



**Arrangements for:**  
**Professional Development Award in  
Customer Service within a Public  
Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8**

**Group Award Code: GA7V 48**

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## **Acknowledgement**

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of Professional Development Awards.



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# 1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the new Group Award in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 which was/were validated in March 2011. 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 part of the Scottish local government's Improvement Service's Customer First Programme — a development funded by the Scottish Government — which has involved working in partnership with a consortium of Councils under Renfrewshire Council.

The award is the final part of a suite of 3 stand alone customer service qualifications which will promote and ratify excellent customer service among employees in Scottish Councils and associated organisations. In common with the other awards it is contextualised to Scottish local government and levelled against the SCQF framework.

The other awards are the Customer Service Professional Award at SCQF level 5 and the Customer Service Professional Certificate at SCQF level 6.

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) has been strongly supportive of the suite of qualifications and has jointly-funded the development of this PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8.

# 2 Rationale for the development of the Group Award

The rationale for the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 has two parts. The first is the one that it shares with the other 2 awards in the suite of 3 customer service awards developed primarily for local authorities in Scotland. This rests on raising the quality of customer service provision by Scottish local government. The second aspect of the rationale is the need to ensure that the suite of customer service qualifications caters for all levels of staff in local authorities and equivalent organisations.

## Raising the quality of customer service provision

The first part of the rationale stems from a programme led by the Improvement Service in Scottish local government and in partnership with all councils in Scotland [see the undated Qualification Prospectus, Customer Service Professional: Journey to Excellence, and [www.customerserviceprofessional.co.uk](http://www.customerserviceprofessional.co.uk)]. The main aim of this programme is set out on page 1 of the Qualification prospectus and is to 'encourage and support service providers in the redesign of services around customers' needs with the aim of delivering 'first time' public services'.

This programme itself derived from two key, strategic objectives in relation to workforce planning and development identified by CoSLA, the umbrella organisation for Scottish local government. They are:

- ◆ to elevate Scottish Local Government as an employer of choice
- ◆ to enable Scottish Local Government's workforce to add value and provide competitive advantage in the delivery of excellent, sustainable services to Scotland's communities

The above strategic objectives are informed by the fact that a clear association between an engaged workforce and customer satisfaction levels is widely accepted and underpinned by substantial literature.

The two key strategic objectives are themselves part of a wider agenda for Councils in Scotland based on principles, supported by the Scottish government, of:

- ◆ easier to access and better integrated public services
- ◆ effective collaboration across the public sector
- ◆ better use of public resources
- ◆ high standards of public service

Overall, therefore, this part of the rationale for the new award is based on the commitment of national and local government to ensure that the delivery of public services is more responsive to the needs of customers. In order for this commitment to be realised, it is critical that staff involved in the delivery of public services are able to work to the highest standards of customer service. By sponsoring the development of qualifications in customer service, Scottish Local Government employers have developed a mechanism to ensure that their staff can become fully aware of the underlying principles of customer service and also be able to apply them successfully in their own work situations.

This new award can, therefore, contribute to the achievement of the requisite cultural change among staff and to an increasing level of professionalism among staff in local government and associated employment in Scotland. In order to meet this aspect of the rationale, this award, in common with all 3 awards in the customer service suite, has been aligned closely with National Occupational Standards for Customer Service, Customer Service Excellence (formerly Charter Mark) and the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). By doing this, the award represents current best practice in customer service.

Overall, the 3 awards taken together can be seen as meeting the requirements to up-skill current members of staff at different levels and provide an attractive environment for new entrants, and existing staff, at various levels within local government and associated employment

### ***Catering for all levels of staff***

The second part of the rationale for the new award relates to the need to make sure that the available qualifications in customer service professionalism are suitable for all levels of staff.

A major reason for the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 is to meet the needs of those who lead, direct, support and manage effective customer service delivery within their organisation. Staff at this level will have management and leadership responsibilities which, from a customer service perspective, will require them to be able to:

- ◆ inspire, support and set examples for others to achieve excellent customer service delivery
- ◆ lead and demonstrate the principles and practical application of effective ownership in the pursuit of excellent customer service delivery
- ◆ demonstrate effective collaborative and partnership working within and/or across organisational boundaries to achieve more effective customer Outcomes;

- ◆ develop effective solutions to the customer and organisation's benefit in both routine and non-routine contexts
- ◆ display self-awareness of their own learning requirements and those of others as far as customer service is concerned

The suite of customer service awards has to cover both the needs of those whose day to day work involves dealing with customers but also the needs of those who manage staff in these customer facing roles. It is these managers who have the responsibility to build and maintain a culture of customer service excellence among their staff. As the third and final tier of the suite of awards, the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 is aimed at staff in managerial positions has, as a result, a different emphasis than the other awards in the suite. This also explains why it has been pitched at SCQF level 8.

The PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8, in conjunction with the other 2 awards at SCQF Levels 5 and 6, ensures that there are customer service qualifications available for all who require them and that managers and their staff have the opportunity to become suitably qualified. As well as helping to eliminate any danger a 'them and us' feeling, this reinforces the commitment among Local Government in Scotland to developing excellence in customer service.

Overall, therefore, the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 is an award which stems from the commitment of Scottish Councils to promote excellent customer service and to make local government an attractive place to work. Specifically, it is aimed at those whose job responsibilities require them to manage and lead others in the continuous development of excellent customer service.

### **3 Aims of the Group Award**

The general and specific aims of this Group Award reflect the fact that it has been designed for staff employed in Scottish local authorities and equivalent organisations.

#### **3.1 General aims of the Group Award**

The general aims of the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 are to enable first line managers, team leaders and supervisors to:

- 1 obtain the knowledge of the core management principles involved in effective customer service
- 2 develop an accurate and realistic insight into the effective management of customer service within Scottish local government and associated bodies
- 3 develop general management and other transferable skills within a customer service context
- 4 take ownership of customer service provision and actively develop solutions which will lead to improved organisational performance and customer experience

- 5 develop independent study and research skills both academically and in the workplace
- 6 interpret qualitative and quantitative data on customer service and draw on a range of sources in making judgments
- 7 work in ways that are reflective, self-critical and based on evidence
- 8 support career and academic progression within Scottish local government and associated bodies
- 9 create opportunities for mobility of individuals within and across organisations

### **3.2 Specific aims of the Group Award**

The specific aims of the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 are to enable candidates to:

- 1 develop skills in the effective handling, processing and referring customer complaints
- 2 champion customer service excellence in an organisation
- 3 develop knowledge and understanding of the key principles of customer service
- 4 apply principles of effective customer service in a relevant organisational context

### **3.3 Target groups**

The main target group for PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 is first line managers, team leaders and supervisors working in Scottish local government and associated bodies. It is intended that candidates will undertake the award during their employment.

This is consistent with the underlying rationale and purpose of the award which is to recognise professionalism and enable staff to acquire the skills they need to manage and lead customer service.

### **3.4 Employment opportunities**

This award has been designed for existing employees in Scottish local authorities and associated bodies. As such, therefore, it is not primarily intended to open up employment opportunities for candidates.

Nevertheless, the proposed new PDA may open up employment opportunities for successful candidates. This is because they will now have accredited capabilities in promoting and managing customer service excellence. As a result, holders of the PDA may be better placed to move vertically or laterally in a managerial role with their current employer. They may also be in a stronger position to take advantage of employment opportunities with other employers.



## 4 Access to Group Award

No prior knowledge and skills are required before embarking on this PDA. However, individuals should possess an understanding of the principles involved in effective customer service.

Access to this PDA will be given to:

- 1 Individuals occupying, or aspiring to occupy, first line management positions, team leaders and supervisors who are leading, supporting, directing others in front line customer service delivery.
- 2 Individuals not possessing formal qualifications but who do have substantive experience of operating at the required level.
- 3 Individuals holding a qualification if it is considered that they have the potential to undertake the PDA as part of continuing professional development: These qualifications may be in the same area (for example, the Customer Service Professional Award at SCQF level 5 or the Customer Service Professional Certificate at SCQF level 6); in a different area at an appropriate level (such as SCQF level 7 or 8); or an out of date qualification in a similar area at an appropriate level.

Centres will have the discretion to put forward candidates if it is considered that they have the potential to undertake the PDA as part of continuing professional development.

Candidates for the award should also be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to cope with an award at SCQF level 8. They could do this, for example, through their current level of occupational responsibility or through prior achievement of awards at SCQF level 7 or equivalent.

## 5 Group Award structure

The structure of the award reflects the rationale outlined in section 2 above. A distinctive feature of this award is that it contains a Graded Unit [FG5P 35] which is designed to enable candidates to synthesise and integrate the other Units of the award.

