

# A guide to SVQs



it can  
be done  SQA

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## What are SVQs?

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**Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are based on national standards which are drawn up by people from industry, commerce and education. SVQs are badges or benchmarks of competence, so they work as a guarantee that someone who holds an SVQ can do the job the qualification covers. SVQs say what has to be achieved, and how, but they don't have to be done in a classroom or on a training programme — many people achieve them while carrying out their normal day-to-day work.**

The standards SVQs are based on are the same standards used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The main difference being that SVQs take account of Scotland's distinct legal, education, and enterprise systems.

There are SVQs for nearly all occupations ranging from forestry to IT, management to catering, journalism to construction.



# Who can do an SVQ?

SVQs are about being competent at a job — the one you're doing now, or one that you would like to do in the future. All kinds of people can do SVQs. For example, you might:

- be a new recruit with lots to learn
- have lots of experience but no way to prove it
- be taking part in a training scheme at work or studying part-time at college or with a training provider
- have a qualification, eg a degree, that you would like to follow up with practical, vocational skills

SVQs are available at five levels of difficulty (SVQ level 1 is at SCQF level 4, up to SVQ level 5 is at SCQF level 11), so you can be sure that there is an SVQ for you — whether you're just starting out or have years of experience. That means that SVQs can help you to progress throughout your working years.

## How they work

There are no formal written exams — people doing SVQs collect and submit evidence, usually from their work. SVQs specify the skills and the knowledge and understanding you need to do your job to the national standards of competence. The evidence you collect is assessed against these standards.

The Units are derived from National Occupational Standards (NOS). Each SVQ Unit defines one aspect of a job or a work role, and outlines what it is to be competent in that aspect of the job. To achieve a Unit, candidates have to produce evidence to show they are competent. Performance Criteria and Knowledge and Understanding (K&U) are the two mandatory aspects of SVQ Units. Performance Criteria describe the level of competence that has to be achieved, and K&U describe the knowledge that is needed to understand what you are doing and why.

You can work through the Units one at a time, at your own pace, until you have completed the SVQ or you can gather evidence for a number of Units at the same time. As SVQs don't have exams, you are assessed by an Assessor. An Assessor can make assessments by observing you at your place of work, to ensure your performance meets national standards. You may also be asked questions, or to submit pieces of work or records of something you've done.



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

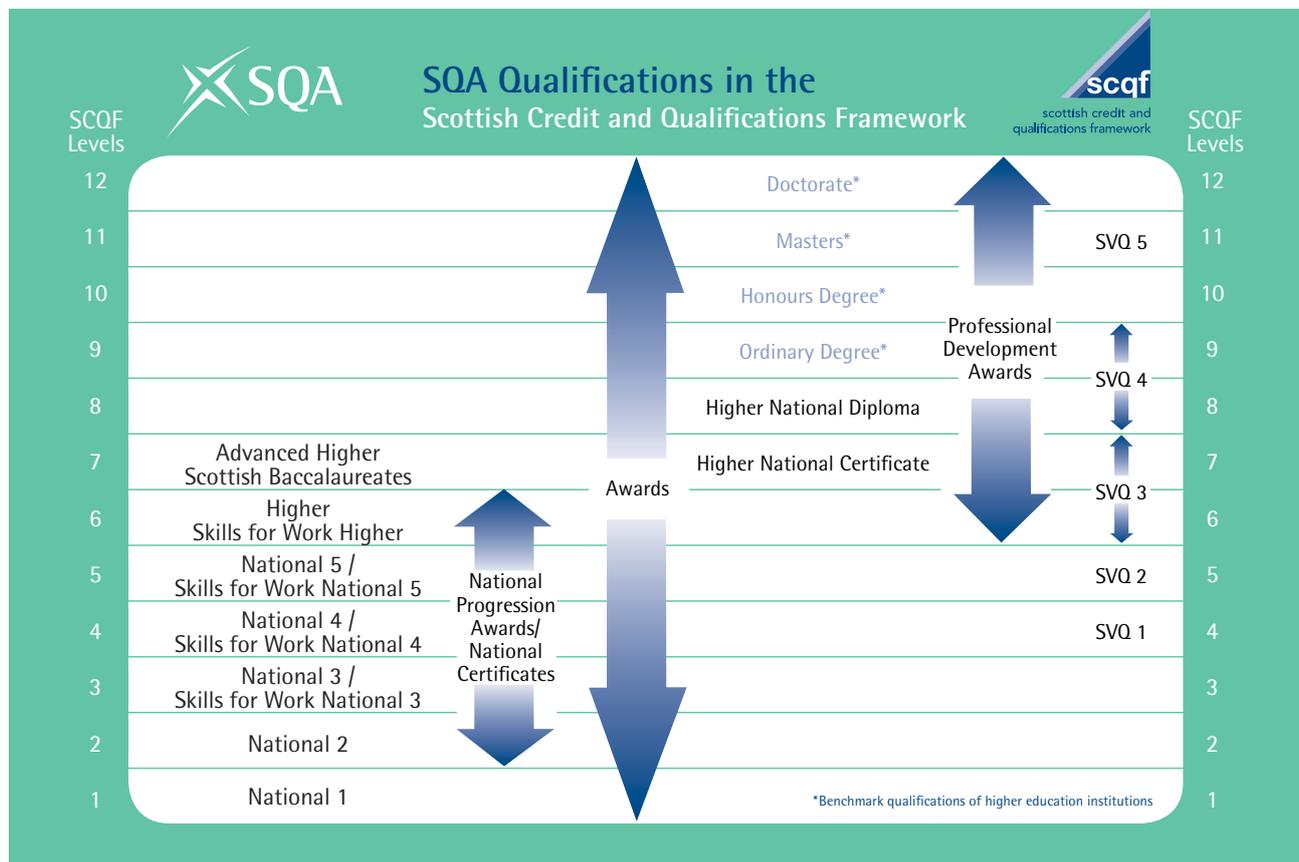
# Benefits of doing SVQs

Employers are very aware of SVQs and appreciate their value. Likewise, admissions staff in colleges, universities and the armed services will take them into account. Each SVQ is recognised on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

The SCQF helps to make the relationships between qualifications clearer. 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 (how much learning is involved, or how long it will take).



