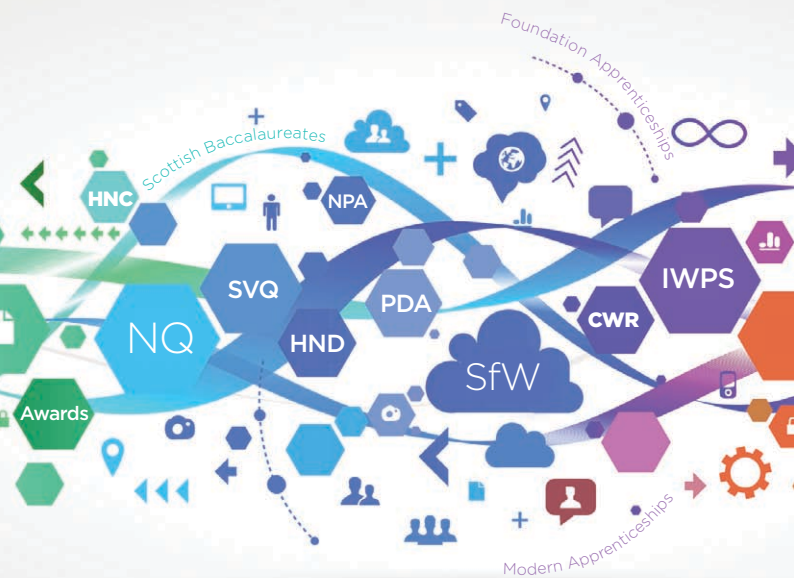


# Guide to Scottish Qualifications



## Scottish Qualifications explained



**“SQA is proud to be at the heart of the education and skills system in Scotland and is committed to helping young people realise their potential and to achieve their ambitions.”**

Dr Janet Brown,  
Chief Executive of SQA

SQA qualifications are designed and structured to support people on their individual learning journeys, and give Scottish businesses a competitive advantage by enhancing the quality of the workforce.

At first sight, the Scottish qualifications system might seem complex, but it is really very straightforward. Qualifications sit at various levels allowing the learner to make strides from one qualification to the next, or to change paths at an equivalent level, which gives everyone the opportunity to achieve their full and true potential.

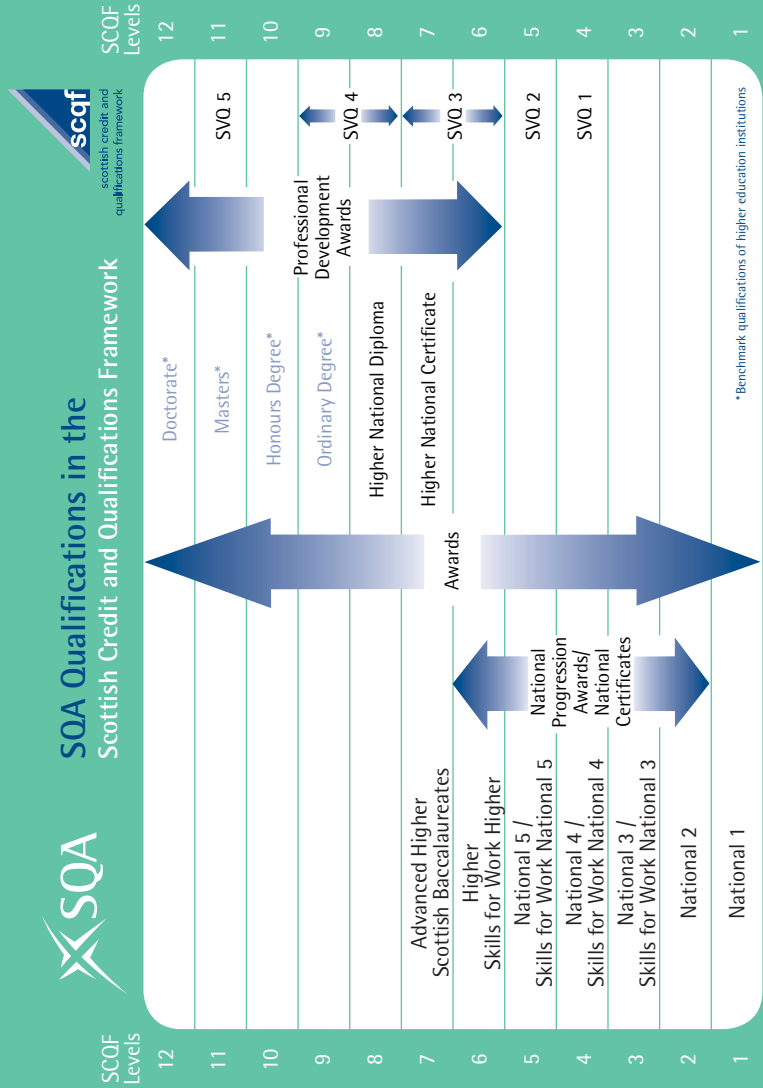
SQA has a wide range of robust, relevant and respected qualifications which are designed in partnership with industry experts to ensure learners gain the skills and experience needed in the workplace.

