

Your National Qualifications

What you need to know about National 5,
Higher and Advanced Higher coursework.

College edition



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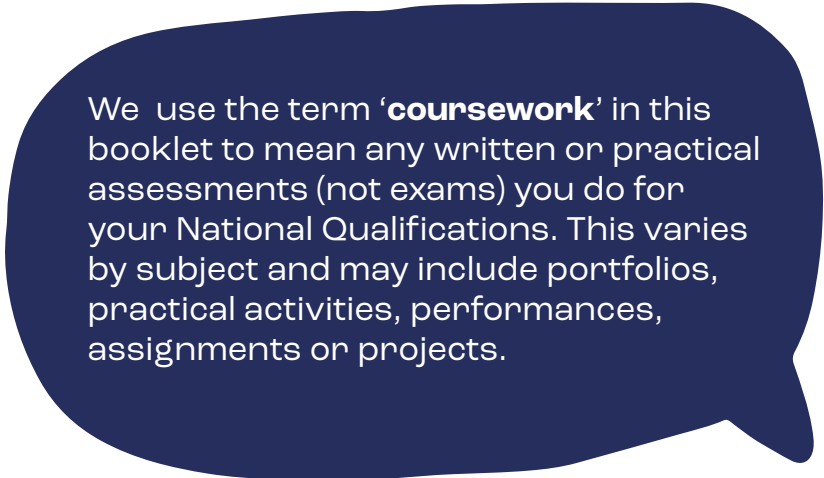
Your National Qualifications

This guide explains what you need to know about completing your coursework for National Qualifications. It also has useful information about preparing for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams.

Your lecturers can give you more details about the coursework and exams for the courses you are taking.

You can share this guide with your parents or carers if you want to.

If you need this information in another format (including large print, Braille or another language), please email **customer@sqa.org.uk** or call **0345 279 1000**.



We use the term '**coursework**' in this booklet to mean any written or practical assessments (not exams) you do for your National Qualifications. This varies by subject and may include portfolios, practical activities, performances, assignments or projects.

Moving to Qualifications Scotland

A new awarding body called Qualifications Scotland will soon take over from SQA. The information in this guide will still be correct. You don't need to do anything different to complete your qualifications. Your lecturers will tell you what you have to do and when.



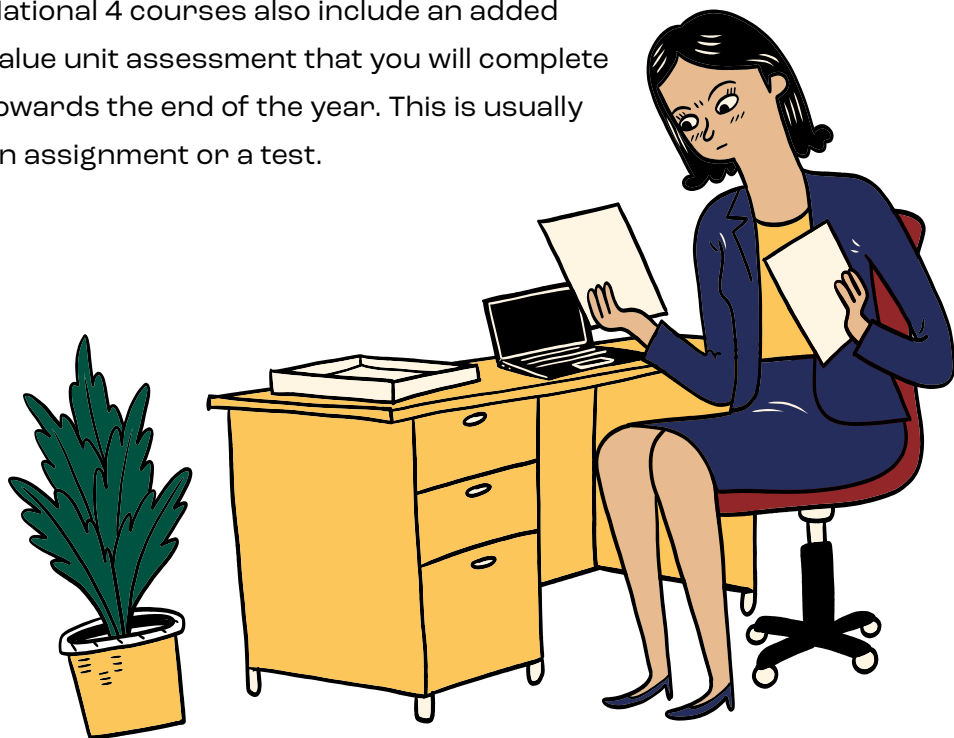
What are National Qualifications?

