



Arrangements for:

**Professional Development Award
(PDA) in Learning Centre Operations
at SCQF level 7**

Group Award Code: G96E 47

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Acknowledgement

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of Higher National qualifications.

History of changes

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

Version number	Description	Date
03	Changes to Code: <i>Marketing: An Introduction</i> from DE3C 34 (<i>finished</i>) to F7BX 34. Changes to code and title: <i>Learner Support: Support Strategies - Key Functions</i> from DP9D 34 (<i>lapse date 31/07/2012, finish date 31/07/2014</i>) to <i>Learner Support: Key Support Functions</i> H366 34.	25/02/13
02	Section added detailing additional requirements for Units DP9N 34, DP98 34 and DP9D 34.	20/05/09

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1 Introduction

This is the Arrangement Document for the revised Professional Development Award in Learning Centre Operations at SCQF level 7, which was validated in December 2008. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure, and guidance on delivery.

The award is a revision of the Certificate in Learning Centre Operations (G5WL 15) which finished in July 2008 and has been revised using the design principles approved by SQA's Qualifications Committee in May 2005 for Professional Development Awards.

2 Rationale for the revised award

The original Certificate in Learning Centre Operations was validated in June 2001 and provided a qualification that developed skills needed by a range of front-line staff in learning centres, such as supporting learners, carrying out administration, collecting and providing information, offering first line support and maintaining a safe and welcoming centre. The award was developed in response to work carried out by the Scottish University for Industry (SUFI, later learndirect scotland, now part of Skills Development Scotland) to support an expansion in the provision of learning centres.

In the relatively short time since the original award was developed however, there have been significant changes in learning centres. For one thing there are far greater numbers of learning centres, varying enormously in location, size, provision and function. Furthermore, new legislation, notably the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), has forced learning centres to examine, and in many cases change, the provision that they offer their customers. All of this has placed new and increased demands on the staff that work in these centres.

As a result of these changes and developments, the Qualification Design Team were of the opinion that the previous award did not adequately reflect the demands made on those who worked in learning centres and did not offer an attractive opportunity for continuing professional development.

The revised award, consisting of two mandatory Units and one optional Unit, recognises the core tasks shared by all staff in modern learning centres: working with and supporting learners; establishing and maintaining effective administrative procedures; and creating a safe and welcoming environment in which learners will feel encouraged and supported in their learning. The range of optional Units will allow a limited degree of specialisation in the award to reflect the interests of the candidate and the needs of the post that they hold, selected from areas including learner support, IT applications, marketing, facilitating group learning, coaching and guidance.

The two mandatory Units were written specifically for this award; most of the optional Units were existing Units from the SQA catalogue.

The award is designed to meet the needs of staff working in learning centres who are likely to hold a variety of job titles including learning assistant, learning centre assistant, assistant training officer, learning centre support worker, assistant librarian, learning centre co-ordinator, and others, but whose job descriptions (see Appendix 1) and functions are likely to focus on the Core Skills addressed by the mandatory Units for this award, ie providing information and support to learners, ensuring a welcoming and safe environment and ensuring quality standards are implemented.

The award will be useful either as part of an initial programme of training for new staff or as continuing professional development. As one of the optional Units is at SCQF level 8 it might encourage some candidates to extend their learning by going on to a level 8 qualification, for example the revised PDA in e-Learning.

3 Aims of the award

General aim of all PDA Awards

Professional Development Awards are designed for people who are in a career and who wish to extend or broaden their skills base. The general aim therefore is to assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills. This general aim is then reflected in the overall aim and the specific objectives.

3.1 General aims of the award

The main aim of this award is to develop the skills and knowledge of staff working in learning centres to enable them to advise and support learners effectively so that the learner's learning experience is enhanced and made more effective.

3.2 Specific aims of the award

The specific aims of the award are to develop skills and knowledge that will enable candidates to:

- ◆ access and interpret information from local and national sources
- ◆ provide relevant information to meet learner needs
- ◆ assist learners to access learning programmes, including by using assistive technology
- ◆ assist learners to access further advice or support
- ◆ promote learning opportunities and the learning centre
- ◆ introduce the learner to the learning environment
- ◆ assist the learner to use IT equipment and to access the learning resources
- ◆ provide encouragement and support to the learner during learning programmes
- ◆ maintain systems and records to ensure the efficient running of the centre
- ◆ create a safe and accessible environment that is conducive to learning
- ◆ promote fair and equal access
- ◆ meet the needs of a diverse client group

These aims have been mapped to the 'Pledge to Learners' of learndirect scotland, which is one of the main tools used in recent years to audit the provision of learning centres (see Appendix 2).

