

# Benchmarking the SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma in the Myanmar Education System

## SUMMARY REPORT



**The SQA Advanced Certificate is considered comparable to the Myanmar Bachelor (Pass) degree. The SQA Advanced Diploma is considered comparable to the Myanmar Bachelor (Honours) degree. Students may alternatively be considered for advanced entry into a Bachelor degree in professional subjects at institutional discretion.**

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### 1. Overview of the SQA Advanced Certificate and Diplomas

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma<sup>1</sup> are higher education qualifications developed in partnership with colleges, universities and industry. The SQA Advanced qualifications are offered internationally in a range of subjects including but not limited to: accounting, architectural technology, art and design, business, chemical engineering, computing (with various specialisations), construction management, electronics, hospitality, hospitality management, mechanical engineering, quantity surveying, retail and retail management and travel and tourism.

This report is designed to provide guidance on the comparable academic standing of the two awards in the context of the Myanmar education system.

#### Entry and duration

The SQA Advanced Certificate is a one-year programme, allocated 96 SCQF Points (960 notional learning hours). Entry requirements are set at the discretion of individual centres but may include National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQ 2 or 3), other qualifications at Level 5 or 6 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), comparable work experience, or a centre-devised test. Programmes are assessed in English and as such entrants who are non-native speakers will typically also need an ESOL certificate at SCQF level 5 or an IELTS band 5.5 for admission.

Entry into an SQA Advanced Diploma course, which typically consists of two years of study<sup>2</sup>, is the same as the entry requirements specified above. The first year comprises 1200 notional learning hours, with the

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<sup>1</sup> Previously known as the SQA Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND).

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Qualifications Authority, "Guide to SQA Advanced Qualifications," 3.

total Diploma worth 240 SCQF Credit Points (2400 notional learning hours). Those already holding the SQA Advanced Certificate may enter the second year of the SQA Advanced Diploma programme.

### Structure and content

The SQA Advanced qualifications have a unit-based structure<sup>3</sup>. Each subject has mandatory units, taken by all students, and a range of optional units allowing students to specialise in a particular area. For example, those undertaking the SQA Advanced Certificate in Hospitality would be expected to develop a general understanding of the hospitality industry and then specialise in hospitality management, professional cookery or events. Similarly those taking an SQA Advanced Certificate or Diploma in Business would have the opportunity to specialise in aspects of accounting and finance, business culture, communication – research skills, customer service, e-commerce, economics, enterprise and employability, financial services, human resource management, information technology, international business, legal, management skills, marketing/sales, mathematics and statistics, office skills, personal and social development, public administration, supply chain management or sustainability.

### Aims and learning outcomes

Aims are generally stated for each subject group, and can be broadly summarised as follows:

- To ensure students will be prepared for employment
- To develop study and research skills
- To develop transferable skills including Core Skills for employment: communication, numeracy, information and communication technology, problem solving and working with others.

Specific aims are also set for each award, detailing the subject-specific knowledge and skills that should be developed.

The SQA Advanced Certificate is placed at Level 7 of the SCQF, and the SQA Advanced Diploma at Level 8, where students at these levels should be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills such as the following:

	Indicators of SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Certificate)	Indicators of SCQF Level 8 (Advanced Diploma)
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overall appreciation of the body of knowledge that constitutes a subject/discipline/sector.</li> <li>• Knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles of the subject / discipline / sector.</li> <li>• An awareness of the dynamic nature of knowledge and understanding.</li> <li>• An understanding of the difference between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other sources, and of the importance of this difference.</li> </ul>	Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of the subject / discipline / sector.</li> <li>• Specialist knowledge in some areas.</li> <li>• A discerning understanding of a defined range of core theories, concepts, principles and terminology.</li> <li>• Awareness and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms.</li> <li>• Awareness and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes.</li> </ul>
Practice: Applied knowledge, skills and understanding	Apply knowledge, skills and understanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In practical contexts.</li> <li>• In using some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector.</li> <li>• To practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts.</li> </ul>	Apply knowledge, skills and understanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In using a range of professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector, a few of which are advanced and/or complex.</li> <li>• In carrying out routine lines of enquiry, development or investigation into professional level problems and issues.</li> <li>• To adapt routine practices within accepted standards.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> There is a fixed and a non-fixed framework for some of the SQA Advanced qualifications. Both frameworks have the same credit requirements; however the construction of the latter is more flexible and individual centres can choose to create their own content and structure, using guidelines provided by SQA.