National Qualifications are mainly taken by learners in secondary schools, colleges and training centres in Scotland. You may be studying for some of the following National Qualifications.

National 1 units and National 2 to National 4 courses

You will complete unit assessments throughout the year. Your lecturers will mark these as either 'pass' or 'fail'.

National 4 courses also include an added value unit assessment that you will complete towards the end of the year. This is usually an assignment or a test.



National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses

Most of these involve coursework and end-of-year exams. We mark and grade these from A to D.

Skills for Work courses

These focus on the general skills needed in the workplace. Your teacher will usually assess these through practical activities.

Scottish Baccalaureates

Scottish Baccalaureates include Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications, and an 'interdisciplinary project' which is graded A to C. Completing a Scottish Baccalaureate is a chance to develop your skills and show evidence of initiative, responsibility and your ability to work independently.

An **'interdisciplinary project'** is a large piece of work that will help give you the skills, attitude and confidence you will need to make the transition into higher education or employment.



Awards

These are a set of related units that are often projects and assignments. Your lecturer will mark these as either 'pass' or 'fail'.

Assessment arrangements

If you need additional support because of a disability or additional support need, your college can arrange this. You don't need to be formally diagnosed by a medical professional to receive this support.

Your lecturer can arrange support for coursework, performances and exams.

You still need to show the same skills and knowledge as other learners and you will be marked in the same way.

Speak to your teacher as soon as possible about these arrangements. If you prefer, your parent or carer can speak to your lecturer for you.

More information is available at

www.sqa.org.uk/learnerassessmentarrangements

'Assessment arrangements'

are types of support that can be put in place to give you an equal opportunity to show what you know and what you can do in an assessment.



Types of coursework

National Qualifications can include different types of coursework, such as portfolios, practical activities, performances, assignments and projects. The type of coursework you do will depend on the course you are studying.

Coursework gives you the chance to show how much you understand your subject and gain marks that could make a difference to your final grade. Each piece of coursework has different requirements. Your lecturer will tell you about these. There are rules that you must follow when you are doing your coursework to keep assessments fair for everyone. Speak to your lecturer if you don't understand the rules. Your lecturer will also tell you what happens if you break them.



Completing your coursework

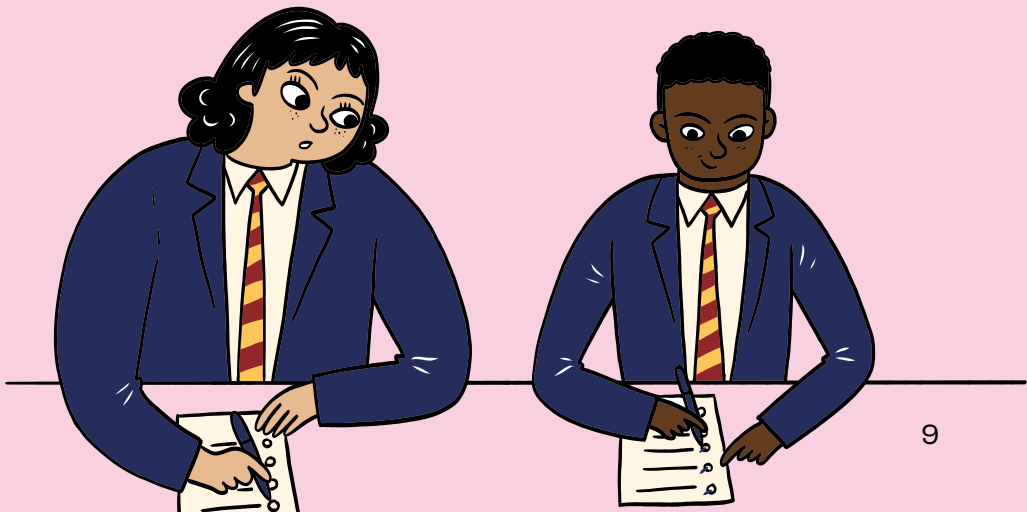
Plagiarism

You must only submit your own work. Submitting work that is not your own is a type of cheating called 'plagiarism'. This can be copying from another person's work or submitting work that was created by generative artificial intelligence (GenAI).

It's also plagiarism if you submit work that is not your own without referencing sources. This is explained on page 11.

