SQA | Scottish Qualifications Authority

Group Award Specification for:

SQA Advanced Certificate in Visual Communication

Group Award code — GR9T 47

SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication

Group Award code — GR9R 48

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Contents

1   Introduction

This document was previously known as the Arrangements Document. The purpose of this document is to:

♦ assist centres to implement, deliver, and manage the qualification
♦ provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the qualification
♦ inform course managers, teaching staff, assessors, learners, employers, and higher education institutions of the aims and purpose of the qualification
♦ provide details of the range of learners that the qualification is suitable for and the progression opportunities

This document includes background information on the original development of and latest revisions to the qualifications, aims, guidance on access, details of the structure, and guidance on delivery.

These qualifications are presented to meet the challenges of the design industry in the 21st century. They are designed to meet employers' and candidates' expressed needs and priorities. They will develop practical creative competences within the discipline of Visual Communication, along with appropriate technical skills through in-depth study of the current design industry.

The SQA Advanced Diploma further develops the knowledge, skills and competencies of the SQA Advanced Certificate, while focusing on specific aspects of the industry; in terms of preparing candidates for roles that require creativity, creative thinking, critical analysis, planning and reflection. The SQA Advanced Diploma demands a high level of self-management and responsibility for action, which is distinct from the SQA Advanced Certificate.

Candidates undertaking the SQA Advanced Certificate or SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication will examine the subject from a number of perspectives. They will have an opportunity to develop their creativity, study appropriate business areas as well as technology. In addition, candidates will undertake and present credible research in areas of practice offering potential future employment.

These qualifications provide an opportunity for candidates to prepare themselves for a career within the creative industries, for example, as a designer. They equip those seeking such a career with a rigorous and relevant educational experience to enhance their aims and career goals. These qualifications also give a solid foundation from which candidates could progress to further study, eg a degree level course.

In recent years, the number of candidates exiting visual communication qualifications at SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma level to embark upon a career as a designer has increased rapidly. These SQA Advanced Qualifications have two distinct pathways: to provide candidates with a thorough and comprehensive education that can lead to vocational employment and to offer candidates the opportunity to establish a strong and creative educational foundation from which to further their studies within a degree programme.

The demand for courses within the areas of graphic design, illustration and new media has maintained its popularity.

There is evidence to suggest that arts and entertainment and media are among the sectors likely to provide the greatest increase in employment opportunities over the next decade. Recent work on the scale of the arts and creative industries sector in Scotland supports this. An Economic Contribution Study: An Approach to the Economic Assessment of the Arts and Creative Industries in Scotland commissioned by Creative Scotland and Scottish Enterprise has stated that the sector is worth £3.2 billion to the country's economy. This is of greater value than life sciences, worth £3.1 billion and not far behind tourism, on £4 billion. The financial services industry is thought to contribute some £7 billion. The study estimates that the arts also generate an additional £3 billion in the benefits to various businesses that supply and service the cultural sector.

As a key sector, creative industries boost innovation, productivity and employment, and it is vital that centres are fully engaged with relevant sectors and work with businesses to produce the skills, knowledge, design and innovation needed to be world class.

There is a growing need for designers and professionals with creative skills to exemplify the ability to develop entrepreneurial skills, as well as demonstrate an understanding of commercial possibilities within their area of expertise.

Creative and artistic talent is abundant in Scotland, and with the demands of the design market it is essential that designers have the skills to actively gain employment or set themselves up as a company and to market and promote themselves if they choose to do so. Professional practice is of paramount importance within the area of visual communication. The SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma places a strong focus on the skills that are required to work at a professional level and this emphasis of professionalism is evident throughout all the subject areas within the award. There are two new units with an emphasis on professional practice; both units have been written specifically for art and design specialisms.

The awards offer four key routes of specialism within them which are supported by a substantial group of optional subjects which will complement the candidate's development within their chosen area of focus. This approach ensures that the group award has a greater deal of flexibility.

2 Aims of the qualifications

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has been given due consideration in the design of these group awards. This has resulted in the SQA Advanced Diploma being broadly equivalent to the second year of a Scottish degree. All new units have been allocated an SCQF level; generally, the first year SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma is level 7 while the second year SQA Advanced Diploma is level 8.

Practical skills are developed in the vast majority of individual units, most of which require a final demonstration of skills before an assessor and an appropriate audience. This regular requirement for formal and less formal presentation will develop an awareness of how to improve the presentation of the candidate and their work as well as building the candidate's confidence.

Self-evaluative skills are developed through an integrated approach to assessment. The mandatory units at SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma level require regular self-assessment, which will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. This will provide candidates with the skills and discipline necessary to identify areas of strength and weakness in their studies, and an opportunity to produce strategies and targets for improvement.

With regard to potential employment and success, while formal qualifications are one route and show a progression of the basic skills required by employers, they are arguably of less importance than demonstrable talent and the evidence of a strong portfolio of work. The nature of the employment market is such that work in this area is often self-employed, or through employment for short periods on specific project briefs. To gain such employment, the appropriate characteristics and aptitudes must be proven on demand. The awards have therefore been designed to reflect the diversity of the jobs market by integrating skills in each of the graded units. The SQA Advanced Certificate graded unit demands that the candidate works closely to the stringent parameters of a design brief undergoing a variety of presentation/mentoring sessions in order to simulate the realistic process of dealing with a client and tendering for work. In the SQA Advanced Diploma graded unit the same approach applies regarding potential employment/progression. The assessment of the Graded Unit 2 will be in the creation and presentation of design work appropriate to the requirements of a specified design brief. Candidates will also give verbal and written analysis and justification for their design solutions.

