed allocation of SCQF levels and SCQF credit points to each Unit, and this needs to be seen to be done consistently. Until the process of devolving this to centres is fully worked out, SQA will validate all new or revised HN Unit specifications. Centres may continue to develop HN Unit specifications for validation by SQA.

### **Validation of HN Group Awards and Graded Units**

Group award validation may continue to be done by those centres with devolved powers to do so. As Graded Units relate to the principle aims of a Group Award, these too may be validated by devolved centres as part of Group Awards.

### **Validation periods**

HN Units, Graded Units and Group Awards will be kept under review by design teams in order to ensure continuing fitness for purpose. Normally, these will be reviewed every five years or more frequently if recommended by validation panels. However, specific time periods of validation will not be specified.

# Appendix 2: Example of an Outcome

*This is from an HN Unit covering Critical Thinking.*

## Outcome

Analyse a business situation and propose a strategy for its development.

## Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ business, markets, and objectives
- ◆ internal organisation and decision-making in the business
- ◆ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the business's current situation and external environment
- ◆ involvement of the main stakeholders in the business

## Evidence Requirements

To achieve this Outcome, candidates will need to demonstrate their knowledge by producing a report that analyses the situation of one specific business.

The report must include:

- ◆ analysis of all relevant factors, and the relationships between them
- ◆ analysis of the relevance of each factor to the future development of the business
- ◆ an overall evaluation of the business situation and its potential for future development
- ◆ a proposed strategy for the development of the business, which is clearly related to the evaluation of the business situation

## Assessment guidelines

The three Outcomes of the Unit should be assessed through production of a business plan. Hence, the investigation should be structured to enable candidates to present their findings in this format. Business plans are commonly used as a means of assessing the viability of new business proposals and candidates should be encouraged to centre their investigation on the establishment of a new business enterprise in which they would be involved. This could include considering an opening for self-employment as well as a business that could employ others. In some cases, the Unit may give a chance to investigate a new business start-up.

It may also be possible for some candidates to investigate developments in an existing business.

The investigation should cover all aspects of setting up a new business or expanding an existing one, for example, finding premises, doing market research, obtaining finance, making projections of likely sales.

Alternatively it could look at a particular issue such as the development of a new product or service, in which case it is likely to concentrate on market research, likely sales, potential production, or delivery issues.

The above are all examples of small business, but the Unit has been designed to enable candidates, who wish to do so, to investigate aspects of the operation of larger firms. In these cases, the investigation is likely to be less wide-ranging and will probably concentrate on a current issue relevant to the organisation, for instance, the recruitment of suitably skilled labour, or a particular area of its operations, for example, increasing exports of a product made in one particular plant. In these cases, the SWOT analysis etc should be focused on the factors pertinent to the issue or plant selected. Depending on the situation, the information gathered is likely to vary, for example, an investigation on labour requirements may seek data on availability of particular skills etc, rather than involving market research.

The investigation could be based on any type of organisation. Local operations of those in the voluntary sector may be particularly suitable as they may see the investigation as being in the nature of a consultancy service.

The foregoing suggests that the investigation should have a local context and that it should encourage candidates to recognise the importance of entrepreneurial behaviour in business development.



# Appendix 4: Example: Form CSD, completed for the Unit

HNC or HND:	Business Plan Development	Unit no(s):	
Core Skill component(s) and level(s): <i>Critical Thinking, H</i>			
<b>Core Skill component</b>	<b>Unit information (Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills, Evidence Requirements, Assessment Guidelines.)</b>		
<p><b>Skill</b></p> <p>Analyse a complex situation or issue.</p> <p><b>Specific Skills</b></p> <p>a Identify the factors involved and assess their relevance.</p> <p>b Develop and justify an approach to deal with the situation or issue.</p> <p><b>Contexts and tasks</b></p> <p>A complex situation/issue.</p>	<p>Outcome 1, all Knowledge and/or Skills,</p> <p>Outcome 1, Evidence, bullet points 1 and 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ analysis of all relevant factors, and the relationships between them</li> <li>♦ analysis of the relevance of each factor to the future development of the business</li> </ul> <p>Outcome 1, Evidence: bullet points 3 and 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ an overall evaluation of the business situation and its potential for future development</li> <li>♦ a proposed strategy for the development of the business, which is clearly related to the and evaluation of the business situation</li> </ul> <p>Outcome 1, Assessment guidelines: a business plan should be produced for a new enterprise or expansion of an existing enterprise. Where the investigation centres on a large organisation it is likely to be less wide-ranging.</p>		

# Appendix 5: Examples of signposting in the Support Notes of a subject Units

## Example 1: From Psychology Unit

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may contribute towards the component ‘Written Communication’ of the Core Skill Communication at SCQF level 6 because of the requirement for assessment in the form of an essay. The general skill for this component is ‘Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics.’