### 5.1 Framework

The Professional Development Award (PDA) in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 consists of 4 mandatory Units, each of 1 HN credit value. There are no optional Units. The structure is illustrated below:

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation	FE6W 35	8	8	1
Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation	FE6V 35	8	8	1
Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation	FE6X 35	8	8	1
Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation Graded Unit 1	FG5P 35	8	8	1

The PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 will be awarded to candidates who achieve the 4 mandatory Units. Each Unit in the award carries 1 HN credit and successful candidates will, therefore, gain a total of 32 credit points at SCQF level 8.

The structure follows directly from the Units in the Customer Service Professional Award at SCQF level 5 and the Customer Service Professional Certificate at SCQF level 6 which are the first 2 awards in the suite of 3 customer service awards available for local authority staff. This applies particularly to the first 3 Units which focus on the identified need to develop a culture of excellence in customer service among local authority employees.

The second part of the rationale is addressed by the Graded Unit, FG5P 35. This identifies the need to ensure that the suite of customer service awards meets the needs of all members of staff and is why this award is targeted at managers who have responsibility for developing and leading customer service excellence. The choice of a Graded Unit enables the award to take advantage of two key devices of SQA Graded Units:

- ◆ the Integrative Approach where a project is used to ‘bind’ the learning of the subject specific Units in an award together
- ◆ grading, where the completed work is assessed and recorded against three possible levels (A, B, and C) or ‘Fail’.

The Graded Unit thus enables managers to undertake an integrative work-based project on the provision of excellent customer service. As well as emphasising the

more integrative nature of this PDA compared to the others in the suite, the Graded Unit offers candidates a challenge appropriate to an award at SCQF level 8 and one which is relevant to the role of a first line manager, team leader or supervisor.

Candidates will be given a grade for this Unit. This grade applies to the Unit and does not extend to the PDA as a whole.

## 5.2 Mapping information

The new award has been aligned with the National Occupational Standards (NOS) in Customer Service.

The following table shows the Units which make up the PDA. It demonstrates:

- 1 how each of the award's Units map to the relevant NOS Unit;
- 2 how each of the award's Units maps into the SVQ Customer Service at level 3 (GA52 23) and level 4 (GA3R 24)

<i>Unit(s)</i>	<i>NOS</i>	<i>SVQ Unit</i>
<i>FE6W 35: Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public sector Organisation</i>	NOS Unit F4 — Demonstrate understanding of the rules that impact on improvements in customer service	FE2T 04
<i>FE6V 35: Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation</i>	NOS Unit F3 — Demonstrate understanding of customer service	FE2R 04
<i>FE6X 35: Implement Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation</i>	NOS Unit C8 — Handle referred customer complaints	FE3P 04
<i>FE6W 35 and FE6V 35</i>	NOS Unit B14 — Review the quality of customer service	FE3L 04
<i>FE6W 35, FE6V 35; FE6X 35 and FEGP 35: Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation Graded Unit 1</i>	NOS Unit B15 — Build and maintain effective customer relations	FE3M 04