2.1 General aims of the qualifications

The SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma Group Award has a range of general aims as well as some specific aims. These general aims are to:

- ♦ develop communication and interpersonal skills
- ♦ develop candidates' skills as either, graphic designers, illustrators, new media designers or creative personnel
- ♦ develop self-presentation skills
- ♦ develop self-evaluative skills, enabling professional development
- ♦ develop analytical skills
- ♦ develop the ability to work independently and as part of a team
- ♦ develop self-assurance and the confidence to perform to potential

♦ develop professional attitudes
♦ enhance employment prospects and/or facilitate progression to higher education
♦ enable progress within the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF)

2.2 Specific aims of the qualification(s)

The aims of the SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication are to develop the following areas of skills and knowledge:

♦ an ability to analyse and synthesise knowledge and skills acquired through study
♦ an ability to develop study, organisational and research skills
♦ an ability to develop innovation, originality and creativity
♦ to build proficiency in time management and professional practice and promote accuracy in the presentation of design work
♦ an ability to develop critical analysis; to reflect on own work and continually strive for best practice
♦ an ability to integrate these skills in practical or business application
♦ an ability to develop competencies in a range of specialised areas in line with preferred career aims
♦ to enable progression to further study in a visual communication related discipline
♦ to enable the adoption of innovative practices and creativity in work and ability to respond quickly to the challenges posed by changes in the visual communication industry
♦ an ability to develop personal skills and follow creative industry protocol

Other key aims are to:

♦ prepare candidates for interview for employment
♦ prepare candidates for progression to higher education
♦ develop self-assurance and confidence and to meet the needs of the labour market

Centres may wish to select optional units within specialist subject areas that will allow candidates to have a main area of focus and expertise, for example, Graphic Design, New Media and Illustration — *Figure 1*.
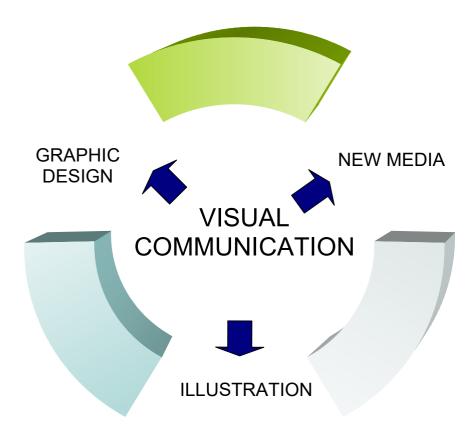
Figure 1 — The three main areas that define the Visual Communication Awards at both SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma level.

This would give candidates the opportunity to gain extremely advanced skills within a visual communication specialism which may strongly enhance the candidate's prospects of successful progression into both employment and higher education. Candidates should be encouraged to evaluate, research, develop and contextualise their concepts and designs in response to their chosen area.

Other subject-related aims are to:

♦ develop an understanding of the influence and contribution made by visual communication within the 20th and 21st centuries
♦ develop knowledge and understanding in at least three disciplines within visual communication
♦ develop an understanding of interdisciplinary connections between the various subject areas within visual communication
♦ demonstrate that by combining perspectives from more than one subject, particular themes can be examined, explained and thereby understood in a more comprehensive manner
♦ develop an open-minded, critical and evaluative approach to study
♦ develop investigation and research skills
♦ gain knowledge and understanding of different research methods

♦ gain knowledge of competing views, perspectives, theories and evidence from a variety of subjects to enable the candidate to adopt as comprehensive an approach as possible

Having experience of different subjects within the context of visual communication will allow candidates to make informed choices for later specialisation if so desired. However, if needed for articulation purposes, it will be possible for candidates to choose a variety of different subject areas within each group award rather than focusing on a dedicated specialism.

2.3 Employment opportunities

The awards provide the skills and knowledge demanded of a modern work environment. The following occupational areas accepted the relevance of these awards and stated that candidates who gained an SQA Advanced Certificate or SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication could successfully progress into employment, for example, as:

♦ Graphic Designers
♦ Design Agencies
♦ Illustrators
♦ Web Designers
♦ Multimedia Designers
♦ Social Media Managers
♦ Commercial Printers
♦ Publishers
♦ Computer Animation Companies
♦ Game Design Companies

The mandatory units and large variety of optional units ensure provision can be made to match employer demand.

2.4 Articulation with degree programme

An SQA Advanced Diploma Award can lead to articulation into year 3 of a degree programme but this is at the discretion of each university and is based on the portfolio evidence presented by the individual candidate at interview. Articulation to year 2 of a degree programme with an SQA Advanced Award is also a popular route of progression.

3 Recommended entry to the qualification(s)

Entry to this qualification is at the discretion of the centre. The following information on prior knowledge, skills, experience, or qualifications that provide suitable preparation for this qualification has been provided by the Qualification Design Team as guidance only.

