

**Arrangements for:**

**National Progression Award in  
Contact Centre Employability Skills  
at SCQF level 4**

**Group Award Code: GF97 44**

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## **Acknowledgement**

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

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# 1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the National Progression Award (NPA) in Contact Centre Employability Skills at SCQF level 4, which was validated in June 2012.

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.

NPAs are designed to help people reach their goals in employability and are aimed at developing a defined set of skills and knowledge in specific specialist vocational areas.

The NPA in Contact Centre Employability Skills at SCQF level 4 is designed to assist candidates from a wide range of backgrounds to develop an awareness of the contact centre industry, while developing skills and competences to enable employment in the customer service based, contact centre industry.

The NPA enables centres to structure their course programmes to be delivered in association with the needs of employers, and prepares candidates for future employment or for further study. It can also be used as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for those already employed.

# 2 Rationale for the development of the award

Following an initial proposal, consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders, on a new, nationally recognised qualification in contact/call centre skills. As a result of the consultation, a strong need was established for a qualification in this area at SCQF level 4. The consultation exercise found that stakeholders recognised the benefits of having confident employees who have achieved a nationally recognised and certificated standard of training and education, relevant to their job.

Feedback from stakeholders also suggested a need for specific topics to be accommodated in the new qualification, including an awareness of data protection, misuse of computers, dos and don'ts of social networking sites, root cause analysis, prioritising work load, ability to handle attitudes, after sale skills and listening skills. These topics were addressed as part of the process of devising the framework for the qualification and can be accommodated through approaches to learning and teaching.

As part of the consultation and research process, key strategic information published by the Scottish Government on economic growth and employability informed the development, eg 'Draft Youth Employment Strategy'.

The development also took account of developments in A Curriculum for Excellence, embracing the four capacities with specific reference to the individual capacity relating to Responsible Citizens (see section 6.1).

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

The NPA prepares candidates to enter the world of work with improved skills and enhanced personal development, and also facilitates further study.

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

Principal aims of the NPA are to:

- 1 develop employment skills in relation to the contact centre industry
- 2 develop the personal skills and attributes to work effectively within the call centre industry
- 3 provide a range of development opportunities for Core and essential skills, within the context of contact centre operations
- 4 provide candidates with the skills and attributes required to provide effective customer service
- 5 provide candidates with opportunities to learn a range of specialist selling techniques used in contact centre disciplines
- 6 provide candidates with the underpinning knowledge and practical experience of health and safety practices necessary in a contact centre environment

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

General aims of the NPA are to:

- 1 provide an award structure which has sufficient flexibility to allow for a various modes of delivery and target groups.
- 2 enable progression within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications framework (SCQF)
- 3 develop generic transferable skills
- 4 encourage candidates to take charge of their own learning and development (thus supporting four capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence)

#### **3.3 Target groups**

The NPA is targeted at candidates preparing to enter employment and those already in employment seeking recognition and certification of their skills.

The NPA is particularly appropriate for delivery within centres developing employability programmes, and particularly for those candidates who are interested in pursuing a career in the contact centre industry. However, the NPA will also benefit a broad range of candidates who wish to progress to employment within the wider customer service industry.

The development was informed by the Scottish Government's Draft Youth Employment Strategy to improve the opportunities for young people to progress through education employment or training, and young people who may not have substantial work experience are a key target group for this NPA. However, a range of candidates may be catered for regardless of age, gender, or background.

### 3.4 Employment opportunities

The NPA provides opportunities for candidates' to demonstrate the ability to manage information, be effective communicators and deliver a product or a service in the capacity of an employee or an active practitioner within a service setting.

Successful candidates may progress to employment within contact centres, or the wider customer service industry. However, the generic employability skills developed within the NPA prepare candidates for employment in general, rather than a single specific occupation, and a range of options may be available.

Alternatively, successful candidates may undertake further studies in related areas such as opportunities through Skills for Work programs or Modern Apprenticeships.

## 4 Access

Entry is at the discretion of the centre, with no specific prior learning required. However, it is expected that candidates will demonstrate the potential to acquire and/or use the necessary level of Core Skills to undertake the course. The table below gives recommended entry levels of Core Skills, for guidance purposes.

Core Skill	SCQF level	
	Recommended Entry	Anticipated Exit
Communication	2	4
Information and Communication Technology	2	4
Numeracy	2	4
Problem Solving	2	4
Working with Others	2	4

## 5 Group Award structure

### 5.1 Framework

Unit title	Code	SCQF level	SQA credit value	SCQF credit points
<b>Mandatory Section — 2.75 SQA credits required</b>				
Contact Centre Skills: Call Handling	DN8E 10	4	1	6
Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 1	DN8F 10	4	1	6
Preparing for Employment: First Steps	F786 09	3	0.25	1.5
Building Own Employability Skills	F787 09	3	0.5	3

<b>Optional Section 1 — 0.25 SQA credits required</b>				
Responsibilities of Employment or Dealing with Work Situations	F788 09 F789 09	3	0.25	1.5
<b>Optional Section 2 — 1.0 SQA credits required</b>				
Contact Centre Skills: Selling Skills	DN8K 10	4	1	6
Contact Centre Skills: Information and Communication Technology	DN8G 10	4	1	6
Contact Centre Skills: Personal and Organisational Effectiveness	DN8H 10	4	1	6
Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 2	DN8J 11	5	1	6

## 5.2 Conditions of Award

Candidates successfully completing 4 SQA credits (24 SCQF credit points) will gain the Group Award.