This table shows SQA Qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework



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## For Learners

Gaining an SVQ proves that you can do your job well, to national standards that have been agreed by the industry or commercial sector you are in. SVQs send powerful messages to employers:

- you can do your job confidently and well
- you are motivated, confident and ambitious
- you are ready to take on responsibility
- you are committed to your work

## For Employers

More and more companies are seeing education and training for their workforce as an investment, not as a luxury — and more and more companies are seeing SVQs as an integral part of their business development strategy. SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications) give employers a focused, on-the-job context for training and developing staff. They are an excellent way of making sure that staff development programmes and your business strategy go hand-in-hand.



“IBM is delighted to be associated with SQA. The Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) offered are valued by our employees and being able to combine work experience with formal qualifications is a real benefit to IBM as an employer.

IBM offer IT Professional, Customer Service, Supply Chain Management and Management SVQs through the Modern Apprenticeship programme which have proved extremely popular with our employees. We have witnessed an increased self awareness of skills and experience and impressive personal development for participants.”

**Barry McGugan**

Greenock Communications Training and Innovations Manager  
**IBM Greenock**

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# Which sectors have SVQs?

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**There are over 500 SVQs available including Accounting, Business & Administration, Management, Childcare, Construction, Dental Nursing and Oil and Gas at a range of SVQ levels.**

## Level 1

Level 1 SVQs cover jobs which involve a range of tasks, most of which fall into a set pattern and don't change.

## Level 2

For a level 2 SVQ, candidates have to be able to show that they are competent in a range of varied activities, in a variety of contexts. Some of the activities will be complex, and the person will have some individual responsibility or autonomy. The job may also involve collaboration with others, perhaps through membership of a work group or team.

## Level 3

At this level, candidates have to perform a broad range of activities in a variety of contexts, most of which are complex and non-routine. They will usually be working with considerable responsibility and autonomy, and may have control or guidance of others.

## Level 4

Level 4 SVQs involve a broad range of complex, technical or professional work activities. They will be performed in a wide variety of contexts and with a substantial degree of personal responsibility and autonomy. People doing these SVQs will often be responsible for the work of others and for allocating resources.

## Level 5

This level requires candidates to demonstrate competence in applying fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy, and often significant responsibility for the work of others and the allocation of resources feature strongly; as do personal accountability for analysis and diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation.

**SQA have created an interactive tool called MySector which lets you browse available SQA qualifications by qualification level (SCQF and QCF), for a number of sectors.**



**MYSECTOR**

To view SQA's qualifications by sector visit [www.sqa.org.uk/mysector](http://www.sqa.org.uk/mysector)

The graphic features a dark background with the word 'MYSECTOR' in large, bold, teal letters. Below the text, there are several colorful, overlapping images representing different sectors: a swimmer in a pool, a person in green boots working in a field, a paintbrush applying colorful paint, a ship at sea, a person in a blue shirt working with a large green bottle, and wind turbines. The images are framed with colorful borders. On the left side, there are colorful arrows and gears, suggesting a network or flow of information.

Find out more about which sectors have SVQs at [www.sqa.org.uk/mysector](http://www.sqa.org.uk/mysector)

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# How to deliver SVQs

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There are two ways to offer SVQs — your company can become an Approved Centre, or you can work with a training provider to offer your staff SVQs.

To become an Approved SQA Centre, your organisation will have to show that it has the potential to offer SQA qualifications and have a management structure and processes to underpin and support the delivery of the qualifications. Then, to become approved to offer a specific SVQ, your company will have to demonstrate that you have the staff, learning and assessment resources, and equipment needed to offer the SVQ or SVQs you are interested in.



If you would like to offer your staff SVQs, but would prefer to outsource the delivery of the SVQs, then just get in touch with our Business Development Team who can put you in touch with the nearest SQA Approved Centre offering the SVQ you are interested in.

“NHS Ayrshire and Arran has been an established accredited SVQ Centre for many years. The delivery of these awards is aligned to the ethos of our organisation and its purpose, values and quality ambitions to support and enhance the provision of modern health services. Through our SVQ programmes candidates develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in the work setting to take on extended roles and career advancement.”

**David Black,**  
Learning and Development Manager  
**NHS Ayrshire and Arran**

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# Contact us now



## Partnership with SQA

When you work with SQA, we are with you every step of the way – whether you are a small company or a large multinational. Your own dedicated Account Manager is your main point of contact and source of expert advice. They will provide excellent customer service focused on your needs and supporting your organisation's goals for the future.

Remember, what you've read here is just a taster of what SQA can offer your business. Speak with our Business Development team today.

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E-mail: [mycentre@sqa.org.uk](mailto:mycentre@sqa.org.uk)

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

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