Learners would benefit from having attained the skills, knowledge, and understanding required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

Access will be at the discretion of the centre however, given the demands of the Course, it is recommended that candidates demonstrate competence in one of the following:

- ♦ SQA National Units and Courses in relevant areas at Higher level
- ♦ GCSE 'A' level in Art and Design related subjects and other relevant GCE Awards

Existing Art and Design Courses, however, have a tradition of offering opportunities to applicants who may be without formal qualifications and who may have experienced social exclusion. Therefore, centres are encouraged to support fully the tradition of social inclusion and continue to provide opportunities for applicants from non-traditional programmes. In such cases, centres are encouraged to take into account experience, life skills and potential ability.

The design of the awards offers articulation and progression with:

Secondary education

- ♦ SQA National Units and Courses in appropriate subjects at Higher level
- ♦ GSVQ (level 3) Art and Design or other appropriate awards
- ♦ specialisms appropriate to the SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication evidenced by appropriate qualifications

Further education

- ♦ SQA National Units and Courses in appropriate subjects at Higher level
- ♦ GSVQ (level 3) Art and Design or other appropriate awards
- ♦ GCSE 'A' levels in appropriate subjects
- ♦ specialisms appropriate to SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication evidenced by appropriate qualifications

As with all SQA qualifications, access will be at the discretion of the centre offering the group awards and the following recommendations are for guidance only.

The following are recommendations regarding minimum levels of interest, skill and competence required by a prospective candidate for entry to the SQA Advanced Certificate Group Award or the first year of the two year SQA Advanced Diploma Award:

- ♦ a strong interest in visual communication and art and design practices and associated skills demonstrated in the presentation of a portfolio of work
- ♦ applicants should demonstrate ability to SCQF level 6 (Higher) in Art and Design and English (or language-based subject such as Economics, History or Modern Studies, etc would be acceptable) along with three National 5 passes or equivalent

- an appropriate programme of study at National Qualification level in Graphics, Illustration, Digital Design, Digital Media, Portfolio Preparation or other visual communication related areas
- an existing SQA Advanced Certificate Group Award in order to articulate into the second year of the SQA Advanced Diploma Group Award
- qualifications comparable to the above gained from other awarding bodies
- mature candidates may bring other qualities and qualifications, which may be appropriate. Prior or experiential learning may also be considered appropriate in some circumstances

Formal academic achievements will not in themselves represent adequate entry criteria. A more accurate prediction of candidate attainment may be achieved through appraisal, which includes an element of guidance. This will normally include a formal interview where applicants should demonstrate their artistic and creative ability to SQA Higher level by presenting a portfolio of work. This sort of contact will enable an appropriate and realistic assessment of suitability for this group award. For example, an applicant may apply and be interviewed. During the interview it becomes apparent to the interviewer that the skills and interests of this particular applicant are more suited to computer arts with a focus on multimedia and web production. In this scenario the applicant will be guided to and informed of this option.

Academic staff with experience in course tutorship, student counselling, advice and guidance, work placement and post-qualification career monitoring may also carry out a non-academic assessment interview.

This informally structured, adaptive interview process will allow the candidate to form a realistic perception of the group award and its demands in terms of workload, content and assessment methods. This will improve retention and allow for earlier career planning and development.

Entry into the SQA Advanced Diploma will nearly always be through the SQA Advanced Certificate, but centres may wish to consider Accreditation of Prior Learning where appropriate. Candidates are required to achieve the 12 credits required of the SQA Advanced Certificate Award before progressing to the SQA Advanced Diploma Award. Candidates should also have attained the recommended Core Skills entry profiles before undertaking the awards.

3.1 Core Skills entry profile

The five Core Skills recognised by SQA are at levels from National 3 to Higher (SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 6).

The Core Skill entry profile provides a summary of the associated assessment activities that exemplify why a particular level has been recommended for this qualification. The information would be used to identify whether additional learning support needs should be put in place for learners whose Core Skills profile is below the recommended entry level, or whether learners should be encouraged to do an alternative level or learning programme.

SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma in Visual Communications

The minimum recommended Core Skill entry profiles for the SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication are:

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile
Communication	5
Numeracy	4
Information and communication technology (ICT)	4
Problem solving	5
Working with others	5

Many candidates will have entry profiles beyond the minimum requirements, and selection interviews will additionally focus on a high level of personal qualities essential to success in the vocational area.

The general aims of the group award include developing a range of personal and key skills designed to improve creative and critical thinking, self-awareness and employability. Team working, achieving personal targets and time management are attributes essential to success in the creative industries.

Additional qualities recognised as critical by employers and higher education, such as creativity, meeting deadlines, personal management skills, and the ability to learn from other professionals, are not precisely reflected in the Core Skill specifications. Awareness and development of these skills is incorporated into the group award by the requirement for candidates, supported by tutors, to take responsibility for their learning programmes, and to work with a range of others on a variety of projects. Personal Development Planning (PDP) is also highly encouraged within the awards and opportunities exist to undertake a formal unit within the subject. The graded units also integrate and apply knowledge and skills developed and provide further opportunities for candidates to demonstrate transferable key skills and a high level of achievement.