3.3 Target groups

The award is designed for staff working in learning centres, whether they are located in colleges, libraries, schools, universities, industry, hospitals, or in other public and private sector locations. The award will be useful both for new staff and for existing staff looking for continuing professional development opportunities.

Most candidates will choose to complete the whole award, some others might select from the Units in the award as CPD, and others might complete the award with the aim of progressing to other courses or awards.

3.4 Employment opportunities

Learning centres are found in various locations, including colleges, universities, libraries, as part of private training provision and also in many workplaces. All learning centres face diverse demands from their learners and, consequently, learning centre staff need to be properly equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to be able to provide the level of service expected by their learners.

The PDA in Learning Centre Operations will provide learning centre staff with the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge they need to progress within the training industry. The PDA in Learning Centre Operations has been structured in such a way as to allow learning centre staff to gain knowledge and skills relating to learning centre operations and also to explore new skills which are transferable into other industries, eg, marketing, IT, customer service, administration. Although a three credit award, learning centre staff, should they choose to do so, will be able to complete additional optional Units over time, as part of their continuous professional development.

Achievement of the PDA in Learning Centre Operations will not only improve employability opportunities for learning centre staff but also provide them with skills which will improve both learning centre performance and their learners' journeys.

4 Access to awards

Access to the award is at the discretion of the centre and no formal qualifications are required for candidates undertaking this PDA. Candidates however will have experience in working in a learning centre in an educational or training setting and be in a position that will allow them to generate the necessary evidence to achieve the award. Candidates should be in a role that involves contact with learners, specifically in a context where the candidate is involved in supporting learners, both prospective and current. The award is not suited to staff who have no experience of supporting learners in a learning centre context.

Candidates would normally be expected to have competence in *Communication* skills at SCQF level 5 and *Information and Communication Technology* skills at SCQF level 5.

5 Award structure

5.1 Framework

The PDA comprises 3 credits (24 SCQF Points at level 7), ie two mandatory Units and one optional Unit selected from a list of 11 Units.

The two mandatory Units cover the core tasks that staff who work in a learning centre will typically be expected to be involved in:

- ◆ providing information to potential and actual learners
- ◆ supporting learners
- ◆ carrying out administration
- ◆ ensuring that the learning centre environment is safe and welcoming
- ◆ ensuring that quality standards are maintained

The optional Units provide a range of topics from which candidates will be able to select a Unit that covers an area of interest or that relates to a more specific part of their role in a learning centre. The optional Units *F3XS 34: Learning Centre Operations: Meet External Quality Assurance Requirements in a Learning Centre* and *F3XM 34: Learning Centre Operations: Funding* were written specifically to be part of this award. The other optional Units were selected from the SQA catalogue.

The credits comprising the award should be chosen from the following:

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Mandatory Units				
Learning Centre Operations: Working with Learners	F41M 34	8	7	1
Learning Centre Operations: Centre Administrative and Quality Systems	F55T 34	8	7	1
Optional Units				
Learning Centre Operations: Meet External Quality Assurance Requirements in a Learning Centre	F3XS 34	8	7	1
Learning Centre Operations: Funding	F3XN 34	8	7	1
Marketing: An Introduction	F7BX 34*	8	7	1
Information Technology: Applications Software 1	D75X 34	8	7	1
Learning Support: Promoting Access to Information and Learning for Learners with Additional Support Needs	DP9N 34	8	7	1
Learner Support: Assistive Technology in Support of Learners with Additional Support Needs	DP98 34	8	7	1
Learning and Development: Facilitating Group Learning	DN3F 35	8	7	1

*Refer to History of Change for revision changes.

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Optional Units (continued)				
Learning and Development: Coaching Skills	DN3A 34	8	7	1
Learning and Development: Learning Processes	DN3J 34	8	7	1
Online Communication: Coaching, Guidance and Support	F2BH 35	8	8	1
Learner Support: Key Support Functions	H366 34*	8	7	1

*Refer to History of Change for revision changes.

5.2 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer

Candidates who complete the Professional Development Award in Learning Centre Operations may have the opportunity to progress to the Professional Development Award in e-Learning at SCQF level 8. The Learning Centre Operations award is aimed at learning centre staff and librarians, many of whom now have a hybrid role. As libraries have developed and added learning centre functions to their traditional role, so the role of the library assistant has changed to include support for learners. Similarly, the role of staff in learning centres will encompass administrative and resource-oriented functions, but will very often also include advising learners and providing them with first-line support in the course of their learning. For many of these staff either the full PDA in e-Learning or single Units would form a progression route as their careers advance.

That award in turn has been designed to lead on to other awards in this occupational area, namely:

G7KG 16: Diploma: e-Assessment
G79J 16: Diploma: e-Learning Production
G7KF 16: Diploma: e-Learning Delivery
G7KJ 18: Advanced Diploma: e-Learning

The above awards are scheduled to be reviewed under the new SQA Design Principles.

Credit transfer arrangements

Those who achieved the previous award do not need to re-qualify but should be encouraged to consider updating their skills through Continual Professional Development (CPD) by selecting optional Units which reflect changes in the job role since they qualified, or changes in practice within their centre.

5.3 Core Skills

The Professional Development Award in Learning Centre Operations at SCQF level 7 will provide candidates with opportunities to demonstrate the relevant components of Core Skills to SCQF level 6.

All components of *Problem Solving* — Critical Thinking, Planning, Organising, Reviewing and Evaluating — are developed as the award is undertaken. Identification and analysis of a range of needs, including the individual requirements of each learner as well as quality and centre requirements, will be essential. All factors affecting the learning experience are taken into account and decisions are made on approaches, technologies and materials in line with legal, organisational and safety requirements. Planning and organising support which meets learner needs and maximises centre resources available involves the ability to adapt and modify approaches. Feedback from learners, centre staff and external agencies is formally reviewed, evaluated and documented, before being used to determine any appropriate action for the future.

Candidates will be encouraged to explore ways of enhancing skills in *Communication* and *Working with Others*. The ability to research, translate and convey complex information in the most effective form for purpose and users is an aspect of competence. Communicating with others by offering encouragement, explaining, demonstrating, and supporting the strengths of all involved in the learning process will be essential. Strategies to promote good working relationships will underpin the identification, management and resolution of any potential problems. Issues of diversity and inclusion will be dealt with in a way which allows practical opportunities to practise empathic, reflective communication techniques. Meetings, telephone contact and personal interviews with centre staff, learners and representatives of external agencies all provide a context for demonstrating mastery of complex verbal and non-verbal skills to promote and progress the learning experience.

Information and Communication Technology skills are fundamental to effective retrieving, adapting and presenting of various types of information. The development of efficient electronic systems of recording, coding and storing evidence will underpin achievement. Security in the use of equipment and software will be routine practice.

Numeracy is a tool used flexibly in dealing with the funding requirements, products and processes of financial support for individuals and learning centre activities. Researching current information on opportunities candidates strengthen their skills by producing, maintaining and presenting records and reports. Accuracy in sustained complex calculations, interpretation of figures and use of statistical data for quality purposes requires the ability to interpret, calculate and present complex information in a range of formats.

6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

Guidance on context and content

Detailed guidance about the context and content is given for each Unit. The mandatory Units are both practical and are therefore intended for candidates actively involved supporting learners and carrying out administrative tasks in learning centres/learning environments. Study of them would enhance knowledge and skills and it is recommended that the assessments be undertaken by those candidates who are actively involved in appropriate work activities to enable the practical aspects of the qualification to be demonstrated.

The optional Units contain a mix of practical and theoretical work. While they will be of value as stand-alone Units for the purposes of continuing professional development, the principal context is to enhance the skills and knowledge gained in achieving the mandatory Units in the award by allowing candidates to select a Unit that matches their interest and the requirements of their workplace.

Guidance on assessment and delivery

The award may be delivered using a variety of methods: face to face, within a virtual learning environment (VLE), or by open learning. It is intended for part-time delivery to candidates employed in a suitable work setting. The experience of this employment will be fundamental to the achievement of the award and without being able to draw on this experience and practice it will be very difficult for candidates to complete the award.

The recommended assessment methods centre on description and reflection of practice supported by witness testimony and work product. This will ensure that assessment is embedded in the workplace experience of candidates.