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

# SCQF

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) helps to make the relationships between qualifications clearer. It covers achievements such as those from school, college, university, and many work-based qualifications. Qualifications in the SCQF are compared using two measures: level and credit. The level of a qualification shows how difficult the learning is, and the amount of credit shows the size of the qualification.

This ready reckoner shows SQA Qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.



# National Qualifications (NQ)

National Qualifications (NQ) are one of the most important types of qualification in Scotland. Almost everyone leaving school or college today has one or more NQ.

National Qualifications are taken by students in secondary schools and colleges (and some training providers). They can also be taken by adult learners.

They cover subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills, from Chemistry to Construction, History to Hospitality, and Computing to Care.

Range of National Qualifications available:

- **National 1 to National 5**
- **National Units**
- **National Courses**
- **Highers**
- **Advanced Highers**
- **Skills for Work Awards**
- **Scottish Baccalaureates**

## National 1 Units

National 1 Units are assessed as pass or fail by a teacher or lecturer.

They could lead to:

- National 2 Courses
- Other National 1 Units
- Awards at SCQF level 1 or 2

## National 2 Courses

National 2 Courses are made up of Units which are assessed as pass or fail by a teacher or lecturer.

Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to:

- National 3 Courses
- Other National 2 Units or Courses
- Awards at SCQF level 2 or 3

## National 3 Courses

National 3 Courses are made up of Units which are assessed as pass or fail by a teacher or lecturer.

Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to:

- Related Courses at National 4
- Other National 3 Units or Courses
- Awards at SCQF level 3 or 4,
- National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs)
- Employment opportunities

## National Qualifications (NQ)

### National 4 Courses

National 4 Courses are made up of Units, including an Added Value Unit which assesses learners' performance across the Course. These Units are assessed as pass or fail by a teacher or lecturer and learners need to pass all Units, including the Added Value Unit, to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to:

- Related Courses at National 5
- Other National 4 Units or Courses
- Awards at SCQF level 4 or 5
- National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs)
- Modern Apprenticeships or other employment opportunities

### National 5 Courses

National 5 Courses are made up of Units and a Course assessment. The Course assessment involves a question paper (exam) or coursework, or both — most of which will be marked externally. In some subjects, your coursework will be marked by a teacher or lecturer.

These courses are graded A to D or 'no award' and learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to:

- Related Higher Courses
- Other National 5 Units or Courses
- Awards at SCQF level 5 or 6
- National Certificates (NCs) or National Progression Awards (NPAs)
- Modern Apprenticeships or other employment opportunities

### Higher Courses

Higher Courses are made up of Units and a Course assessment. The Course assessment involves a question paper (exam) or coursework, or both — most of which we will mark externally. In some subjects, coursework will be marked by a teacher or lecturer.

They are graded A to D or 'no award'. Learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to:

- Related Advanced Higher Courses
- Other Higher Courses
- Scottish Baccalaureates
- National Certificates (NCs) or National Progression Awards (NPAs)
- Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) Courses

- An undergraduate degree
- Technical Apprenticeships or other employment opportunities

### Advanced Higher Courses

Advanced Higher Courses are made up of Units and a Course assessment. The Course assessment involves a question paper (exam) or coursework, or both — most of which we will mark externally. In some subjects, coursework will be marked by a teacher or lecturer.