4 Additional benefits of the qualification in meeting employer needs

This qualification was designed to meet a specific purpose and what follows are details on how that purpose has been met through mapping of the units to the aims of the qualification. Through meeting the aims, additional value has been achieved by linking the unit standards with those defined in National Occupational Standards and/or trade/professional body requirements. In addition, significant opportunities exist for learners to develop more generic skills, known as Core Skills, through this qualification.

Candidates will learn about the development of the creative industries in *Working in the Field of Visual Communication,* the type of businesses that constitute these industries, their role and characteristics. In *Preparing for a Role in the Field of Visual Communication,* candidates will analyse the skills that are required for entry to and the commercial and legal considerations of these industries. They will then create a strategy for personal career development. This will be the basis for general personal development and will underpin studies throughout the group awards.

Legal issues concerned with copyright, contracts and health and safety are central features of the creative industries; ownership of intellectual property is key to understanding how these industries work. Insofar as the visual communication industries are concerned, legal safeguards are required to be in place to protect the products of these industries — people, their designs, artwork or creativity. Therefore, it is important for anyone entering these industries to have a broad understanding of the issues and why they are important, whether it is a graphic designer, illustrator or multimedia designer. These units will give the candidate that broad knowledge.

The mandatory units reflect the importance of an understanding of the creative industries as well as the skills necessary for anyone working professionally in this field. The study therefore focuses on this knowledge and stresses the importance of the skills essential to those entering the profession.

There are six credits within the mandatory section of the SQA Advanced Certificate in Visual Communication. A further six credits are required from the extensive range of optional units for the candidate to gain the remaining credits for the award.

The SQA Advanced Diploma has 12 credits within the mandatory section. A further 18 credits are required from the extensive range of optional units for the candidate to gain the remaining credits for the award.

Within the SQA Advanced Diploma there are nine units within the optional unit section that are SCQF level 9. While an SQA Advanced Diploma is recognised in its totality as being a level 8 Award and SQA Advanced Certificate as being a level 7 Award, there is scope for the delivery of both level 6 and level 9 units within the Awards. The level 9 units have been included in order to give candidates the opportunity to focus their studies to a very high level of expertise. It is also felt that they will give candidates who plan to progress to higher education a stronger pathway of transition onto a degree level course. It is anticipated that a candidate would undertake only one level 9 unit and certainly no more than two. The inclusion of advanced units within the award would always be at the discretion of the delivering centre.

The structure of the SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma is seen as central for professional development, ensuring the delivery of vital knowledge and skills for anyone entering the profession. Knowledge of professional bodies, areas for employment, health and safety and legal requirements will allow graduates to enter their profession with confidence and maximise their chances of success.

4.1 Structure of SQA Advanced Certificate in Visual Communication

4.1.1   Mandatory units

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Visual Communication: An Introduction	J52T 47	8	7	1
Art and Design Project	HT6J 48	8	7	1
Digital Imaging	HT5G 47	8	7	1
Working in the Field of Visual Communication	J52W 47	8	7	1
Art and Design Context	HT6E 48	8	7	1
Visual Communication: Graded Unit 1	J53E 47	8	7	1

All of the above units must be undertaken = **6 credits**.

4.1.2   Optional units

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Typography	J513 47	16	7	2
Graphic Design	J50X 47	16	7	2
Developmental Drawing	HT3X 47	8	7	1
Mixed Media	J511 47	8	7	1
Illustration	J510 47	16	7	2
Web Design	J514 48	16	8	2
New Media	J512 47	16	7	2
Visual Communication: Social Media	HR3C 47	8	7	1
Visual Communication: Sustainable Design	J52V 47	8	7	1
Experimental Illustration	J52R 47	8	7	1
Animation: An Introduction	J538 47*	8	7	1

2D Computer Animation	J52J 48	16	8	2
3D Computer Animation	J516 48	16	8	2
Art and Design Desktop Publishing and Layout	J52N 47	8	7	1
Art and Design Creative Process	HT3V 47	8	7	1
Communication: Practical Skills	HP4A 47	8	7	1
Employment Experience 1	HR08 47	8	7	1
Graphic Design: Three Dimensional	J517 47	8	7	1
Graphic Production for Commercial Printing	J50Y 47	8	7	1
Life Drawing	HT3Y 47	8	7	1
Observational Drawing	HT40 47	8	7	1
Personal Development Planning	HP6M 47	8	7	1
Photography: An Introduction	HT42 47	8	7	1
Portfolio Production	HT41 47	8	7	1
Printmaking and Producing Print	HT3W 47	8	7	1
Specialist Illustration	J515 47	8	7	1
Typography: An Introduction	J52S 47	8	7	1
Web Design: An Introduction	HT5J 47	8	8	1
Work Placement	HP4X 47	8	6	1

*Refer to History of Changes for revision changes.