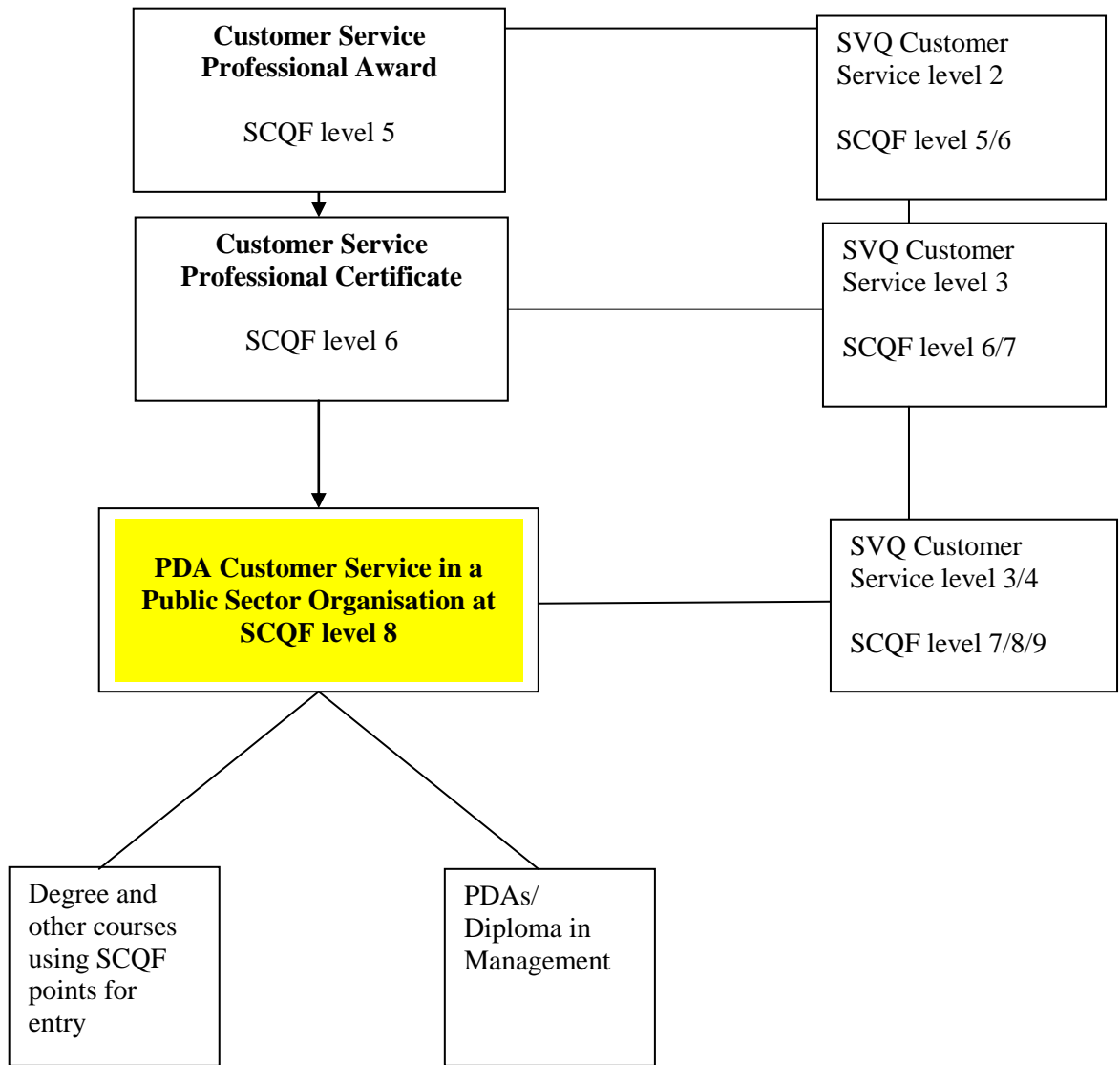
In addition, as the table below shows, the Units in the award are aligned to the specific aims of the award. Overall, therefore, the structure of the award is consistent with the aims of the PDA and reflects national occupational standards in customer service.

Unit Code	Unit Title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4
FE6W 35	Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation	✓			✓
FE6V 35	Promoting Excellent Customer Service Organisation within a Public Sector Organisation		✓		✓
FE6X 35	Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation			✓	✓
FG5P 35	Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation: Graded Unit 1	✓	✓	✓	✓

### 5.3 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer

The diagram on the following page illustrates the progression between the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 and the other awards in the Customer Service Professional suite. There is a smooth progression from the Award at SCQF level 5 to the Certificate at SCQF level 6 but there is a discontinuity in progression to the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8. This is to ensure that this PDA is suitable for those in an occupational role which involved championing customer service excellence.

The diagram also shows how the suite of awards fits in with the SVQ in Customer Service and possible progression from this PDA. There is no direct progression into other qualifications as this PDA has been designed as the final part of a suite of awards. However, candidates will gain SCQF credit points which they can use towards other qualifications and will have demonstrated a capacity to study at SCQF level 8.



## 6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

### *Approaches to delivery*

This PDA has been developed specifically for candidates employed with Scottish local authorities or associated bodies. The target client group is people currently occupying posts in local authorities and associated bodies and the intention is that the award will be delivered by online learning. This will enable candidates to work at a time and place of their own choosing.

Candidates employed by local authorities will have access to eNet Learn™, a system also used for the customer service awards at SCQF Levels 5 and 6. It is widely used in Scottish local government and, as a result, candidates are likely to be familiar with it.

The e-learning arrangements can be supported by Learning Coaches who are likely to be Council staff appointed on the basis of their experience and expertise in customer service delivery in local government. This replicates the system that has worked well for the Award and Certificate qualifications.