	Indicators of SCQF Level 7 (Advanced Certificate)	Indicators of SCQF Level 8 (Advanced Diploma)
Generic cognitive skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas that are routine to a subject/discipline/sector.</li> <li>Use a range of approaches to address defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings in a subject/discipline/sector.</li> <li>Use a range of approaches to formulate and critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems and issues.</li> </ul>
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with a subject/discipline/sector, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form.</li> <li>Use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</li> <li>Select and use standard ICT applications to process and obtain a variety of information and data.</li> <li>Use a range of numerical and graphical skills in combination.</li> <li>Use numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.</li> </ul>	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills associated with a subject/discipline/sector, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convey complex information to a range of audiences and for a range of purposes.</li> <li>Use a range of standard ICT applications to process and obtain data.</li> <li>Use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.</li> </ul>
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	<p>Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level in practice or in a subject/discipline/sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accept supervision in less familiar areas of work.</li> <li>Exercise some managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others within a defined and supervised structure.</li> <li>Manage limited resources within defined areas of work.</li> <li>Take the lead in implementing agreed plans in familiar or defined contexts.</li> <li>Take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities when carrying out and evaluating tasks.</li> <li>Work, under guidance, with others to acquire an understanding of current professional practice.</li> </ul>	<p>Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level in practice or in a subject/discipline/sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exercise managerial responsibility for the work of others within a defined structure.</li> <li>Manage resources within defined areas of work.</li> <li>Take the lead on planning in familiar or defined contexts.</li> <li>Practise in ways that show awareness of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions when carrying out and evaluating tasks.</li> <li>Work, under guidance, with others to acquire an understanding of current professional practice.</li> <li>Manage, under guidance, ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices</li> </ul>

### Assessment and grading

The methods of assessment vary by subject and by centre; however these may include open-book assessments such as case studies, practical exercises and observations, written projects, portfolios, and oral presentations. SQA provides clear guidance to centres on designing valid and reliable assessments. For example, the Business Graded Unit 1, taken in both the SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma, is assessed by a three hour closed-book examination consisting of two papers based on a previously seen case study. The Business Graded Unit 2, done towards the end of the SQA Advanced Diploma course is a project where candidates are given a real or simulated business problem to evaluate.

Students receive a final certificate and accompanying transcript detailing the units undertaken. Generally, units are graded on a pass or fail basis, with the exception of graded units which are marked out of 100 and are given a letter grade; C (50%) is the minimum pass grade.<sup>4</sup>

### Certification and progression

On successful completion, candidates are awarded an SQA Advanced Certificate or an Advanced Diploma in their field of study. SQA Advanced Certificate holders may advance to further study, including to the second year of an SQA Advanced Diploma. SQA has a Diploma to Degree programme<sup>5</sup> to support progression for holders of the SQA Advanced Diploma to the second or third year of study at an SQA Progression Partner university.

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Qualifications Authority, "SQA Advanced Certificate in Business (GM8A 47) SQA Advanced Diploma in Business (GM8Y 48)," 30.