In both formative and summative assessment you should encourage the candidate to:

- ◆ present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order
- ◆ use a structure that takes account of purpose and audience, and links major and minor points in ways that assist the clarity and impact of the writing
- ◆ use conventions that are effective in achieving the purpose and adapted as necessary for the target audience
- ◆ use spelling, punctuation, and sentence structures that are consistently accurate

These skills can be developed through formative activities, such as short essays on each theory or debate/issue, without being formally assessed for certification of Core Skill.

You should encourage candidates to use an appropriate referencing method for the O3 report (and for any formative essays).

The Core Skill of Working with Others at SCQF level 6 could also be developed in this Unit in the work for Outcome 3. Working with Others involves the ability to work with others to plan, agree, and take responsibility for tasks; to support co-operative working in appropriate ways; and to review the effectiveness of one’s own contribution. This would fit with a group task to carry out research suitable for Outcome 3. The general skill at SCQF level 6 is ‘Work with others in a group to analyse, plan, and complete a complex activity’. A group could carry out the task for O3, as it is a complex activity, although the report should then be written up individually for summative assessment of Outcome 3 of this Unit. You can encourage candidates to analyse the task and negotiate goals, roles, and responsibilities, anticipating and responding to needs of others, supporting co-operative working, and evaluating and drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of one’s own contribution. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.



The Component ‘Using Number’ of the Core Skill of Numeracy at SCQF level 5 could be developed in the teaching and learning contributing to Outcome 3. The specific skills required for the component at SCQF level 5 include: working confidently with a numerical concept; deciding on the numerical operations to be carried out; and carrying out complex calculations or a number of sustained calculations. This is likely to fit in to the treatment and presentation of findings required in the production of the research report, in particular in the use of descriptive statistics. It is also likely that the component ‘Using Graphical Information’ from Numeracy at SCQF level 5 could also be developed in this context. The specific skills of: interpreting information from tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams; selecting an appropriate form of tables, graphs, charts, or diagrams; and communicating information in that form would also be found in the research report. This Core Skill could be developed here without formal certification.

## **Example 2: From Make-up Artistry Unit**

The delivery and assessment of this Unit could also contribute towards the component ‘Critical Thinking’ of the Core Skill Problem solving at Higher because of the requirement to develop an approach to leading a team in the teaching and assessment requirements of Outcome 4. The general skill for this component is to ‘identify and assess the relevance of the factors involved in a situation/issue and to develop and justify an approach to deal with this situation/issue’.

When selecting and justifying a leadership approach to enable the team to function effectively this justification should take account of the factors involved in setting up and leading a team and the available evidence, and may include a comparison with other possible approaches.

The delivery and assessment of this Unit may also contribute towards the component ‘Planning and Organising’ of the Core Skill Problem Solving at Higher because of the requirement to plan, design and apply advanced make-up techniques for a chosen production. The general skill for this component is ‘Plan and Organise a complex task’.

In both formative and summative assessment the candidate should be encouraged to work to a design brief taking account of all possible variables such as the experience/skill levels of individual team members and the need to consider contingencies. Candidates will be required to source relevant physical resources including products, tools and equipment. Within a work based context, candidates must also decide how the task will be managed and carry it out to industry standards — this could include the allocation and delegation of tasks in a group context.

The Unit may also provide opportunities to develop the component ‘Reviewing and Evaluating’ of the Core Skill at Higher in particular

because of the requirement to evaluate the work of the Design Team in Outcome 4. The general skill for this component is ‘Review and evaluate a complex problem solving activity’.