They are graded A to D or 'no award' and learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to:

- Higher National Diploma (HND) Courses
- An undergraduate degree or employment opportunities

## National Qualifications (NQ)

### Skills for Work Courses

Skills for Work courses are designed to introduce learners to the demands and expectations of the world of work.

They are available in a variety of areas such as construction, hairdressing and hospitality.

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

### Scottish Baccalaureates

Scottish Baccalaureates are qualifications at SCQF level 7, and are available to learners in S5 and S6. There are Scottish Baccalaureates in Expressive Arts, Languages, Science, and Social Sciences. They are awarded as a pass or distinction.

The Scottish Baccalaureate contains an Interdisciplinary Project which allows learners to develop and show evidence of initiative, responsibility, and independent working — skills of real value in the world of higher education.

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

## Qualifications For Work

### Introduction to Work Place Skills

The Introduction to Work Place Skills (IWPS) is a qualification designed specifically for young people aged 16-19 that have a positive “can do” attitude and are preparing for the world of work, but need some support to develop their core skills and employability skills. Young people will get an employer assessed work experience placement of a minimum of 150 hours.

The IWPS will allow learners to develop their underpinning core skills, and to start to develop competence in a working situation. As some young people may not be quite ready for a real work environment, simulated workshops, sheltered and supported work environments, as well as real work environments can all be utilised for the work placement element of the IWPS.

The IWPS encompasses existing SQA nationally recognised employability and core skills units which support the Skills Development Scotland customised unit. These units form a quality framework around the delivery of good quality work experience at SCQF level 3.

Successful completion of this qualification gives the young person evidence of their core skills and experience, from which they can progress on to the Certificate of Work Readiness, further training, education or employment.

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

## Qualifications For Work

### Certificate of Work Readiness (CWR)

The Certificate of Work Readiness is an award designed specifically for young people who are ready for their first experience of the world of work, but need some guided support. The certificate includes a unique employer assessed “real life” work experience placement, providing a meaningful qualification and a credible standard employers can recognise and trust.

Successful completion of this award offers the young person greatly improved job prospects and transferable skills in self evaluation, planning and goal setting that can be applied to any workplace.

This qualification is available through colleges and training providers working in partnership with employers.

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

### Foundation Apprenticeships

Foundation Apprenticeships are new, work-based learning qualifications for secondary school pupils and enable pupils in S4 to S6 to complete elements of a Modern Apprenticeship while still at school. Depending on the subject they choose, pupils will study towards a foundation apprenticeship alongside their other subjects, but they'll also spend part of the school week at college or with a local employer. As well as working towards industry-recognised qualifications they will develop skills, experience and capability in a live business environment.

Find out more at [www.apprenticeships.scot/foundation-apprenticeships](http://www.apprenticeships.scot/foundation-apprenticeships)

### Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships offer anyone aged over 16 paid employment combined with the opportunity to train for jobs at craft, technician and management level. They are designed to help create a high-calibre workforce. They are supported by the Confederation of Business and Industry, the Trade Union Congress and a wide range of employers. All the Modern Apprenticeship frameworks are developed by the industry or sector in which they will be implemented.

An overview on Modern Apprenticeships is available on the SQA website ([www.sqa.org.uk/modernapprenticeships](http://www.sqa.org.uk/modernapprenticeships)) and specific information on individual Modern Apprenticeships can be found at [www.apprenticeships.scot](http://www.apprenticeships.scot)

## Awards

SQA Awards are characterised by their flexible nature and are nationally recognised. These Awards are suitable for a wide range of people at different stages.

They provide learners with opportunities to acquire skills, recognise achievement and promote confidence through independent thinking and positive attitudes, while motivating learners to be successful and participate positively in the wider community

The level of Award attained depends on the quality of response and the amount of support received by the learner.

Find out more about SQA's Awards at [www.sqa.org.uk/awards](http://www.sqa.org.uk/awards)

## Wider Achievement Awards

SQA Awards are designed to recognise wider achievement and the development of skills which will help learners to succeed in today's world. Wider Achievement Awards recognise the life and work skills that come from a wide range of activities which can include sport, mentoring, voluntary work or fundraising activities — whether they take place at school, college or elsewhere.