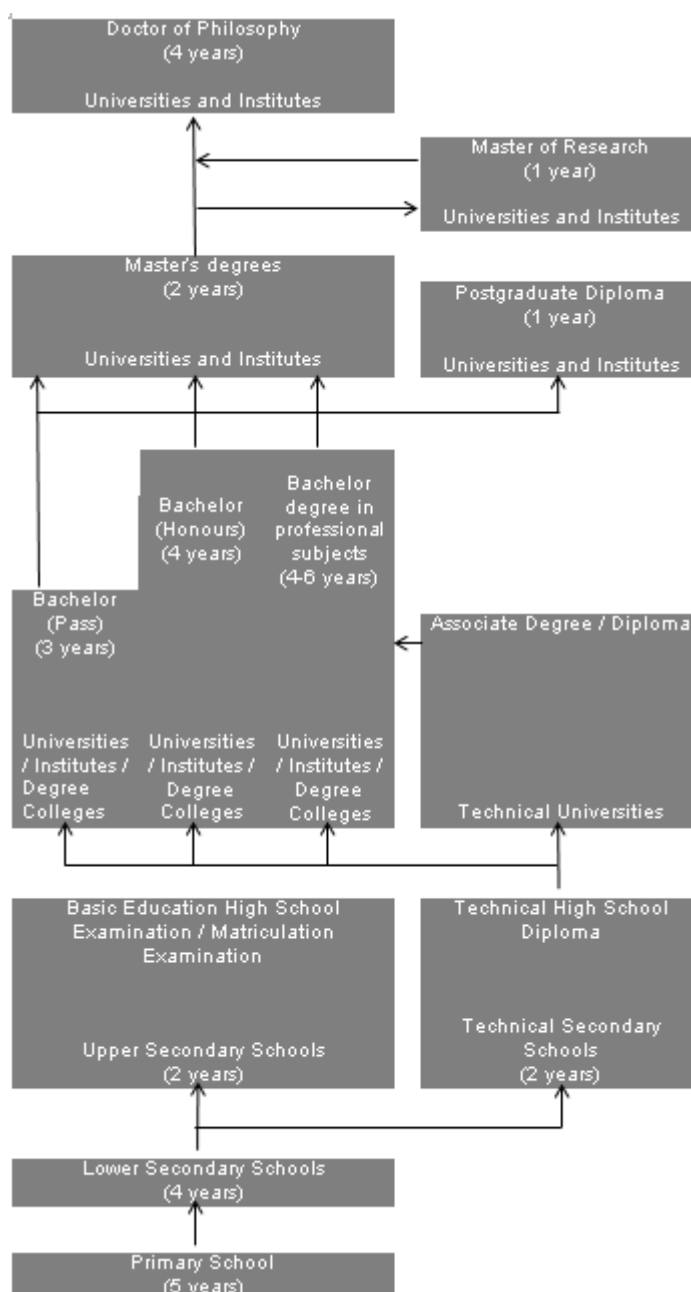
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/79553.html>  
[projects@naric.org.uk](mailto:projects@naric.org.uk)

## 2. Comparative analysis with the Myanmar education system

Compulsory education in Myanmar lasts for five years from the age of five. Lower secondary education lasts four years, on completion of which students take the Basic Education Middle School Examination. After this, students can progress to general academic or technical secondary schools. Students study for two years at upper secondary level leading to the Basic Education High School Examination. They typically study six subjects at upper secondary level, of which sciences and mathematics are taught in English. In higher education institutions, the medium of instruction for most subjects is English. The academic year runs from June to March.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for administering primary, secondary and the majority of higher education in Myanmar. The National Education Committee (NEC) is responsible for the development of education policy. Under the NEC, the Universities' Central Council and the Council of University Academic Bodies focus on the coordination and implementation of higher education policy. The Myanmar National Qualifications Framework (MNQF) is under development but has yet to be implemented.

The overall structure of the Myanmar system can be seen below:



As shown in the chart, Bachelor degree programmes are the most comparable to the SQA Advanced qualifications when considering the current entrance level and pathways<sup>6</sup>. Different types of Bachelor degrees are available in Myanmar, including the Bachelor (Pass) degree, the Bachelor (Honours) degree and the Bachelor degree in professional subjects

Progression to Bachelor level degree programmes in Myanmar requires completion of the Basic Education High School Examination / Matriculation Examination, which can be considered comparable to SCQF Level 5, similar to the typical entry requirement for the SQA Advanced Certificate (qualifications at SCQF Level 5/6) Admission onto Bachelor degree programmes in professional subjects can also be provided to those who have completed an Associate degree. Some higher education institutions require completion of an English course to ensure preparation for studying via English medium of instruction.

