

Professional Development Awards

Background

Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are very flexible awards which can comprise Higher National (HN), National Qualification (NQ) and SVQ Units. PDAs can span SCQF levels 6 to 12 and can be made up of a minimum of two Units and 16¹ SCQF credit points. There is no maximum number of credits required.

The PDA can consist of:

- ◆ mandatory and optional Units, or
- ◆ all mandatory Units, or
- ◆ all optional Units.

However, the choice of structure must reflect the title and aim of the award. PDAs must be aligned to National Occupational Standards (NOS) and must be credit and levelled. PDAs can be embedded within another qualification, such as an SVQ.

PDAs are designed for people who are normally already in a career or vocation and who wish to extend or broaden their skills base. They will assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills.

PDAs are normally undertaken by those who have an existing qualification or substantial experience/skills in an occupational area.

PDAs in Management

SQA has developed a range of 9 PDAs in Management based on HN Units (eg PDA in Project Management at SCQF level 8; PDA in Strategic Management at SCQF level 9) and now wants to investigate the need for Management PDAs based on SVQ Units. SQA has carried out research in the business area and there are strong indications that there is a requirement among employers for short management awards at SCQF levels 7, 8 and 9.

The key purpose of these PDAs would be to develop a range of management skills for those currently in management positions seeking recognition of their management skills and knowledge or wishing to extend, broaden or enhance their skills in a particular area.

This, of course, could be covered by the SVQs in Management, but the benefits of the PDAs are that they could be small bite-sized qualifications, which:

- ◆ Provide a stepping stone to the full SVQ.
- ◆ Provide candidates/employers with a flavour of the SVQ.
- ◆ Allow centres, particularly in the current economic climate, to market smaller awards which can be undertaken in a shorter time frame and would therefore be less costly for candidates/employers.

¹ For PDAs at SCQF level 6, a minimum of 12 SCQF credit points is required