

# Introducing Advanced Highers

**NQ**  
NATIONAL  
QUALIFICATIONS



**SQA**

## Introducing Advanced Highers

Advanced Highers are, as the name suggests, advanced qualifications. They are usually taken in the sixth year at school or at college. People who take Advanced Highers have normally passed Highers.

They are available in a wide range of subjects — you can find a list, as well as information sheets for each subject, on our website at:

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

Advanced Highers are **National Courses**. They are usually made up of three National Units and an external assessment.

For the **National Units**, you have to do challenging work on your own, as well as studying what is taught in the classroom or tutorial. You achieve a National Unit by passing an assessment — coursework, tests or practical work — which is marked by the teacher or lecturer. The marking is then checked by SQA.

The **external assessment** is usually an examination or project. Its purpose is to assess the extent to which you have understood everything you've learned, and to show that you can apply this learning to new and varied situations or different contexts. The external assessment is marked by professionals who are appointed by SQA.

## Why study for Advanced Highers?

- Advanced Highers are popular with universities and colleges throughout the UK as well-respected qualifications that encourage independent learning at a high standard.
- Our research shows that candidates who achieve Advanced Highers are mature, confident and able to work on their own. Studying for an Advanced Higher can be a useful bridge between the class-based learning, typical of Highers, and the more self-motivated and proactive type of study at college or university. It can also be a useful preparation for some types of employment.
- Above all, studying for an Advanced Higher brings you the personal rewards of intellectual challenge, and the opportunity to deepen your knowledge and develop higher-level skills, such as research and analysis, extended essay-writing, and investigation techniques.

# The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

The SCQF is a way of describing and comparing qualifications in terms of how hard they are and how much effort is involved in achieving them. It does this by describing qualifications in terms of **level** and **credit points**:

→ **level**: how hard it is to achieve

→ **credit points**: the amount of learning needed to achieve

There are 12 levels. Qualifications at level 1 are the simplest to achieve; qualifications at level 12 are the most complex and demanding. Credit value is worked out according to the amount

of 'notional learner effort' a qualification will take to achieve. A qualification is given 1 credit point for every 10 hours of effort the average learner will need to put in to achieve the qualification.

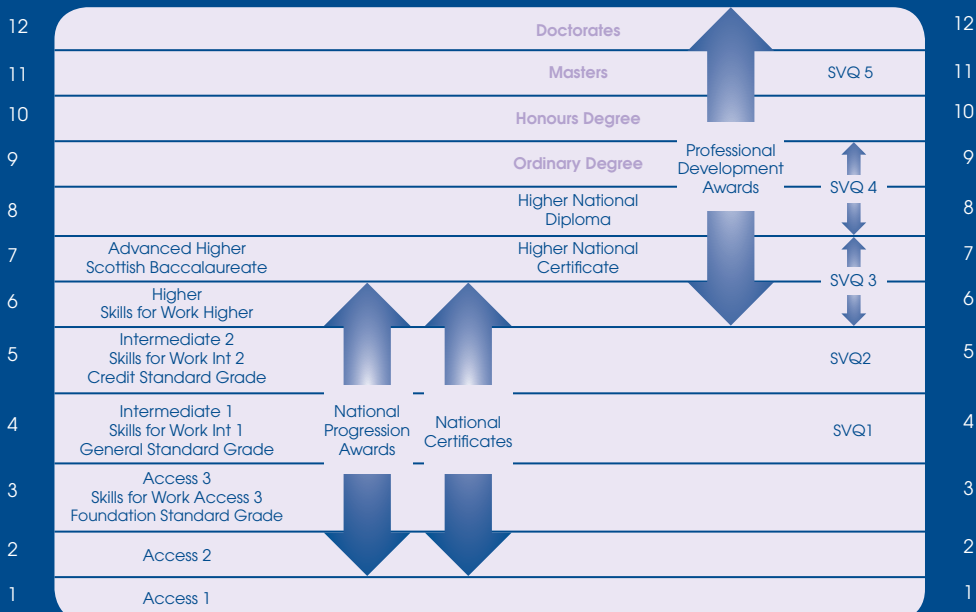
Advanced Highers are at SCQF level 7. Each Advanced Higher is worth 32 credit points.

All the qualifications awarded by SQA are covered by the framework, as are all university degrees. This table shows how some of the more popular or common qualifications fit into the framework — and compare to each other.

## SQA Qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Levels

SCQF Levels



One of the aims of the SCQF is to make credit transfer between different learning programmes easier. This is already happening when people move from college to university. Now it is becoming even more common for you to be

able to count the credits you've already achieved towards the new qualification you're working towards. (Of course, it will depend on the subject matter being suitable.)



## Advanced Higher opportunities

**Whether you are at school, college or university, or looking for work, Advanced Highers can lead to a wide range of opportunities:**

- **School:** learners who have passed Highers may want to choose to do a sixth year at school — perhaps to prepare themselves for higher education or employment, perhaps simply to broaden their skills and knowledge. If you combine two Advanced Highers in Languages or Science subjects with an Interdisciplinary Project, you may also be eligible for a Scottish Baccalaureate. (Not all Advanced Higher subjects are available at all schools, but your school will be able to advise you on which ones it offers, and which ones are available in partnership with other schools or colleges. This is also the case for the Interdisciplinary Project.)
- **College:** Advanced Highers can also be studied at college, either as qualifications in their own right or as stepping stones to further study at college through Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. Advanced Highers are at the same level as Higher National Certificates (see 'the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework' in this leaflet), and may enable credit transfer for part of that qualification.
- **University:** many universities welcome Advanced Highers as an entry qualification. Furthermore,

some Scottish universities offer learners who have achieved Advanced Highers direct entry to the second year of degree programmes. This is known as 'Advanced Standing'. Others offer exemption from first year modules.

- **Workplace:** many employers value the skills required to achieve Advanced Highers — particularly the self-motivation. Some Advanced Highers (eg Information Systems, Home Economics, Construction, and Accounting and Finance) are more directly relevant to specific careers.

### Some key facts

- The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) Tariff has increased its scores for Advanced Highers at A, B and C from 2010. Advanced Highers now attract more UCAS Tariff Points than A-levels at the same grades.
- The Interdisciplinary Project, part of the Scottish Baccalaureate, has been Tariff-rated and receives exactly half the points of an Advanced Higher at the same grade (valid from entry 2011).
- Many colleges and universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, have changed their rules for admission to reflect the value they place on Advanced Highers.

Our website ([www.sqa.org.uk/highereducation](http://www.sqa.org.uk/highereducation)) features Case Studies of real-life learners' experiences of studying Advanced Highers.

## Finding out more ...

If you'd like **more information** about Advanced Highers, here are a few places to look and people to speak to:

- SQA's website: **[www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)**
- the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) website: **[www.scaqf.org.uk](http://www.scaqf.org.uk)**
- SQA's Customer Contact Centre (see below)
- teachers, lecturers, careers/guidance officers
- university/college admissions officers

Produced in association with the School Leaders Scotland: **[www.sls-scotland.org.uk](http://www.sls-scotland.org.uk)** and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools: **[www.scis.org.uk](http://www.scis.org.uk)**



Customer Contact Centre  
T: 0845 279 1000 E: [customer@sqa.org.uk](mailto:customer@sqa.org.uk) W: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)  
BD5019 September 2009