The Bachelor (Pass) degree is typically awarded on completion of a three-year (full-time) course, whilst the Bachelor (Honours) degree is typically awarded on completion of a four-year (full-time) course. Bachelor degrees in professional subjects are at least four years in duration, although this may vary depending on the specialisation. Upon completion of the Bachelor (Pass) degree it is possible to complete the Bachelor (Honours) degree in one year. The duration of the Bachelor degrees is longer than the typical duration of the SQA Advanced qualifications however when reviewed in conjunction with the structure, content and broad intended learning outcomes of the degree, the awards can be considered comparable overall.

Undergraduate students in Myanmar generally take six modules per semester, which count for 24 credits. Most Bachelor (Pass) degrees comprise 144 credit units and four-year degrees comprise 192 credits. Degrees include basic subjects as well as core and elective subjects. The first two years of undergraduate study comprise general and foundation courses, although some institutions may teach a specialisation from the first year. From the third year, study becomes more narrowly focussed on the main subject and in the final year students choose a specialism. By comparison, the majority of units comprising SQA Advanced qualifications are related to the specialism chosen and are studied from the beginning of the programme.

Assessment methods and grading systems for Bachelor programmes in Myanmar vary between institutions and the programme studied. Continuous assessment via semester examinations is common, in addition to tutorial exercises, practical exercises, in-class performance, lecture attendance, projects and field work (where appropriate). By comparison, assessment for the SQA Advanced qualifications consists of theoretical and practical methods and can vary between institutions. Units in the SQA Advanced qualifications are given a pass or fail mark with the exception of graded Units, where students are awarded an A (70-100%), B (60-69%) or C (50-59%). The graded units can be assessed via practical and theoretical methods such as case studies, performances, written portfolios, projects and/or exams. To achieve the qualification, students need to pass all the units in the course and attain grade A-D in the course assessments.

Overarching learning outcomes for programmes at Bachelor degree level are typically set by individual institutions, in contrast with SQA Advanced qualifications, which have overarching and also specific learning outcomes. Graduates of a Bachelor (Pass) degree may enter a one-year Bachelor (Honours) programme. Graduates of a Bachelor (Honours) degree may advance to postgraduate programmes such as a Postgraduate Diploma or Master's degree.

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<sup>6</sup> Whilst noting that there is an Associate degree, this is considered broadly comparable to BTEC National Diploma standard (SCQF Level 6-7).

### 3. Key findings

The SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma are found to be well-designed and internationally-relevant programmes, noting in particular that they:

- Are developed with colleges, universities and employers – the qualification design process includes consultation with key external stakeholders designed and reference to National Occupational Standards, to help ensure the relevance of the SQA qualifications to learners and to labour market needs
- Have established progression routes in key destination countries including but not limited to the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA, enabling students to top-up, with further study, to a Bachelor degree in a number of universities
- Provide career-focussed, practical learning: integrating core skills relevant to employment and with a structure that provides a well-rounded overview of the subject area as well as a specialisation through its combination of optional and mandatory units.

In comparing the SQA Advanced qualifications in the context of the Myanmar education system, it is important to highlight that duration is neither the sole or primary consideration: best practice in evaluation places the focus on learning outcomes and when reviewing these in conjunction with other components listed above, it was found that the Bachelor degree (pass) compares most closely with SCQF Level 7 (SQA Advanced Certificate) whilst the Bachelor (Honours) degree or Bachelor degree in a professional subject are both considered comparable to SCQF Level 8. In practice, holders of each qualification should be eligible for further study, whether through advanced standing into a Bachelor Honours or professional degree (SQA Advanced Certificate) or through direct entry to further study.

### 4. Methodology

Based on UK NARIC's well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent benchmarking study comprised a review of the SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma as well as national awards in the Myanmar education system. This took into consideration the following core criteria:

- Entry requirements
- Duration
- Structure and content
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes
- Associated outcomes.

Relevant information on the Myanmar education system and comparable qualifications was obtained from UK NARIC's *International Comparisons* database and official websites of Myanmar education authorities and institutions, where available.