



## **Professional Development Awards** (June 2021, amended March 2024)

### **Rationale**

Every Professional Development Award (PDA) must have a clear rationale that:

- ◆ justifies the need for the qualification and its uniqueness
- ◆ provides evidence of demand for the qualification
- ◆ explains how it fits with other qualifications
- ◆ identifies the progression opportunities into and from the qualification
- ◆ outlines the aims, purposes and intended learning outcomes of the qualification, and explains how the award structure enables them
- ◆ gives information about who the course is for

### **Qualification design**

PDAs are made up of at least two units **or one double credit unit**, which must all be validated and credit rated by SQA. These can be HN Units, SVQ Units, National (Workplace) Units and National Qualification Units.

Units can be mandatory and/or optional, and must reflect the title of the group award. The choice of structure must reflect the title and aim of the award. This is checked at validation. For example, if an award is made up solely of optional units, it must be shown how each combination of units provides the skills and knowledge outlined in the aims of the group award.

PDAs must be aligned to NOS, or other professional body standards, as appropriate to the group award area.

It is possible to have PDAs with the same vocational context at different SCQF levels. However, each group award must have distinct aims that correspond with the level of the PDA, and there must be a separate need and demand for each level.

PDAs can also be embedded within other qualifications, such as HNCs and HNDs. In this case, there must be a separate rationale, aims, purpose and structure for the PDA. This must be supported by market research (although validation may take place at the same time as the HNC or HND).

### **SCQF level and credit points**

All PDAs and their component units are credit rated against SCQF. They may be set at SCQF levels 6–12.

At SCQF level 6, PDAs are made up of units with a minimum credit value of 12 SCQF credit

points.

At SCQF levels 7–12, PDAs have a minimum credit value of 16 SCQF credit points.

At least half the SCQF credit points must be at the level of the group award.

There should be new titles for all revised PDAs that reflect the vocational context and the SCQF level of the group award. So, revised PDAs are titled 'Professional Development Award in XXXX at SCQF level X', for example, 'Professional Development Award in Enterprise at SCQF level 8'.

### **Assessment**

Units within a Professional Development Awards are internally assessed.

### **Award of qualification**

Candidates must achieve all unit assessments within the group award.

### **Grading**

Professional Development Awards are ungraded.

### **Skills**

PDAs should provide all candidates with opportunities for the development of Core Skills and other generic skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. You can use the following skills frameworks:

- ◆ Core Skills
- ◆ Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work
- ◆ Essential Skills

### **Equality**

PDAs must take into consideration the needs of all candidates. These qualifications should be as accessible and inclusive as possible to candidates who will achieve in different ways and at a different pace.