This includes 2.75 mandatory SQA credits (10.5 SCQF credit points), 0.25 SQA credits (1.5 SCQF credit points) from optional section 1, and a further 1.0 SQA credits (6 SCQF credit points) from optional section 2.

## 5.3 Nested Employability Award

An additional Group Award is nested within the framework, which candidates can achieve concurrently with the NPA. Successful candidates will achieve the required credits to gain the Employability Award (G9D2 43), which consists of two mandatory Units, plus one option:

### Mandatory

- ◆ Preparing for Employment: First Steps (F786 09)
- ◆ Building Own Employability Skills (F787 09)

### Option

- ◆ Responsibilities of Employment (F788 09), or
- ◆ Dealing with Work Situations (F789 09)

**Note — for candidates to gain the Employability Award, centres must enter them for the Group Award code once they have achieved the Units (there is no additional charge for this entry).**

## 5.4 National Occupational Standards (NOS)

The NPA builds on best practice from employer engagement and the understanding of employer demands, and aims to facilitate routes to employment for candidates. In so doing, the NPA broadly aligns National Occupational Standards as detailed in Appendix 1.

## **6 Approaches to delivery and assessment**

### **6.1 Content and context**

The NPA in Contact Centre Employability Skills at SCQF level 4 is designed to develop candidates' potential as employable, contributing members of society through the development of life skills related to task management, social interaction, and self-reflection. The NPA also provides opportunities for candidates' to demonstrate the ability to manage information, be effective communicators and deliver a product or a service in the capacity of an employee or an active practitioner within a service setting.

An important aspect of employability is the ability to continue in employment. The generic employability skills, developed will enable candidates to prepare for a range of areas of employment.

The NPA embraces the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, with specific reference to the individual capacity relating to responsible citizens, through:

- ◆ Learning through self-development and team working
- ◆ Accepting responsibility on both a personal and task related basis
- ◆ Contributing and sharing values within society

The NPA could be delivered in secondary schools, colleges and as a school/college partnership.

### **6.2 Delivery**

The delivery and assessment of the Group Award is intended to be of a practical nature wherever possible, and in so doing, reflect the practical nature of the industry.

The structure lends itself to a variety of delivery approaches and opportunities. Some Units could be delivered on a part-time basis, full time, or embedded within a broader programme of study. The NPA is capable of capturing achievement in small chunks of learning.

The NPA could be delivered in a number of ways, and sequence of delivery could depend on factors including:

- ◆ the individual candidate, including any prior learning
- ◆ local and national requirements for employment,
- ◆ required criteria laid down by other bodies for candidate progression, such as candidate funding
- ◆ duration of the programme of study
- ◆ resources/timetabling

Delivery could be supported through a variety of teaching and learning approaches, including:

- ◆ tutor or teacher led working with groups or individuals
- ◆ internet research
- ◆ work placement visits
- ◆ visiting speakers
- ◆ practical activities
- ◆ simulation/role-play
- ◆ candidate presentations
- ◆ peer support
- ◆ E-assessment, supported by ICT, eg e-portfolios and checklists
- ◆ projects
- ◆ group work

These methods are indicative and are neither mandatory nor exhaustive.

Centres should consider the inclusion of the following topics: data protection, misuse of computers, dos and don'ts of social networking sites, root cause analysis, prioritising work load, ability to handle attitudes, aftersales skills and listening skills.

There are opportunities to include and address these skills, especially within the following Units:

- ◆ DN8E 10: Contact Centre Skills: Call Handling
- ◆ DN8F 10: Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 1
- ◆ DN8K 10: Contact Centre Skills: Selling Skills
- ◆ DN8G 10: Contact Centre Skills: Information and Communication Technology
- ◆ DN8J 11: Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 2

There are opportunities for integrated learning and assessment across Units and where possible a holistic approach should be taken to the delivery and assessment of the Group Award. Course leaders should encourage integration and contextualisation of Units wherever possible to avoid over assessment and ensure that Core Skills are made meaningful for candidates.

### **6.3 Core Skills**

The Unit Contact Centre Skills: Personal and Organisational Effectiveness (DN8H 10) has two Core Skills embedded within it. Candidates completing this Unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skills of Problem Solving and Working with Others at SCQF level 4.