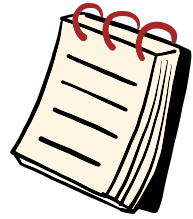
It's not your own work if:

- you have copied text, images or material from GenAI tools;
- all or part of it was done by someone else;
- someone who has produced similar work in the past (for example, an older student) helped you or did the work for you;
- you have used work that your lecturer prepared as an example; or
- you have copied text from books, websites or essay banks without referencing it.



Collusion

Working with others when you should be working alone is called 'collusion'. This includes giving or getting help and sharing files, passwords and work.



Everyone involved in collusion is breaking the rules, not just the person asking for help. If another learner asks you for help, tell them to speak to the lecturer instead.

If you are completing group work, make sure your written work is your own.



If you find any part of your course difficult, ask your lecturer for advice. No one else can be involved in discussing or reviewing your coursework.



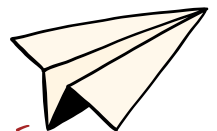
Don't risk it

If you break the rules, you may face penalties.



Lecturers are familiar with your work and can spot changes in your writing style and the language you use.

We use software that helps us identify plagiarism, collusion and the use of GenAI. This software works by matching copied text with the sources it has been taken from.



Sources



You can use different sources when completing your coursework, including books, the internet and TV programmes. Using different sources helps you learn, but you must reference them correctly.

Don't copy information and include it as your own work. Keep notes of all the material you use from other sources so you can tell it apart from your own work. Your lecturer will show you how to do this, but here are some general rules.

- Use quotation marks around any text that has come directly from other sources and say where it is from.
- Provide a reference for any diagrams or illustrations that you have used from other sources.
- Create a bibliography (a list of sources you have used) at the end of your work.
- Don't use text created by GenAI tools.

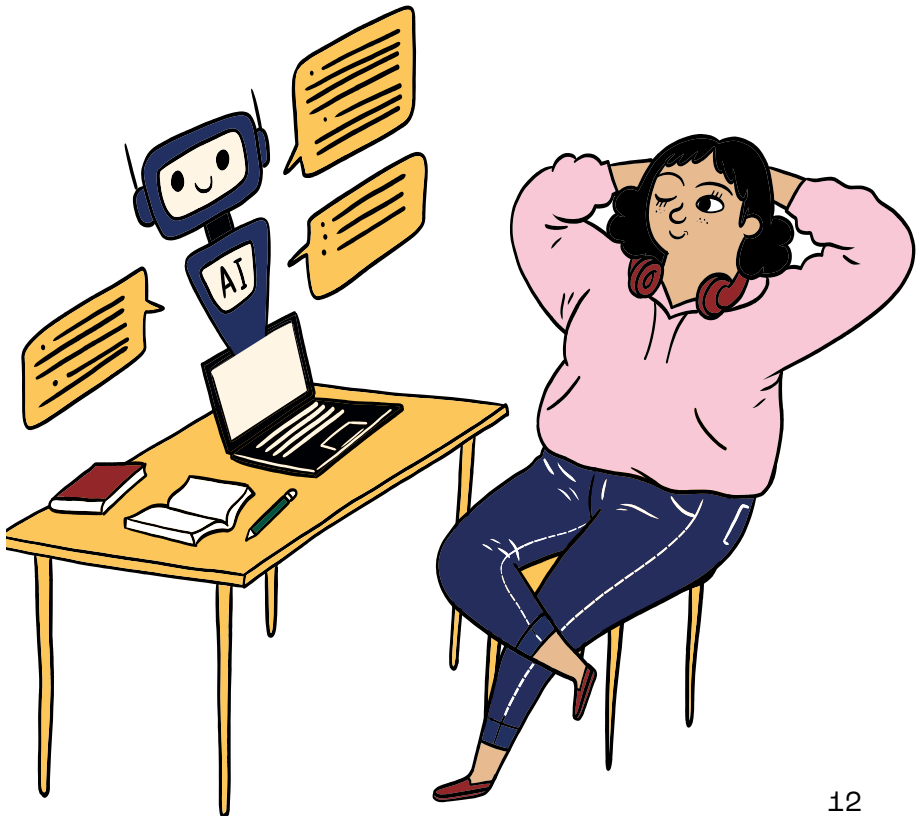
If you write about someone you know in real life, don't use their name or any other information that could identify them in your coursework.



Artificial Intelligence

You may have heard about or used GenAI tools such as ChatGPT or Google Gemini. These tools can be helpful when you are researching topics for your coursework and exams. If you choose to use GenAI, you must still show your own knowledge and skills. You must only submit your own work for marking. Text created by a GenAI tool is not your own work.

Ask your lecturer if you are not sure whether you can use GenAI tools.



Language, writing and images

Don't include rude, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or images in your work. If you submit work that includes discriminatory material, such as racist or sexist content, people who are marking your work will report it to us.

Written coursework must be legible. Markers will do their best to read your work, but they may not be able to award marks if it's too difficult to read.

Word count

If your coursework has a minimum or maximum word count, you must stick to it. You might be penalised if you don't.

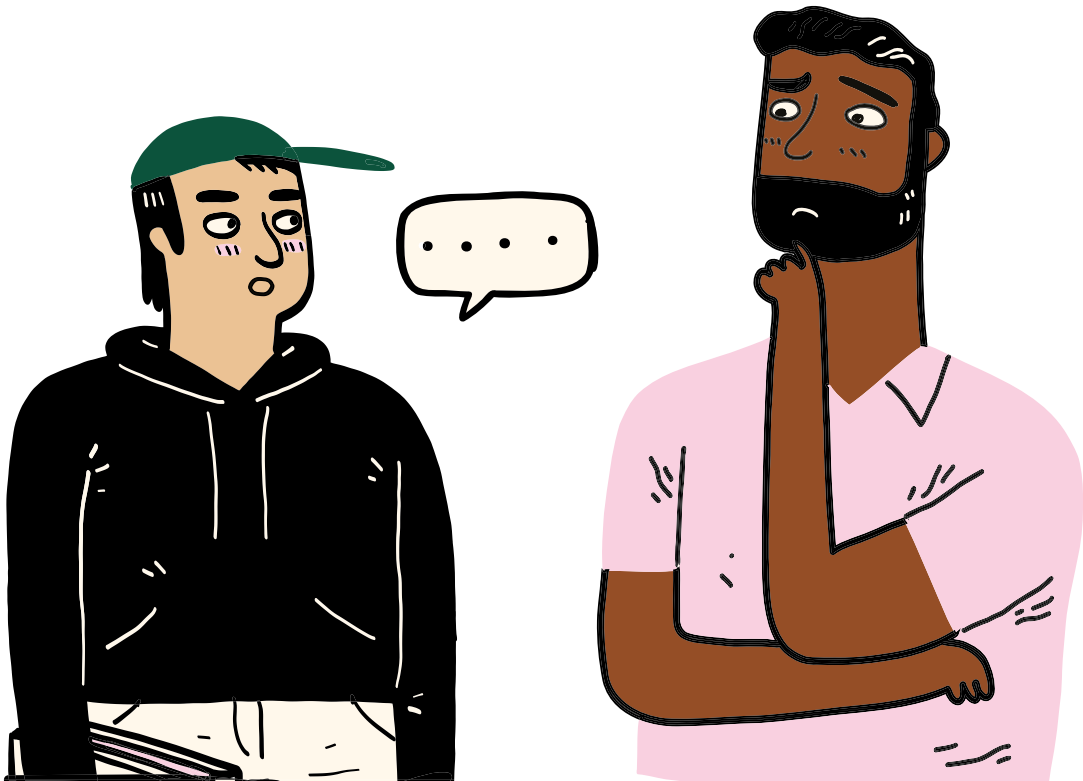
See '[What if I break the rules?](#)' on page 17 for more information.



Resource sheets

For some subjects, you are allowed to use resource sheets (also called 'research sheets' or 'processed information sheets'). Your lecturer will tell you if you need one and show you how to use it. If you are not sure whether you will need to use one, ask your lecturer.

If you need to use a resource sheet, make sure you know the rules. You could lose marks if you don't use it correctly. You must submit your resource sheet with your coursework. If you don't, you will automatically lose 20% of the marks available.