4.2 Structure of SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication

4.2.1 Mandatory units

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Visual Communication: An Introduction	J52T 47	8	7	1
Digital Imaging	HT5G 47	8	7	1
Art and Design Context	HT6E 48	8	7	1
Art and Design Project	HT6J 48	8	7	1
Working in the Field of Visual Communication	J52W 47	8	7	1
Visual Communication: Graded Unit 1	J53E 47	8	7	1
Digital Imaging Project	J51E 48	8	8	1

Creative Project for Artists and Designers	HT6K 48	8	8	1
Design Production	J51C 48	8	8	1
Preparing for a Role in the Field of Visual Communication	J52X 48	8	8	1
Visual Communication: Graded Unit 2	J53B 48	8	8	2

All of the above units must be undertaken = **12 credits**.

4.2.2   Optional units

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Visual Communication: Social Media	HR3C 47	8	7	1
Visual Communication: Sustainable Design	J52V 47	8	7	1
Typography: An Introduction	J52S 47	8	7	1
Typography	J513 47	16	7	2
Typography Project	J51L 48	16	8	2
Graphic Design	J50X 47	16	7	2
Graphic Design Project	J51H 48	16	8	2
Developmental Drawing	HT3X 47	8	7	1
Mixed Media	J511 47	8	7	1
Illustration	J510 47	16	7	2
Experimental Illustration	J52R 47	8	7	1
Illustration Project	J521 48	16	8	2
Illustration: Advanced	J51X 49	16	9	2
Developmental Drawing Portfolio	HT4C 48	8	8	1
Mixed Media Portfolio	J51Y 48	8	8	1
Web Design	J514 48	16	8	2
New Media	J512 47	16	7	2
Web Design Project	J522 48	16	8	2
New Media Project	J525 48	16	8	2
2D Computer Animation	J52J 48	16	8	2
2D Computer Animation for Visual Communication: Advanced	J51P 49	16	9	2
3D Computer Animation	J516 48	16	8	2
3D Computer Animation for Visual Communication: Advanced	J51R 49	16	9	2

SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma in Visual Communications

Advanced Bitmap Graphics for Creative Multimedia Design	J50T 48	16	8	2
Advanced Vector Graphics for Creative Multimedia Design	J50V 48	16	8	2
Art and Design Desktop Publishing and Layout	J52N 47	8	7	1
Art and Design Desktop Publishing and Layout Project	J51S 48	16	8	2
Art and Design Creative Process	HT3V 47	8	7	1
Communication: Practical Skills	HP4A 47	8	7	1
Art and Design Context: Personal Investigation	HT4G 48	8	8	1
Client Initiated Design Project	J51T 48	8	8	1
Digital Audio for Artists and Designers	J51D 48	8	8	1
Digital Video for Artists and Designers	J51F 48	8	8	1
Graphic Design — Three Dimensional	J517 47	8	7	1
Graphic Design — Three Dimensional	J517 47	8	7	1
Graphic Design — Three Dimensional Project	J51K 48	8	8	1
Graphic Design — Three Dimensional: Advanced	J51J 49	16	9	2
Graphic Design: Advanced	J51G 49	16	9	2
Graphic Production for Commercial Printing	J50Y 47	8	7	1
Graphic Production for Print: Advanced	J520 49	16	9	2
Information Graphics: Advanced	J51W 49	16	9	2
Life Drawing	HT3Y 47	8	7	1
Life Drawing Portfolio	HT4E 48	8	8	1
New Media: Advanced	J51V 49	16	9	2
Observational Drawing	HT40 47	8	7	1
Observational Drawing Portfolio	HT4D 48	8	8	1
Personal Development Planning	HP6M 47	8	7	1
Photography: An Introduction	HT42 47	8	7	1
Photography: Image Editing	J52M 47	8	7	1
Photography: Advanced Image Editing	J52K 48	8	8	1
Photography: Advertising	J518 48	16	8	2
Portfolio Production	HT41 47	8	7	1
Printmaking and Producing Print	HT3W 47	8	7	1
Printmaking in Multiple Layers	HT4F 48	8	8	1
Printmaking: Advanced	J524 49	16	9	2

Scientific Illustration Project	J523 48	8	8	1
Specialist Illustration	J515 47	8	7	1
Web Design: An Introduction	HT5J 47	8	8	1
Work Placement	HP4X 47	8	7	1
Creative Arts Project: Development	HT6H 47	8	7	2
Creative Arts Project: Production	HT6G 47	8	7	2
Employment: Experience 1	HR08 47	8	7	1
Employment: Experience 2	HR1D 47	8	7	1
Animation: An Introduction	J538 47	8	7	1
Compositing and Motion Graphics	J12G 47	8	7	1
Compositing and Motion Graphics Advanced	J527 48	8	8	1
Art and Design: Digital Media Project	HT64 48	16	8	2

Nine units at SCQF level 9 have been included within the optional units. These units have been written in order to offer candidates the opportunity to focus their chosen area of specialism to a higher level of complexity and creative conceptuality.

The opportunity for candidates to study at an advanced level within the SQA Advanced Diploma Award encourages a stronger progression to higher education and may also make the transition from further education to higher education much smoother for the candidates involved.

It is recommended that candidates only undertake one SCQF level 9 unit due to the advanced level of study that is required.

4.3 Graded units

The purpose of the graded unit is to assess the candidate's ability to retain and integrate the Knowledge and/or Skills gained in the mandatory units; to assess that the candidate has met the principal aims of the group award and to grade the candidate's achievement.