The flexibility of an e-learning approach together with the input from Learning Coaches should enable a number of different learning techniques to be used in the delivery of the PDA. These can range from conventional tutorials arranged perhaps at candidates' places of work to more recent electronic based methods such as blogs, virtual classrooms, smart-groups and eforums.

The Units in the awards are practical, applied Units in that candidates are expected to relate them to organisational situations with which they are familiar. The e-learning system is a dedicated system for local government and this can help to ensure that the Units can be delivered in a context appropriate to the candidates. The flexibility of the system and of the Units themselves means that candidates will be able to tailor their study to the particular situations relevant to them and to the specific customer service needs of the organisations for which they work. In this way delivery can reinforce the underlying objective of the PDA to raise the quality of customer service in local government in Scotland.

Candidates who are not yet in suitable first line managerial posts with a customer service responsibility should be able to make use of their current work situation when undertaking Units, eg perhaps by participating in special projects.

### *Approaches to assessment*

The assessment methods for the PDA in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8 are conducted on a Unit basis. The following table summarises the methods of assessment used for each of the Units which make up the qualification.

<b>Unit Code</b>	<b>Unit Title</b>	<b>Method of Assessment</b>
FE6W 35	Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation	Report based on candidate's own organisation [alternatively candidates may respond to a case study]
FE6V 35	Promoting Excellent Customer Service Organisation within a Public Sector Organisation	Report based on candidate's own organisation [alternatively candidates may respond to a case study]
FE6X 35	Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation	Report based on candidate's own organisation [alternatively candidates may respond to a case study]
FG5P 35	Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation: Graded Unit 1	Practical Investigation Project Graded A, B or C

The preferred method of assessment for each of the first 3 Units is a report based on investigations undertaken by the candidate within her/his own organisation. Ideally, this should enable candidates to explore issues which are directly related to their current work situation. Candidates can be given a brief for the report to ensure that they adequately cover the requirements of the Unit. It is possible, if desired, for candidates to combine their work for all 3 Units into a single report.

Where candidates are unable to make use of their current work situation it is acceptable for assessment to be based on a case study of a local authority which could be real or hypothetical.

Both assessment approaches should allow candidates to demonstrate that they have understood the key principles of customer service and that they can apply them to work situations with which they are familiar.

Assessments can be administered online which would be consistent with the anticipated methods of delivery. If this is the case, suitable arrangements should be in place to ensure that evidence submitted is authentic. The e-learning system developed for local authorities does have suitable facilities.

## 7 General information for centres

### Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

### 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 and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## 8 General information for candidates

Welcome to the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation at SCQF level 8. The award aims to be an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience for you. It is designed to enable you to:

- ◆ inspire, support and set examples for others to achieve excellent customer service delivery
- ◆ lead and demonstrate the principles and practical application of effective ownership in the pursuit of excellent customer service delivery
- ◆ demonstrate effective collaborative and partnership working within and/or across organisational boundaries to achieve more effective customer Outcomes
- ◆ develop effective solutions to the customer and organisation's benefit in both routine and non-routine contexts

This PDA is one of a set of Customer Service qualifications which have been especially devised for people working in Scottish local government or associated organisations. This qualification, like the other two, is endorsed by CoSLA, the umbrella organisation for Scottish local government.

The award consists of 4 Units and you will be expected to take each of them. The Units are:

- 1 Applying the Principles of Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation
- 2 Promoting Excellent Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation
- 3 Implementing Best Practice in Customer Complaint Handling within a Public Sector Organisation
- 4 Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation: Graded Unit 1



Each of the first 3 Units follows a similar pattern. You will learn some key principles of customer service and be asked to compare them with what happens in your own organisation. The Units are, therefore, practical and they should help you develop ideas to improve customer service in your area of work. If you are working for a Scottish Local Authority, the Units will be delivered online using the electronic learning system specifically developed for Scottish local authorities. This will allow you to study at times which are convenient for you.

The fourth Unit is a little different. It is designed to bring together the other 3 Units. For it you will be expected to do a work based project to investigate customer service in some part of your organisation. You will be expected to draw conclusions on how customer service could be improved.

By completing the PDA you will not only enhance your own skills in managing customer service but you will also gain recognition for the professionalism which you have acquired.

You will complete the PDA if you successfully complete all the assessments associated with the 4 Units. You will be given a grade of A, B or C for the Customer Service within a Public Sector Organisation Graded Unit depending on how well you undertake the project. Good luck with your studies.

## 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](http://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.