There are no other embedded Core Skills, but opportunities to develop Core Skills may arise through activities undertaken in other Units, depending on learning and teaching approaches adopted. Examples are highlighted below:

**Oral Communication at SCQF level 4** could be covered through the mandatory Unit Contact Centre Skills: Call Handling (DN8E 10). The emphasis of this Unit is on speaking, listening and questioning skills. Candidates are required to elicit, confirm and convey essential information ensuring that they speak clearly and audibly. They are also required to adapt their tone, register and language to meet the needs of callers and manage the escalation of customer issues. In addition, Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 1 (DN8F 10) requires performance evidence of the candidate handling customer complaints.

**Written Communication (Reading) at SCQF level 3** could be developed through the Unit Contact Centre Skills: Selling Skills (DN8K 10), in which candidates must gather information on appropriate products and services and match the products and services to customer requirements. This requires candidates to evaluate how well the product or service meets the customer's needs. Candidates could also be required to work to scripts for routine selling.

The mandatory Unit Building Own Employability Skills (F787 09) may also provide opportunities to develop this Core Skill. Candidates are required to find information about employment opportunities, which could be from newspaper adverts, Job Centre Plus or the internet. Candidates need to identify what is required from a job advert, including what skills are required for the job and decide if it is suitable.

**Written Communication (Writing) at SCQF level 3** could be developed through the mandatory Unit Building Own Employability Skills. Candidates are required to fill in an application form and produce curriculum vitae (CV).

**Information and Communication Technology (Accessing information) at SCQF level 4** could be developed through the mandatory Unit Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 1 (DN8F 10). Candidates are required to respond to customer needs using ICT which involves using appropriate technology to locate and provide relevant information. In addition, the optional Unit Contact Centre Skills: Information and Communication Technology (DN8G 10) provides excellent opportunities for development of this component. Candidates are required to locate and provide relevant information to customers.

**Information and Communication Technology (Providing/Creating information) at SCQF level 4** could be developed within the mandatory Unit Contact Centre Skills: Call Handling (DN8E 10), which requires candidates to use ICT to maintain electronic files and record information on a database. In addition, Contact Centre Skills: Information and Communication Technology (DN8G 10) requires candidates to input data, create customer records and edit customer information. Candidates are also required to use ICT to locate and provide information to customers.

## 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 moderation

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

External moderation 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 moderation 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

The National Progression Award (NPA) in Contact Centre Employability Skills (SCQF level 4) is a nationally recognised qualification which develops knowledge and skills in contact centre operations, employability and customer service.

The contact centre and wider customer service industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK and the NPA can enhance your potential career opportunities in this area. As part of the course, you will learn modern call centre skills and how to apply the latest principles from a customer service oriented, professional standpoint.

The NPA can help you into employment, further learning and/or other training opportunities. Successful completion of all the Units and activities will result in you building on your experiences, developing your skills and increasing your confidence.

The NPA in Contact Centre Employability Skills at SCQF level 4 consists of 4 SQA credits. The Units ensure that you gain experience and skills in the following areas:

- ◆ preparing for employment
- ◆ building employability skills.
- ◆ responsibilities of employment.
- ◆ dealing with work situations.
- ◆ call handling.
- ◆ customer care

There are no formal entry requirements for access to the NPA. However, it is expected that you can demonstrate the potential to acquire and/or use the necessary level of Core Skills to undertake the course.

### **Progression pathways**

The NPA provides opportunities for you to demonstrate the ability to manage information, be effective communicators and deliver a product or a service in the capacity of an employee or an active practitioner within a service setting.

Once you have completed the NPA, you may progress to employment within contact centres, or the wider customer service industry. However, the employability skills you have developed will help you prepare for employment in general, and a range of options may be available.

Alternatively, you may undertake further studies in related areas such as opportunities through Skills for Work programs or Modern Apprenticeships. Progression may be possible through employer based development such as the level 2 SVQ in Contact Centre Operations (SCQF Level 5).

## **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 (see Section 6 for further information on this).

**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 Core Skill Unit:** This is a Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills, eg HN Units in Information Technology or Communication.

**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/D 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: Mapping of National Occupational Standards

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SVQ Level 1: Contact Centre Operations		Group A		Group B					Group C								
Unit title	Code	A1	A2	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9
Contact Centre Skills: Call Handling	DN8E 10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓		
Contact Centre Skills: Customer Care 1	DN8F 10	✓	✓		✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		
Preparing for Employment: First Steps	F786 09		✓														
Building Own Employability Skills	F787 09		✓														
Responsibilities of Employment	F788 09		✓			✓	✓										
Dealing with Work Situations	F789 09		✓			✓	✓										
Contact Centre Skills: Selling Skills	DN8K 10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓		
Contact Centre Skills: Information and Communication Technology	DN8G 10	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓
Contact Centre Skills: Personal and Organisational Effectiveness	DN8H 10		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓				
Contact Centre Skills: Selling Skills: Customer Care 2	DN8J 11		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓		