



Arrangements for:
Professional Development Award
(PDA): Seal Management
at SCQF level 6

Group Award Code: GA1G 46

Validation date: November 2010

Date of original publication: March 2011

Version: 03 (November 2025)

Acknowledgement

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

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.

Version number	Description	Date	Authorised by
02	Amendment to Evidence Requirements for Outcome 2.	18/10/11	David Grant
03	<p>Amendments to Seal Management Practice –</p> <p>Amendment to knowledge and/or skills for Outcome 1 and 2</p> <p>Amendment to Evidence Requirements for Outcome 1</p> <p>Amendments to content and context for this unit – outcomes 1, 2, 3 and lethal removal</p> <p>Amendment to guidance on delivery and assessment of this unit</p>	07/11/25	Mark Hood
03	<p>Amendments to Seal Management – Theory –</p> <p>Amendment to unit purpose</p> <p>Amendment to context for delivery</p> <p>Amendment to Knowledge and/or skills – outcomes 1 and 3</p> <p>Amendment to evidence requirements – outcome 1</p>	11/11/25	Mark Hood

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1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the new Group Award in Seal Management, which was validated in November 2010. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure, and guidance on delivery.

The award has been developed at the request of the Scottish Government to provide a qualification for those who require to undertake seal management. It has been developed specifically to meet the requirements of the Marine (Scotland) Act, 2010.

2 Rationale for the development of the Group Award

2.1 Introduction

The Professional Development Award has been specifically developed to provide underpinning knowledge and skills for individuals involved in seal management, in order to meet the requirements of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. This award will provide these individuals with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of key aspects of seal management. It will allow candidates to develop their professional practice in order to demonstrate their competence and apply for a licence under the provisions of the Act.

2.2 Background

This sector-specific award has been developed at the request of the Scottish Government in response to the need to provide candidates with a suitable qualification to gain a licence within the provision of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

The impetus for the development of the qualification was initiated by two key factors:

- the introduction of a statutory licence for marksmen

- the need to manage and protect the native seal populations in Scotland's coastal waters

The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 makes it an offence for anyone to kill seals except under licence or to alleviate suffering for welfare reasons.

Scotland has a duty to protect its iconic seal populations. We have more seals than the rest of the European Union — previously estimated at 186,000 grey seals and 19,000 harbour seals. As of 2024, the most recent count reports 24,822 harbour seals in Scotland and 166,900 grey seals across the UK. Such large numbers of seals can lead to some local conflicts between individual seals and fisheries or fish farms, which can necessitate seal management.

The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 (the Act) increased the protection for seals and improved seal management in Scotland. Since 2010, it has been illegal to kill or take any seal at any time unless under specific licence. All seal management has to be carried out under licence and properly regulated. In particular, section 111(2) of the Act provides that Scottish Ministers should not issue seal licences authorising a person to kill seals/undertake seal management unless they are satisfied that the person has the necessary skills and experience.

The target client group for this award will be both existing and potential marksmen seeking to apply for a licence to shoot seals/undertake seal management.

2.3 The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the seal licensing system

Under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 Scottish Ministers can grant licences to take or kill seals. Changes to the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 came into force on 1 February 2021 removing two grounds for which licences can be granted. These are for the purpose of protecting the health and welfare of farmed fish and for preventing serious damage to fisheries and fish farms.

The remaining licencing provisions remain, including for the purpose of conserving seals or other wild animals (including wild birds) or wild plants. Marine Directorate has issued [guidance notes](#) on applying for a license under these grounds.

Each seal licence applicant will be required to provide details of one or more named marksmen, enclosing evidence to confirm that the marksman has completed a suitable training course to demonstrate competency. Once a decision has been made to grant a licence, it will be a licence condition that the named marksman will comply with the Code of Practice (available from [Marine licensing: seal code of practice - gov.scot](#)). Compliance with the Code of Practice and completion of the relevant training course will support the principles of the new system to ensure that seals are killed/treated humanely.

If anyone shoots a seal/undertakes seal management without a licence, breaches the conditions of a licence or fails to report the shooting of a seal they could face heavy penalties (a fine of up to £5,000 and/or a possible prison sentence).

The requirements of section 111(2) of the Act necessitate a suitable training course that will ensure competently trained marksmen are available to those seeking to engage in licensed seal management activities. Successful completion of this qualification will provide evidence of the required competence and enable the marksman to apply for a licence.

2.4 Verification of successful completion

Completion and successful achievement of the PDA will determine whether someone can be accepted as a named marksman on a licence application to shoot seals/for seal management.

3 Aims of the Group Award

3.1 Primary aim

The primary aim of this qualification is to provide knowledge and skills in specified areas which will prepare candidates to apply for a licence to shoot seals/undertake seal management under the provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

3.2 General aims

To support candidates in the management of their own personal resources and professional development in order to achieve work objectives, career and personal goals.

To develop pathways towards higher level qualifications for this sector and enhance professional development.

3.3 Specific aims of the PDA

To build skills, knowledge, and understanding in managing Scotland's seal population, with a particular focus on the effects of seal predation on fish farms, fish stocks, and the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon.

- to enable candidates to develop specific knowledge and skills in relation to the legislation, licensing arrangements and shooting expertise required in direct relation to seal management under the Marine (Scotland) Act, 2010.
- to provide a means for candidates to be certificated in order to gain the licence

3.4 Target groups

The primary target client group for these awards will be marksmen seeking to apply for a licence to kill seals under the provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

The award may also be appropriate as a top-up qualification for gamekeepers who have previously achieved an SVQ or HNC in Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management but require to demonstrate their occupational knowledge and

skills when applying for a licence under the provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

Candidates may also undertake the individual Units for the purposes of continuing professional development.

3.4 Employment opportunities

Candidates will be able to use the PDA in Seal Management as evidence of their knowledge and skills when applying for a Seal Management License from Marine Directorate.

4 Access to Group Award

Access to the Group Award is at the discretion of the centre and there are no pre-entry qualifications for this award although it is recommended that candidates should have some experience of general fisheries/gamekeeping and gun-handling. It would also be beneficial for candidates to have current or recent experience of working within these sectors.

Presenting centres will need to ensure that each prospective candidate has sufficient ability, experience of the sector and the appropriate personal qualities to succeed. Candidates should also be in possession of appropriate, relevant firearm handling certification. Candidates for the award should also have good communication and problem solving skills which are essential to the delivery of competent practice. Communication and Problem Solving Skills may be demonstrated through achievement of certificated Units, for example Core Skills in *Communication* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5 or equivalent. Alternatively, candidates could be deemed to be at the appropriate level by references from employers and/or through verbal and/or written evidence at interview.

5 Group Award structure

5.1 Framework

The PDA is comprised of two Units: *Seal Management: Theory and Seal Management: Practice*. The PDA will be awarded on successful completion of the two component Units providing a total of 16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6.

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Seal Management: Theory	FA7L 33	8	6	1
Seal Management: Practice	FA7M 33	8	6	1

5.2 Mapping information

The requirements of the *Seal Management: Theory and Seal Management: Practice* Units have been mapped against the National Occupational Standard CU47 'Control Vertebrate Pests and Predators by Shooting'. Details are provided on the following page.

Mapping of National Occupational Standard Unit CU47 to PDA Units

CU47.1	1	2	3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I														
T O1					X	X	X		X		X	X														
T O2	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X														
T O3	X		X	X				X		X																
P O1	X	X	X					X		X	X	X														
P O2	X	X	X					X		X	X	X														
P O3	X	X	X					X		X	X	X														
T O1					X	X	X		X		X	X														
CU47.2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
T O1				X								X				X										
T O2	X			X								X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
T O3	X							X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X					X	X	X		
P O1	X			X							X	X		X	X	X	X	X								X
P O2	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X	X

CU47 — Control Vertebrate Pests and Predators by Shooting

CU47.1 — Determine the Need for Vertebrate Pests and Predators Control

CU47.2 — Shoot Vertebrate Pests and Predators

T 01 — Outline the Key Reason for Seal Management in Scotland

T O2 — Outline the Practical Activities to be Undertaken for Effective Seal Management

T O3 — Outline the Key Aspects of Relevant Legislation Relating to the Sustainable Taking and Shooting of Seals

P O1 — Plan for Seal Control Action

P O2 — Undertake a Practical Shooting Test for Seal Management in Compliance with Legislation

P O3 — Perform Post-shooting Procedures to Meet Legal Requirements

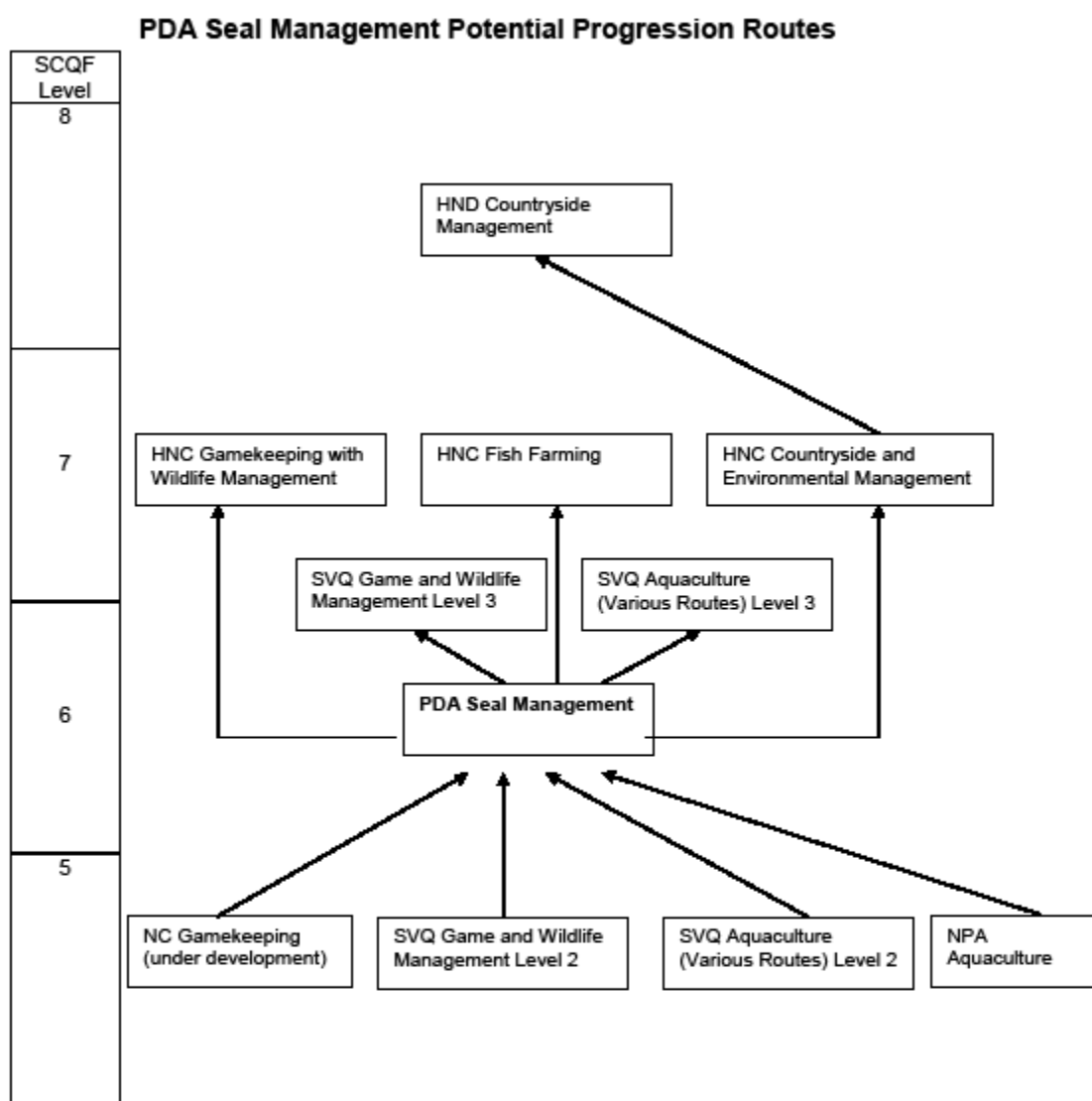
5.3 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer

There is direct articulation and progression to other awards in the SQA framework as follows:

• HNC Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management SCQF 7	GL04 15
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management (Deer) SCQF 5	GN91 22
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management (Game Rearing) SCQF 5	GN93 22
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management (Lowland) SCQF 5	GN96 22
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management (Upland/Grouse) SCQF 5	HN97 22
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management Level 3	GN95 23
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management (Deer) SCQF 7	GN92 23
• SVQ Game and Wildlife Management (Game Rearing) SCQF 7	GN94 23

An example of potential progression routes is given on the following page.

Candidates with prior experience may be eligible for Credit Transfer (Accreditation of Prior Learning — APL or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Evidence — APEL). Where centres consider that credit transfer opportunities exist they should map the areas already covered by the candidate against the requirements of the two Units. Centres should ensure the currency of any knowledge and skills identified for credit transfer, for example through evidence of continuing professional development. All evidence and mapping produced for credit transfer should be retained for the purposes of External Verification. Centres should seek clarification from their External Verifier if they have any concerns over potential Credit Transfer opportunities.



6 Approaches to delivery and assessment

The delivery of this award should focus on the occupational requirements specific to working within the requirements of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. The PDA comprises two new Units.

SQA does not prescribe a particular mode of delivery and encourages Centres to develop their own delivery pattern for this award based on client need and demand. Although it is envisaged that the Units will be delivered as part of the overall qualification, Centres may offer each of these as stand alone Units for purposes of continuing professional development or specific skills top-up.

Although there is no prescribed order in which the Units must be delivered and centres may design their delivery plans to meet the needs of candidates, the Units do have a sequential aspect and SQA would recommend that when delivered as part of the qualification, a coherent pattern is followed, ie, that the Unit Seal Management: Theory should be delivered first as it underpins the whole course.

Candidates may be able to collect evidence for assessment of the award when working in real work situations. This should be encouraged wherever possible. This may be the candidate's own workplace or an appropriate placement. Evidence may also be gathered through involvement in training events. However, it is acknowledged that candidates would not be able to offer any evidence for shooting of seals without the appropriate Licence.

The Assessment Strategy for this PDA is designed to encourage a mix of assessments:

- performance evidence for the practical elements of the Unit, *Seal Management: Practice*, evidenced through the Performance Test
- product evidence in the form of responses to questions to meet the knowledge requirements of both Units, and also a Risk Assessment in the Practice Unit. (NB, specific guidance on content, context and delivery and assessment is given in each of the component Units)

Outcome 2 of the Unit *Seal Management: Practice* requires a specific focus. This Outcome requires satisfactory completion of a Performance Test. Candidates will normally undertake this test in a simulated situation, due to the difficulties in providing real work based opportunities for assessment purposes. An example of an observation checklist for Outcome 2 is included in Appendix 1.

The Outcomes in this qualification (with the exception of Outcome 2 in the Practice Unit) may be delivered through a blended learning format which could include distance, open or e-learning. Workshops could be used to supplement tutor-led sessions and any e-learning opportunities.

In relation to continuing professional development there is flexibility in delivery which will allow trainers/tutors/lecturers/assessors/mentors to take account of the levels and knowledge and experience of candidates.

Instruments of assessment will be designed to meet the evidence requirements for each unit and could include:

- Short written assignments
- Risk Assessment
- Short answer questions based on case studies, oral or written
- Practical performance test
- Oral questioning

Wherever possible, centres should seek ways to integrate assessments within and across the individual Units. Compiling a portfolio which includes work products and incorporating theoretical and practical aspects of the Units would be one way of presenting and retaining evidence. The use of reflective logs and professional discussion could also provide valuable evidence of competence.

Deliverers should ensure that the assessments reflect the practical context in which candidates work and meet the Evidence Requirements as detailed in the Unit specifications. Centres are encouraged to seek ways to integrate assessments within and across Units where possible. For example, it should be possible to integrate the Theory Unit with elements of the Practice Unit. Integration could refer to integration of topics and/or a wider set of skills, such as analysis, evaluation, practical demonstration. The nature of this integration means that much of the assessment will be ongoing and parallel and could be presented in a portfolio or log book.

7 General information for centres

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Internal and external verification

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

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

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in SQA's *Guide to Assessment* (www.sqa.org.uk).

8 General information for candidates

The PDA in Seal Management at SCQF level 6 combines theory and practical application to offer you the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills needed to meet the requirements to apply for a licence under the terms of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. The award has two Units: *Seal Management: Theory and Seal Management: Practice*. Both Units must be achieved to successfully complete this award.

The Units cover the following:

The reasons for seal management in relation to predation on fish farms, fish stocks, and the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon.

- The legislation underpinning the licensing arrangements
- Practical procedures/activities in relation to shoots
- Risk assessment
- Shooting expertise and demonstration of competence

Outcome 2 of the *Seal Management: Practice* Units requires the satisfactory completion of a performance test. This will consist of a test of marksmanship, requiring you to place 3 shots inside a 4 inch target at a distance of 50m and 100m. This test will normally be undertaken under simulated conditions (target shooting).

This award will be of interest to you if you work in the aquaculture/fisheries sectors and may require to be involved in seal management. Fisheries and fish farms require to engage in licensed seal management activities to protect their stock, nets and catches from serious damage or to protect the health and welfare of farmed fish.

Successful completion of the PDA will allow you to apply for a licence to control seals under the requirements of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010

There are no pre-entry qualifications for this award although it is recommended that you have some experience general fisheries and/or gamekeeping and firearm handling. It would also be beneficial if you had current or recent experience of working within these sectors. You will also require good communication and problem solving skills to be successful in this award, these could be demonstrated by possession of the relevant Core Skills at SCQF level 5 or equivalent.

Entry to this award is at the discretion of the centre. Centres may wish to interview prospective candidates to establish their suitability for the award and that they have realistic chance to achieve the award.

Candidates who achieve the PDA in Seal Management may wish to progress to other qualifications in related areas such as:

HNC Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management

SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management SCQF 5

SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management (Deer) SCQF 5

SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management (Game Rearing) SCQF 5SVQ
Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management (Lowland) SCQF 5
SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management (Upland/Grouse) SCQF 5
SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management SCQF 7
SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management (Deer) SCQF 7
SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management (Game Rearing) SCQF 7

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**

SCQF credit points: One HN credit is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points. This applies to all HN Units, irrespective of their level.

SCQF levels: The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HN Units will normally be at levels 6–9. Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8.

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

Graded Unit: Graded Units assess candidates' ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

Dedicated Unit to cover Core Skills: This is a non-subject Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills.

Embedded Core Skills: This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

Signposted Core Skills: This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie outwith automatic certification.

Qualification Design Team: The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the HNC/HND from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

Consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.

Specialist single centre and specialist collaborative devised HNCs and HNDs are those developments or revisions led by a single centre or small group of centres who provide knowledge and skills in a specialist area. Like consortium-devised HNCs and HNDs, these developments or revisions will also be supported by SQA.

10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Example of Observation Checklist

Appendix 1: Example of Observation Checklist

Seal Management: Practice

Outcome 2 — Undertake Practical Shooting Test for Seal Management in Compliance with Legislation

Name: _____ SCN: _____ Date: _____

Part 1 — Interpret Signs of Seal Activity which could Influence Type of Action

Signs of Seal Activity	Appropriate Type of Action	Assessor

Part 2 — Practical Shooting Test

Activity	Observed	Date	Assessor
Candidate holds appropriate firearms licence			
Shooting method selected is appropriate to seal species, site characteristics and legal requirements			
Firearm selected is appropriate to seal species, site characteristics and legal requirements			
Ammunition selected is appropriate to seal species, site characteristics and legal requirements			
Safely fit a sound moderator appropriate to firearm and ammunition			
Place a minimum of three shots in a 4 inch circle at a range of 50m			
Place a minimum of three shots in a 4 inch circle at a range of 100m			
Firearm is used and handled safely and in accordance with all relevant legislation before, during and after shooting			
Candidate is aware of the status of firearm at all times (ie unloaded, loaded with safety on etc)			
Ensure firearm is returned to safe state after firing			
Ensures muzzle is pointing in a safe direction during loading and unloading			
Ensures the firearm is clean and undamaged			

Ensures shooting is terminated if it becomes unsafe			
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Part 3 — Post-shooting Procedures

3.1 Locate and observe reaction of seal to the shot to determine its condition

Reaction to Shot	Likely condition of seal

3.2 Approach seal safely according to its presumed condition

Presumed Condition of Seal	Considerations when approaching seal

3.3 Dispatch wounded seals humanely

Describe how to dispatch a wounded seal humanely with regard to safety of other wildlife, self and others:

The candidate has achieved the minimum Evidence Requirements	
Assessor's Name:	
Assessor's Signature:	
Date:	