Candidates will undertake one graded unit at SCQF level 7 for the SQA Advanced Certificate and a two credit graded unit at SCQF level 8 for the SQA Advanced Diploma.

4.3.1 Type of graded unit

Graded Unit 1

The SCQF level 7 graded unit is a project in the form of a practical assignment. This should be delivered in the latter part of the academic year. This unit will cover a range of knowledge/skills achieved through studying the mandatory units.

In Graded Unit 1 candidates will research and develop concepts for a specified client brief. Candidates will be asked to select their strongest concept which is most appropriate to the design brief and develop it through to a finished design solution, culminating in the creation of client visual artwork. The work and ability necessary to undertake this assignment will combine the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the SQA Advanced Certificate/first year of the SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication Group Award. Candidates will identify the requirements essential to create design work for a client presentation. They will employ skills developed through a combination of the mandatory units from this group award. Candidates will also submit a written evaluation of the design work and the process undertaken in order to create the final design solution.

Graded Unit 2

The SCQF level 8 graded unit is also a project in the form of a practical assignment. This should be presented to candidates at the latter part of the second year so that the outcome of this unit fully reflects the ability of the candidates, having undertaken the awards. This unit will again cover a range of knowledge/skills achieved through studying the mandatory units.

The Graded Unit 2 will give candidates the opportunity to synthesise knowledge and skills acquired throughout the second year units of the SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication Group Award. They will employ skills developed through a combination of the mandatory units from this group award. Candidates will work to a specified design brief which will require them to work with a variety of skills: creative, research, development, presentation and written, which they will have developed in a holistic manner while undertaking the awards.

The assessment of the Graded Unit 2 will be in the creation and presentation of design work appropriate to the requirements of a specified design brief. Candidates will also give verbal and written analysis and justification for their design solutions.

Each candidate must provide his or her individual written responses to the practical assignment, and assessors must be satisfied that the work has been completed by the individual candidate. This should be presented in the form of a structured logbook in the first stage and in the form of a written report for the latter stage.

Centres should supplement the written evidence with oral evidence obtained from each candidate, which should be recorded on a high quality format and kept as evidence for external verification.

4.3.2   Rationale for graded unit assessments

Within the creative industries the most common method of gaining employment as a designer is through an interview and the presentation of a portfolio of work. It is essential therefore to have the ability to demonstrate knowledge of, and skills in, the techniques associated with the creation of client visual artwork. This may relate to the use of computer applications and ICT and therefore candidates should have knowledge of hardware and software where appropriate. This demonstration of skills is the most common method of gaining employment as for example, a graphic designer or web designer. This is generally also the case in progressing to higher education to study creative industries programmes.

The graded units provide an ideal opportunity for candidates to integrate the knowledge and skills gained in the mandatory units, and focus on them within their own chosen area of specialism. The first year graded unit is in the form of a practical assignment involving the candidate working to a client brief. The second year graded unit is also in the form of a practical assignment. The assessment of the Graded Unit 2 will be in the creation and presentation of design work appropriate to the requirements of a specified design brief. Candidates will also give verbal and written analysis and justification for their design solutions. This approach demonstrates a clear articulation between graded units because the specific client brief at SQA Advanced Certificate level requires candidates to undertake substantial and suitable research and development in order to arrive at an appropriate design concept. It also requires the candidate to work to stringent deadlines and adhere to professional working practices. The ability to evaluate and analyse the design process and the success of the design work are also asked of the candidate. The SQA Advanced Diploma level has a much more challenging design brief which could include the presentation of a portfolio of work and a range of design solutions to the client brief. They will have a limited time to 'best' represent themselves in a presentation to a client.

The candidate is required to participate in authentic and relevant experiences when undertaking each of the graded units. For example, candidates will produce designs and client visuals for a particular and specific client brief. The presentation and evaluation of the candidates' design solution is the requirement of the SCQF level 7, first year graded unit.

To enhance prospects further in seeking work or gaining entry to higher education, candidates must demonstrate originality and creativity of thought within their work along with a professional application of appropriate design skills. To be in a position to take advantage of work and progression opportunities candidates will have to put together a portfolio of work that best showcases their work. The SCQF level 8, second year graded unit enables candidates to address the challenges of realising their vocational or academic goals.

5 Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment

In these group awards, the aim of the curriculum design is to provide a balance between, and awareness and understanding of, key skills and concepts required by the creative industries and practical and technical skills range for working within an area of visual communication.

This balance is intended to develop candidates' ability to identify and apply individual skills and to facilitate these abilities in their chosen specialisation within the field of visual communication and creative industries, thereby enhancing future employability and opportunities for progression to higher education.

Although centres can choose in what order to teach the units within the group awards, it is envisaged that the primary elements of the mandatory units in the first year are delivered prior to delivering the graded unit. It is important that these elements of the mandatory units have been delivered before the graded unit is assessed, although in some centres some elements of the mandatory units may be delivered concurrently with the graded unit.

In the SQA Advanced Diploma, candidates will be required to identify the main focus of their year, ie to gain employment or to progress to higher education. This will play a fundamental part in the creation of the portfolio for the graded unit. Candidates will need to ascertain which elements of the mandatory units should be included in their final presentation as well as prepare for the assessment interview necessary to achieve the graded unit.