We have a number of Wider Achievement Awards and qualifications from SCQF levels 1 to 6 — all suitable for a broad range of learners.

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



The table below shows how an Award is differentiated across SCQF levels 2 – 6:

SCQF level descriptor	2	3	4	5	6
The learner will work with...	frequent and directive support, ie the teacher/ lecturer will issue explicit instructions/ provide assistance	directive support, ie the teacher/ lecturer will issue explicit instructions	support, ie the teacher/lecturer will offer advice	minimum support, ie the teacher/lecturer will respond to specific questions from the learner	non-directive supervision, ie learners will take responsibility for their own learning but the teacher/lecturer may explain and interpret if requested
The learner will...	respond and participate, ie agree to ideas, suggestions and plans	participate, ie agree to ideas, suggestions and plans	contribute, ie offer some ideas and/or suggestions	negotiate, ie put forward suggestions and ideas and agree a way forward	take some supervisory responsibility, ie take the lead in some aspects of the work
Tasks and activities will be...	very simple, ie routine and familiar and supported/ supervised	basic, ie routine and familiar	straightforward, ie consisting of routine elements	detailed, ie consisting of some routine and non-routine elements	complex, ie consisting of some non-routine elements

## Wider Achievement Awards

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### Employability Awards

(SCQF Levels 3 and 4)

SQA's Employability Awards are firmly focused on preparing learners to enter the world of work. These Awards enable candidates to develop the solid job-seeking skills and attitudes needed to get and keep a job. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their achievements and identify the appropriate behaviours and attitudes that are attractive to employers.

### NPA Enterprise and Employability Awards

(SCQF Levels 4 and 5)

The National Progression Awards (NPAs) in Enterprise and Employability equip learners with valuable skills that are both relevant and transferable. That means learning can be confidently taken forward into any employment setting, including self-employment.

### Leadership Awards

(SCQF Levels 5 and 6)

Building confidence and self-esteem, Leadership Awards develop the skills, styles and qualities essential for successfully leading activities. Endorsed by the Chartered Management Institute, the Awards also stress the importance to the leadership role of respecting differing cultures and beliefs.

### Modern Languages for Life and Work Awards

(SCQF Levels 3 and 4)

These Awards develop both language and employability skills, and allow learners to follow their own interests in a cultural context. Focused on practical life and work applications, the Awards deliver skills in either one or two modern languages. Beyond language learning, candidates are encouraged to compare life in different countries, enabling a greater understanding of their own and others' cultures.

### Personal Achievement Awards

(SCQF Levels 1 and 2)

SQA's Personal Achievement Awards recognise small but significant successes in a variety of areas. These Awards are ideal for learners with special educational needs, and for organisations working with learners who build up achievements in small steps. The themes of Developing Independence and Taking Part in the Community help develop confidence, independence and communication skills.

### Personal Development Awards

(SCQF Levels 2 – 6)

Personal Development Awards focus on developing personal skills and abilities as well as increasing knowledge of self through experiential learning. The Awards can help build self-confidence and resilience,

with learners encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Through involvement in personal, group and vocational projects, learners can develop valuable interpersonal and task management skills, practical abilities and self-awareness.

### Religion, Belief and Values Awards

(SCQF Levels 3 – 6)

Complementing National Courses, these Awards can be delivered during statutory/core religious education in secondary schools. Learners investigate religion and beliefs, put their own beliefs and values into action, and reflect on their learning.

## Wider Achievement Awards

### Scottish Studies Awards

(SCQF Levels 4 and 5)

Scottish Studies Awards enable learners to develop their knowledge and understanding of Scotland — its people, society, culture, natural environment and heritage — and to make connections across the curriculum.

### Steps to Work Awards

(SCQF Levels 3 and 4)

The Steps to Work Awards help learners from school, further education or training make the leap into employment. Developing self-esteem, self-awareness and self-confidence, the Awards encourage learners to focus on areas that interest them. Then, through practical activities, candidates develop the skills to recognise their strengths and the contribution they'll make to society.