Candidates should be encouraged to critically analyse in detail all stages of the work of the Design Team, define strengths and possible areas for improvement. In addition any potential development actions should be noted.

The Core Skill of Working with Others at Higher could also be developed within this Unit. Working with Others involves the ability to work with others to plan, agree and take responsibility for tasks, to support co-operative working in appropriate ways, and to review the effectiveness of one’s own contribution. This would fit with the requirement of the Unit in which the candidate has to set up and lead a team to research, plan, design and apply advance make-up techniques for a chosen production. This will develop the candidate’s ability to work co-operatively with a range of colleagues and clients in a professional context. The general skill at Higher level is ‘Work with others in a group to analyse, plan and complete a complex activity’.

Candidates can be encouraged to analyse the task and negotiate goals, roles and responsibilities, anticipating and responding to needs of others, supporting co-operative working and evaluating and drawing conclusions on the effectiveness of one’s own contribution.

The component ‘Using Number’ of the Core Skill of Numeracy at Intermediate 2 could be developed within the teaching and learning contributing to Outcome 4. The specific skills required for the component at Intermediate 2 include: working confidently with a numerical concept; deciding on the numerical operations to be carried out and carrying out complex calculations or a number of sustained calculations. This is likely to fit into the study of costing where candidates are required to identify and calculate the direct costs and overhead costs associated with a particular production and present this information as a statement clearly showing the associated mark-up or profit margin.

The Unit will also provide the candidate with the opportunity to develop the Core Skill component ‘Oral Communication’ of the Communication Core Skill at Higher level. In both the formative and summative assessment of this Unit candidates must demonstrate a sophisticated level of Oral skills with particular emphasis on listening and responding to others in the most appropriate way. Candidates should be encouraged to attend to and meet the needs of clients using sophisticated verbal and non-verbal communication techniques. They should develop the ability to explain, advise, negotiate and reassure clients. In addition, the demonstration of techniques to be used with clients will involve advanced presentation skills.

# Appendix 6: Example of Core Skills mapping for HNC and HND Social Sciences

It is expected that all Core Skills will be enhanced as candidates progress through the Group Awards.

Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 and Communication at SCQF level 5 are embedded in the Graded Units. Numeracy at SCQF level 5 has been embedded in the mandatory Unit ‘Research and Methodology’. All of these Core Skills will be automatically awarded to all candidates achieving the HNC/D Social Sciences.

Given the demands of the assessments across the Group Awards, candidates will have the opportunity to develop the Core Skills of Communication at SCQF level 6 but will produce evidence of attainment at SCQF level 5. Candidates may wish to use any further evidence produce as evidence towards named Core Skill Units in Communication at SCQF level 6.

The following models illustrate opportunities for candidates to develop the Core Skills of Information Technology and Working with Others.

## Model 1: Core Skills integrated through the delivery of Units

This model would be used for delivering the Core Skills, or Core Skills components, not embedded in Units or assessment but where teaching and learning activities can provide opportunities to integrate Core Skill assessments. However, if using this model, centres would need to ensure that Core Skills assessments were matched to the Core Skills assessment specifications. The list below is not exhaustive and is just an indicator of the way Core Skills assessment might be incorporated. These suggestions may cover only particular components of Core Skills.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Suggestions for integrating Elements of Core Skills</b>
<i>Psychology</i>	<i>SPSS packages — IT Classroom projects — Working with Others and IT</i>
<i>Sociology</i>	<i>Classroom projects — IT and Working with Others Research — IT (internet)</i>
<i>Politics</i>	<i>Projects — Working with Others Research — IT (internet)</i>

<i>Geography</i>	<i>Projects — Working with Others</i>
<i>History</i>	<i>Projects — Working with Others</i>
<i>Philosophy</i>	<i>Debates — Working with Others</i>
<i>Economics</i>	<i>Research — IT (internet)</i>
<i>Research</i>	<i>Projects — Working with Others</i>

### **Model 2: Delivered discretely within the Group Award**

The Core Skills could be achieved within the Group Award by choosing particular Units from the broadening optional Units.