The assessment strategy of SQA's Design Principles — to encourage a more holistic approach to assessment — has been adopted in these group awards. The new SQA Advanced unit specification places the emphasis on reducing the assessment load for both candidates and centres by devising assessments that assess the entire unit or join the assessments of outcomes together.

There is also the opportunity to integrate some assessments across units. The logistics of this will depend on the programme in individual centres.

Unit specifications detail the exact evidence requirements and assessment procedures for each assessment event. Should centres wish to use a different mode of assessment from the recommendation they should seek prior verification from SQA. Assessment exemplars are available for some units indicating to centres what is required from the assessment instrument.

5.1 Opportunities for Core Skills development

This document signposts opportunities to develop Core Skills in the context of the mandatory units and an indication of additional enhancement in options are also provided.

Market research for the development of the SQA Advanced Certificate/SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication Group Award indicated that opportunities should be provided within the first year to enhance development to Higher level Core Skills in *Communication*, *Working with Others* and *Problem Solving*.

No specific level was recommended for the formal development in the Group Award of Core Skills in *Information and Communication Technology* and *Numeracy*. Elements of the advanced numerical, graphical and technological competencies occur frequently throughout the awards and are signposted in SQA's Core Skills framework. Opportunities are provided in all centres for candidates to make extensive use of technology in researching information and in producing professional reports. The use of technology in supporting creativity and performance is also substantial throughout both the SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication Awards. Computer technology is now regarded as a fundamental tool within the creation of professional design work and opportunities to develop the Core Skill of ICT is extensive.

All practical teaching and learning activities will provide a context for developing and tailoring relevant generic elements of the Core Skills to meet the specific vocational demands of the disciplines within visual communication. Candidates will use advanced strategies to work with a range of other people, integrating numeracy through preparing costings and literacy in the form of verbal communication and evaluative written reports. Critical analysis, performance and evaluation review with a focus on the continuous problem solving involved in practical project work will be essential activities which will be further demonstrated in the context of the graded units. This will provide a further opportunity to understand, explore and demonstrate a high level of achievement in components of the Core Skills as they relate to future destinations.

Candidates will also have the opportunity to undertake the unit *Communications: Practical Skills* (SCQF level 7) as part of their SQA Advanced Award if they wish to gain a formal qualification in communications.

5.2 Assessment verification

All instruments of assessment used within this group award should be internally verified including exemplar material provided using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA. This will ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments of assessment used within the centre.

Assessment exemplars have been produced for some units. These are available from SQA's secure website. The SQA co-ordinator in your centre has access to these documents and can download them for you.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

For further information on internal and external verification refer to SQA's *Guide to Assessment and Quality Assurance for Colleges of Further Education,* (Publication code AA0841/3) **(www.sqa.org.uk)**.

5.3 Open learning

Open learning may be feasible for some Outcomes within some units within the group awards. These opportunities are highlighted within the unit specifications. The great majority of Outcomes rely, however, on developing practical skills in the presence of a lecturer and/or fellow candidates. Practical work and workshop activities underpin much of the learning. Centres may, however, find it possible to develop solutions for all or parts of some units, provided all unit and verification requirements are met in full.

Technological advances may make the possibility of such creative solutions more widespread in the future.

Because of the specialist nature of many of the units candidates may struggle to gain access to the appropriate facilities in order to undertake many of the units, hence creating further limitations on distance learning although part-time provision within a college environment is achievable.

For information on normal open learning arrangements, please refer to the *SQA guide Assessment and Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning* (SQA — Publication Code A1030) **(www.sqa.org.uk)**.

5.4 Supporting materials

A **list of exiting ASPs** is available to view on SQA's website.

6 General information for centres

6.1 Equality and inclusion

The unit specifications making up this group award have been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners will be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

6.2 Internal and external verification

All instruments of assessment used within these group awards 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* (www.sqa.org.uk).

6.3 Approval

All centres wishing approval to deliver this Group Award must follow SQA's approval documentation and submit to SQA through their SQA co-ordinator.

7   Glossary of terms

Embedded Core Skills: The assessment evidence for the unit also includes full evidence for complete Core Skill or Core Skill components. A learner successfully completing the unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skill. (This depends on the unit having been successfully audited and validated for Core Skills certification.)

Finish date: The end of a group award's lapsing period is known as the finish date. After the finish date, the group award will no longer be live and the following applies:

♦ Candidates may not be entered for the group award.
♦ The group award will continue to exist only as an archive record on the Awards Processing System (APS).

Graded unit: Graded units assess learners' 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 learners to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

Lapsing date: When a group award is entered into its lapsing period, the following will apply:

♦ The group award will be deleted from the relevant catalogue.
♦ The group award specification will remain until the qualification reaches its finish date, at which point it will be removed from SQA's website and archived.
♦ No new centres may be approved to offer the group award.
♦ Centres should only enter candidates whom they expect to complete the group award during the defined lapsing period.

SQA credit value: The credit value allocated to a unit gives an indication of the contribution the unit makes to an SQA group award. An SQA credit value of 1 given to an SQA unit represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching, and assessment.