### Volunteering Skills Awards

(SCQF Levels 3 – 5)

Through participation in volunteering activities, learners develop skills and personal development experience — ideal preparation for further education and employment. Encouraging responsibility, the Awards focus on the context of volunteering and see learners planning a volunteering placement, reviewing and reflecting on their skills and volunteering experience, and completing an investigative project.

### Wellbeing Awards

(SCQF Levels 3 – 5)

The aim of the Wellbeing Awards is to help learners explore factors that influence well-being and encourage them to undertake activities to improve it. These Awards take a holistic view of well-being and provide learners with an opportunity to look at different ideas of health and well-being at a personal, community, societal or global level.

## More Awards available from SQA

### Customer Service Award: Principles and Practices

(SCQF Level 5)

This Award enables learners to specialise in different sectors as they develop the knowledge and skills to deliver professional customer service. The Award covers effective communication and listening skills, creating a good impression with customers, dealing with customers' needs effectively — including customer dissatisfaction — and understanding why customer service is so important to an organisation.

### Cycling Awards

(SCQF Levels 1 and 2)

These Awards equip learners with the skills needed to check, maintain and ride their bicycles safely. All of the main safety requirements are covered, including safety checks, basic maintenance and repair skills, rules, practices and codes of conduct for safe cycling.

### Internet Safety

(Unit at SCQF Level 4)

Keeping pace with advances, this Unit has been updated to include a stronger focus on personal safety including cyberbullying, online behaviour, social networking and use of mobile devices. Learners are made aware of the risks and responsibilities of online working, and develop the skills and knowledge essential to safeguard themselves and others. Topics include dealing with unwanted communications, guarding against identity theft, and protecting systems against viruses.

## More Awards available from SQA

### Personal Finance Award

(SCQF Level 4)

This Award equips candidates with the skills to understand and manage money throughout everyday financial encounters. The qualification is jointly awarded by SQA and the ifs University College – an awarding body specialising in financial education for a wide range of learners.

### Safe Road User Award

(SCQF Level 4)

The Safe Road User Award builds positive attitudes to road use and enables young people to share responsibility for road safety. The Award has been developed in collaboration with the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) and stems directly from recent government initiatives focused on changing and improving driving attitudes across the UK.

### Statistics Award

(SCQF Level 6)

This Award is the study of statistics in real-life contexts. It will enable learners to have confidence in the subject and encourage a positive attitude towards the use of statistics in everyday life.

It focuses on the areas of applying statistical literacy skills to data – sampling, collection, handling, and presentation and aims to equip learners with the statistical skills and knowledge they will need in their everyday lives – both personally and in the world of work.

## SVQs

Scottish Vocational Qualifications are based on national standards which are drawn up by people from industry, commerce and education. There are SVQs for nearly all occupations in Scotland, from forestry to IT, management to catering, journalism to construction.

Discover how you can gain paid employment combined with the opportunity to train for jobs at craft, technician and management level.

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

## Professional Development Awards

Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are aimed at developing the skills of those already in professional employment.

They are principally designed for those already in a career or vocation who wish to extend or broaden their skills base. They may also be embedded within another qualification such as HNC/HND.

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

## National Certificates and National Progression Awards

National Certificates (NCs) and National Progression Awards (NPAs) provide those preparing for work with opportunities to develop skills much sought after by employers.

### National Certificates (NCs)

NCs are designed to prepare people for employment, career development or progression to more advanced study at HNC/HND level. They also aim to develop a range of transferable knowledge including Core Skills.

These certificates are aimed at 16-18 year olds or adults in education and are at SCQF Levels 2 to 6. Each one has specific aims relating to a subject or occupational area.

Find out more: [www.sqa.org.uk/nc](http://www.sqa.org.uk/nc)

### National Progression Awards (NPAs)

NPAs are aimed at assessing a defined set of skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas – linking to National Occupational Standards, which are the basis of SVQs.

Available at SCQF Levels 2 to 6, NPAs are successfully delivered in partnership between schools, colleges, employers and training providers in a variety of sectors.

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

## Higher National qualifications

HNs are offered by colleges, universities and many other training centres. Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are specially designed to meet the needs of employers.

HN qualifications can also give candidates access to the 2nd or 3rd year entry at University and membership to professional bodies.

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

## Working With SQA

Speak to your local SQA Regional Manager.



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