<i>Information Technology: SCQF level 5</i>	<i>HN Unit D85F 34 — Using Software Application Packages</i>
<i>Working With Others: SCQF level 5</i>	<i>HN Working with Others/Group work/Interpersonal skills Unit</i>

**Appendix 7: Example of a grid from  
a Validation Document/  
Arrangements Document showing  
signposted and embedded Core  
Skills in a Group Award**



## Communication (SCQF level 6)

### Skill component Written Communication (Reading) Read and Understand complex written communication

- a — Identify and summarise significant information, ideas and supporting detail.
- b — Evaluate effectiveness in meeting purpose and needs of readership.

Core Units	Knowledge and Skills/Evidence	Developed/ Assessed	a	b
Managing People and Organisations	<i>Outcomes 1–3: Underpinning knowledge accessing complex information on current events and issues: theory of business management analysed and applied to case study of strategic management in a specific organisation</i>	Developed	√	
Introduction to Marketing	<i>Outcomes 1 and 2: Analysis and evaluation of complex marketing materials Analysis and summary of theory and strategies</i>	Developed	√	√
Introduction to Economic Issues	<i>Outcome 3: analysis of complex information on national policies and their application</i>	Developed	√	
Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Information	<i>Outcome 1: Analyse complex business information — Analysis, summary and detailed evaluation of a complex business report</i>	Developed/Assessed	√	√

**Written Communication (Writing)  
Produce well-structured Written Communication on complex topics**

- a — Present essential ideas/information in a logical and effective order
- b — Use a structure which takes account of purpose/links points for clarity and impact
- c — Use conventions which are effective adapted for audience
- d — Use accurate spelling, punctuation, sentence structures
- e — Vary sentence structure, paragraphing, vocabulary to suit purpose and target audience.

	<b>Knowledge/Skills/Evidence</b>	<b>Developed/ assessed</b>	a	b	c	d	e
Managing People and Organizations	<i>Extended written response to structured questions (1500 words) Strategy report</i>	Developed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Introduction to Marketing	<i>Extended written response to case study</i>	Developed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Business Accounting	<i>Outcomes 3/4/5: Evaluation Report on business financial performance</i>	Developed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Information	<i>Outcome 2: Portfolio (minimum 1500 words) of structured complex written business communication</i>	Developed/assessed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



**Oral Communication**  
**Produce and respond to oral Communication on a complex topic**

- a — Use vocabulary and a range of spoken language structures consistently and effectively with appropriate formality
- b — Convey all essential ideas/information/opinions accurately and coherently with appropriate varied emphasis
- c — Structure to take full account of purpose and audience
- d — Take account of situation and audience during delivery
- e — Respond to others taking account of their contribution

	<b>Knowledge/Skills/Evidence</b>	<b>Developed/ Assessed</b>	a	b	c	d	e
Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Information	<i>Outcome 3 Plan, organise, and take part in a formal business meeting</i>	Developed/Assessed	√	√		√	√
All units	<i>Teaching and Learning for all units will involve group discussion analysing and evaluating relevant and related information. Personal interviews and guidance from assessors will encourage verbal exploration of complex issues.</i>	Developed	√	√	√	√	√

## Using Information Technology (SCQF level 6)

### Use an IT system independently to process a range of information

- a — Use a range of it equipment paying attention to security and other users
- b — Resolve a simple hardware or software problem
- c — Use software in an unfamiliar context requiring analysis, design, integration of data, decision on format
- d — Carry out searches to extract and present information from electronic sources

	Developed/ Assessed	a	b	c	d
Using Software Application Packages	Assessed at Intermediate 2-Developed at Higher	√	√	√	√
Business Accounting	Developed	√			
Managing People within Organizations	Developed	√		√	√
Information Technology: Applications Software 1	Developed/Assessed	√	√	√	√

## Numeracy (SCQF level 5)

### Skill component Using Number

#### Apply a wide range of numerical skills

- a — Work confidently with a numerical concept
- b — Decide on numerical operations
- c — Carry out complex or sustained calculations

	Knowledge/Skills/Evidence	Developed/ Assessed	a	b	c
Introduction to Economic Issues	<i>Theoretical and underpinning knowledge: explanation and evaluation of concepts, features and effects of national income, national policies, resource allocation and consumption</i>	Developed	√		
Business Accounting	<i>Outcomes 1–5: Assessing performance and financial position of a business, preparing basic management account information, calculating key accounting ratios, projecting for fixed and variable costs</i>	Developed	√	√	√
Information Technology: Applications Software 1	<i>Analysing and recording financial data in a range of business formats</i>	Developed	√	√	√