SCQF: The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) provides the national common framework for describing all relevant programmes of learning and qualifications in Scotland. SCQF terminology is used throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF, visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk.

SCQF credit points: SCQF credit points provide a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that is required to complete a qualification at a given level of the framework. One National Unit credit is equivalent to 6 SCQF credit points. One National Unit credit at Advanced Higher and one SQA Advanced unit credit (irrespective of level) is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels: The level a qualification assigned within the framework is an indication of how hard it is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. SQA Advanced Certificates and SQA Advanced Diplomas are available at SCQF levels 7 and 8, respectively. SQA Advanced units will normally be at levels 6–9 and graded units will be at level 7 and 8. National Qualification Group Awards are available at SCQF levels 2–6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2–7.

Subject unit: These contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

Signposted Core Skills: These refer to opportunities to develop Core Skills in learning and teaching, but are not automatically certificated.

8 History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualification, and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below. Centres are advised to check SQA Connect to confirm that they are using the most up-to-date qualification structure.

NOTE: Where a unit is revised by another unit:
♦ No new centres may be approved to offer the unit which has been revised.
♦ Centres should only enter candidates for the unit which has been revised where they are expected to complete the unit before its finish date.

Version number	Description	Date
02	**Addition of Optional Unit**: Animation: An Introduction - J538 47 added to the optional section of the framework GR9T 47 (AC framework)	10/06/22

8.1 Acknowledgements

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of SQA Advanced Qualifications.

8.2 Further information

Call SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 44 (0) 141 500 5030 or 0345 279 1000. Alternatively, complete our Centre Feedback Form.

SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma in Visual Communications

9   General information for learners

This section will help you to decide whether this is the qualification for you by explaining: what the qualification is about; what you should know or what you should be able to do before you start; what you will need to do during the qualification; and opportunities for further learning and employment.

The SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma in Visual Communication have been devised as national awards that will be delivered in further education colleges across Scotland.

The opportunity for specialisation within a specified subject area, such as Graphic Design, Illustration or New Media, will be retained within the awards but the frameworks also offer the opportunity for more creative collaboration of subjects which will meet with the growing demands of employers and industry. Evidence gathered through market research identified support for the restructuring of the existing awards into a stronger and more comprehensive framework which allowed for greater areas of integration which will greatly assist candidates in their progression to completion of the award.

It is strongly recognised that further education has to cater for a variety of different candidate requirements and aspirations. Many candidates continue to use the SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma programmes as a steppingstone to higher education and therefore it is essential that creativity of thought as well as professional practice is delivered within such programmes of study.

Core Skills will be signposted within the context of each unit giving candidates the opportunity to achieve a high level of competence in the areas of Communication, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Problem Solving and Working with Others, while maintaining a focus on their subject specialism. Maintaining a high level of Core Skills is essential within the awards in order to ensure that candidates are fully prepared, academically, to progress into higher education or to gainfully find employment. It is anticipated that the new structure will provide strong pathways of progression for candidates who wish to access higher education. This will be in line with the current Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

It is also imperative that the awards continue to meet with the requirements of employers and industry. In recent years the number of candidates leaving at both SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma level to embark upon a career as a designer has increased rapidly, and therefore the changes within the new framework are a direct response to the advancements within the area of visual communication.

Career opportunities may include the following:

- ◆ Graphic Designers
- ◆ Illustrators
- ◆ Web Designers
- ◆ Multimedia Designers
- ◆ Social Media Managers

- Production Managers
- Freelance Designers
- running own business, possibly combining employment with freelance work

The breadth of opportunity provided by these group awards will equip candidates with skills over a broad range. Also, attainment of the requisite standards will demand the use of a range of study techniques as well as the development of personal skills and attitudes which will be of general value in life and work.

The group awards are designed, in the first instance, to be delivered as a full-time study programme but it has been designed in such a manner as to accommodate part-time delivery and modes of flexible and distance learning.

9.1 Progression pathways

The modern SQA Advanced Awards have two distinct pathways: to provide candidates with a thorough and comprehensive education that can lead to vocational employment and to offer candidates the opportunity to establish a strong and creative educational foundation from which to further their studies within a degree programme.

9.1.1 Progression to employment

SQA Advanced Certificates and SQA Advanced Diplomas are normally designed to meet the needs of the occupational sector by developing the knowledge and skills which candidates need to gain entry into employment. The feedback and guidance gained form undertaking market research in the employment sector has been of vital importance in the construction of the awards. The optional units therefore play a key role in focusing the award in the chosen pathway.

9.1.2 Progression to higher education

The other main pathway of SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma Awards is to provide candidates with the knowledge and skills required for further study in degree programmes. The requirements of candidates who intend to continue with their studies in higher education are quite different from those who wish to gain employment. In a subject area such as visual communication it is of vital importance that candidates are given the opportunity to develop their creativity; personal development; innovation and expressive visual language. Subjects such as Personal Development Planning would allow candidates the opportunity to explore, document and analyse their progression through their studies and the decisions they have made within their educational journey. This would also help prepare candidates for the transition into an HE programme of study where the rational and emphasis of a degree level programme is very much focused on personal development within their chosen area of study.