The use of case studies, visits to learning centres and/or placement in an appropriate learning environment may be useful in providing knowledge and understanding for the award for those candidates not actively engaged in learning centre operations. However, it is recommended that assessment methods and requirements are agreed between assessor and candidate at the outset.

There may be opportunities to integrate some elements of content and assessment of different Units.

It is envisaged that candidates will complete the mandatory Units first. Not all centres will be in a position to offer all the optional Units for the award and candidates will have to select from those available at the centre, or complete an optional Unit at another centre.

Guidance on Open Learning

There are no barriers to the delivery of this award by open learning but centres must have in place robust methods to authenticate the work of candidates.

7 General information for centres

Approval and delivery criteria

It is expected that centres will generally have the experience to deliver the award. Centres will be expected to provide evidence of competence and experience to support this. For Units DP9N 34, DP98 34 and DP9D 34, delivering centres will be expected to provide evidence of working with learners with additional support needs.

Centres offering these Units, or those seeking approval to do so, should ensure that they have appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

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

Internal and external verification

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

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in *SQA's Guide to Assessment* (www.sqa.org.uk).

8 General information for candidates

The Professional Development Award in Learning Centre Operations covers the knowledge and skills needed to support the running of a learning centre and to work with learners.

You will develop the knowledge and skills to enable you to:

- ◆ apply the knowledge appropriate to your workplace
- ◆ develop the skills required in your job role
- ◆ enhance your practice through the understanding and use of new techniques and practices

Assessment will include both written and practical evidence in the form of reflective log and performance evidence from the workplace. Elements of the reflective log could be supplemented or replaced by an oral presentation or interview.

You will be required to carry out a practical assignment in their own area and the reflective log will detail the planning, delivery and evaluation of that assignment.

9 Glossary of terms

SCQF: This stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which is a new way of speaking about qualifications and how they inter-relate. We use SCQF terminology throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk

SCQF credit points: One HN credit is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points. This applies to all HN Units, irrespective of their level.

SCQF levels: The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HN Units will normally be at levels 6–9. Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8.

Subject Unit: Subject Units contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

Graded Unit: Graded Units assess candidates' ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

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

Embedded Core Skills: This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

Signposted Core Skills: This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie outwith automatic certification.

Qualification Design Team: The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the HNC/HND from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

Consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

Specialist single centre and specialist collaborative devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions led by a single centre or small group of centres who provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area. Like consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs, these developments or revisions will also be supported by SQA.

10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Extract from a typical job description

Appendix 2: Summary of the learndirect scotland pledge to learners

Appendix 1: Extract from a typical Job Specification

Job activities:

The postholder will carry out the following duties:

- ◆ Assist with the day-to-day operation and development of the learning environment
- ◆ Perform administrative and learner record keeping tasks
- ◆ Develop and implement systems and procedures that contribute to learner retention and achievement
- ◆ Assist learners, under the direction of Learning Centre Staff with basic, and routine learning activities
- ◆ Assist Learning Centre Staff in the development of new resources
- ◆ Assist learners with the use of learning resources and learning technology
- ◆ Proactively encourage and motivate learners and act as a mentor/facilitator for less confident learners
- ◆ Participate in self-evaluation activities in accordance with Learning Centre policy
- ◆ Any other duties arising and pertaining to the post

Appendix 2: Summary of the learndirect scotland pledge to learners

Pledge to learners

learndirect scotland branded learning centres undertake to:

- 1 Offer the **time, place, pace and style of learning** that most closely meets your needs.
- 2 Give clear information that helps you make the best personal choices about learning programmes and maintain control of your learning.
- 3 Provide learning materials that are relevant to your own personal and work interests and actively involve you in practical comments, exercises and experience.
- 4 Enable you to monitor your progress and record your achievements as you go, not just as the end of a complete programme.
- 5 Provide you with access to the specialist support you need, when you need it.
- 6 Work with you to develop the skills that help you to learn and stay learning.
- 7 Give you the chance to relate your learning to your own longer term ambitions.
- 8 Help you to feel part of a wider learning community and put you in touch with other people studying the same things.
- 9 Link your learning to key areas of your life such as work, family, citizenship and your own personal development.
- 10 Encourage you to value learning and see it add value to your life.