## Numeracy (SCQF level 5)

### Skill component Using graphical information Interpret and communicate graphical information in everyday and generalised contexts

- a — Interpret information from tables, charts, or diagrams
- b — Select an appropriate format and communicate information

	Knowledge/Skills/Evidence	Developed/ assessed	a	b
Business Accounting	<i>Outcomes 1–5: Assessing performance and financial position of a business, analysing basic management account information, preparing and presenting spreadsheets, budgets</i>	Developed	√	√
Information Technology: Applications Software 1	<i>Analysing and recording data in a range of formats — integrated with assessment of business and financial data</i>	Developed	√	√
Introduction to Economic Issues	<i>Outcome 2: Analysis of a range of statistical data relating to the theory and policies of national income</i>	Developed	√	

## Problem Solving Skill components

### Critical Thinking

- ◆ Analyse a complex situation or issue

### Planning and Organising

- ◆ Plan organise and complete a complex task

### Reviewing and Evaluating

- ◆ Review and evaluate a complex problem solving activity

	Knowledge/Skills/Evidence	Developed/assessed	CT	PO	RE
Managing People and Organizations	<i>Strategy report. Underpinning knowledge — major behavioural theories on approaches to problem solving in organisations</i>	Developed	√		
Introduction to Marketing	<i>Written response analysing case study involving a complex situation</i>	Developed	√		
Business Accounting	<i>Analysis of performance and financial position of a business, preparation of accounting information</i>	Developed	√	√	√
Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Information	<i>Outcome 3: Plan and take part in a formal business meeting. Formative work will involve the review and evaluation of performance</i>	Developed	√	√	√
All Units	<i>The process of taking responsibility for personal study and production of assignments across the course will involve all skill components to a high level. Tutor supported guidance will encourage and support on-going evaluation of activities.</i>	Developed	√	√	√

## Working with Others (SCQF level 6)

### Work with Others in a group to analyse, plan and complete a complex activity

- a — analyse the activity, defining goal identifying component tasks and roles, taking account of size and expertise of group
- b — agree allocation of activities taking account of own/group strengths and weaknesses
- c — negotiate working methods and rules for managing group work
- d — support co-operative working
- e — evaluate and draw conclusions about own contribution, justifying with evidence

	Developed/ assessed	a	b	c	d	e
Managing People and Organizations	Developed	√				
Communication: Analysing and Presenting Complex Information	Developed	√	√	√	√	√
All Units	Developed	√	√	√	√	√

## Numeracy (SCQF level 6)

### Skill component Using Number

#### Apply in combination a wide range of numerical/statistical and other mathematical skills to process complex information

- ◆ Work confidently with a numerical/statistical concept
- ◆ Decide on numerical operations
- ◆ Carry out a number of sustained, complex calculations

	Knowledge/Skills/Evidence	Developed/ assessed	a	b	c
Statistics for Business	<i>Outcomes 1–3: Solution of problems involving statistical concepts. Survey methodology. Calculation of appropriate measures of central location and dispersion. Sustained complex calculations including use of linear regression, correlation, and time series analysis to analyse problems. Effective use of software in presentation of quantitative, qualitative and/or ordinal data</i>	Developed	√	√	√

### Skill component Using graphical information

#### Apply a wide range of graphical skills to interpret and present complex information

- a — Analyse and interpret complex graphical information
- b — Select an appropriate form and communicate information

	Knowledge/Skills/Evidence	Developed/ Assessed	a	b
Statistics for Business	<i>Outcomes 1–3: Analysis, interpretation and presentation of complex statistical data from a range of accessed sources. Identification of significant features in complex graphical information and interpretation in relation to underlying variables. Communication using appropriate software of complex statistical information in formats to include graphs, stem and leaf charts, box plot/histograms.</i>	Developed	√	√

# Feedback Form

**Validation of Higher National Certificates  
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Guidance on Core Skills



Your name:

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How useful do you find this guide?

Can you highlight any particular benefits to you in having access to this guide?



Is there any way(s) in which you would like to see this guide improved?

General points you would like to make:

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