Handing in your coursework

Check your work

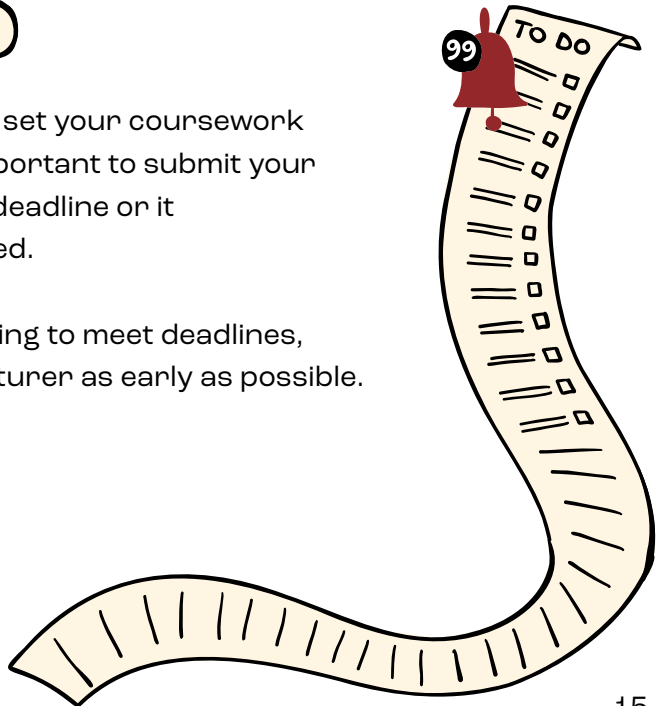
Before submitting coursework, check that:

- everything is your own work, and you have properly referenced all sources of information, diagrams or illustrations you have used;
- there is no rude, abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or images in your work;
- you have followed your lecturer's instructions; and
- you haven't included text created by GenAI.

Deadlines

Your lecturer will set your coursework deadlines. It is important to submit your work before the deadline or it may not be marked.

If you are struggling to meet deadlines, speak to your lecturer as early as possible.



Declaration

Before you submit your coursework for marking, you'll need to sign a declaration. Make sure you understand it. If you're not sure about anything, ask your lecturer.

The declaration confirms that:

- 
- you have read this guide and understand it;
 - you understand that we may reduce or cancel your grades if you break the rules;
 - your coursework is your own work and you have clearly identified all sources you have used;
 - you have submitted any resource sheets or other type of information sheet relevant to your subject; and
 - you understand that your coursework comes to us for marking.

If you plan to publish or share your work online, you must talk to your college first.

What if I break the rules?



If an SQA or college investigation finds you have broken any rules, you may face a penalty. This could include the following.

- Your marks can be reduced, or you can be awarded zero marks.
- Your qualification for that subject can be cancelled.
- All of your qualifications for the entire year can be cancelled.

Remember



You must:

- do all the work yourself;
- properly reference all sources;
- ask your lecturer what you can use GenAI for;
- check your work before handing it in;
- hand your work in on time; and
- include any resource sheets or similar information sheets you have used when you submit your work.

You must not:

- copy someone else's work;
- work with others when you should work alone;
- submit work that was created by GenAI; or
- use rude, abusive, offensive or discriminatory words or images in your work.

Your 2026 exams

You can download the exam timetable at www.sqa.org.uk/timetable

This shows the dates and times of your exams.

You can also download our MyExams app to create your personal timetable, add notes and add your personal timetable to other calendars.

The 2026 exams will take place from 22 April to 2 June.

We will give you more information about your exams in March.



Questions you might have about exams...



What are prelims?

Prelim is short for 'preliminary exam'. Most colleges choose to run prelims to help learners practise for their exams, give them feedback on their performance and help identify how well each learner is progressing with the course.

Your college will decide if and when they will run prelims this year.



Does SQA mark the prelims?

No, your college creates the question papers you sit during prelims and your lecturers will mark them.



Who will mark my coursework and exams?

We mark all National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams. We also mark most of the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher coursework. Your lecturer will assess some coursework. We do quality checks to make sure lecturers are marking in line with the required standard.



When will I get my results?

You will get your exam results by post on **Tuesday 4 August 2026**. We will also send your results to your college. If you have applied to a university or college through UCAS (University and College Admissions Service), they will also receive your results.

If you don't receive your results certificate by post on results day, contact your college. They can tell you your results and will work with us to find out what has happened to your certificate.



I have two exams at the same time or one straight after the other on the same day. What should I do?

Speak to your college. They will be able to look at possible alternative arrangements for you.

Support and information

Your college will give you your Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) card, and more information about sitting exams, by the end of March 2026. When you are given your card, write your name and SCN on it. You can scan the QR code on the back of the card for more information about assessments.

For more support, including organisations who can help if you're feeling anxious, visit [**www.sqa.org.uk/learnersupport**](https://www.sqa.org.uk/learnersupport)

If you have any questions or want to find the latest information, call us on 0345 279 1000 or visit [**www.sqa.org.uk/learners**](https://www.sqa.org.uk/learners)

