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Benchmarking the SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma in India

Independent Evaluation and Benchmarking Summary Report

Submitted to the Scottish Qualification Authority by Ecctis

Commercial in confidence
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Benchmarking the SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma in the Indian Education System



Figure 1: Safdarjung Tomb, Delhi.

SUMMARY REPORT

The SQA Advanced Certificate is considered comparable to NSQF Level 4.5, UG Certificate / NCVET Diploma standard. The SQA Advanced Diploma is considered comparable to NSQF Level 5.0, UG Diploma / NCVET Diploma (Advanced) standard.

1. Overview of the SQA and SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is Scotland's national awarding and accreditation body. SQA is an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government whose purpose is to help people fulfil their full potential whilst maintaining standards across Scottish education (SQA, n.d.)¹. SQA engages with learners, educational institutions and industry partners across Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally, to develop, maintain, and improve a framework of qualifications, and to set and maintain standards (SQA, n.d.)².

The SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma are well-designed and internationally relevant higher education qualifications developed in partnership with colleges, universities and industry. The SQA Advanced qualifications are offered internationally in a range of subjects and specialisations including but not limited to: rural/agricultural and wildlife management, animal care, accounting, art and crafts, business, construction and

¹ SQA, (n.d.). What we do.

² SQA, (n.d.). What we do.

engineering, computing, fashion, hospitality, media and communication, performing arts, sport, retail management, beauty therapy, occupational therapy support, supply chain management and travel and tourism (SQA, n.d.).³

This report is designed to provide guidance on the comparable academic standing of the SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma in the context of the Indian education system.

1.1 Entry and duration

The SQA Advanced Certificate is typically a one-year (960 notional learning hours) programme, allocated 96 Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Credit Points. Entry requirements are set at the discretion of individual centres and specification guidance varies but may include for example one or more of, or combinations of, relevant National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQ 2 or 3), other qualifications at Level 5 or 6 of the SCQF, relevant work experience, appropriate mathematical and digital skills, and a centre-devised test. Programmes are delivered and assessed in English and as such entrants who are non-native speakers will typically also need an ESOL certificate at SCQF level 5 or an overall IELTS band 5.5 for admission (SQA, 2024).⁴

An SQA Advanced Diploma course, which typically consists of two years of study, has the same entry requirements as the SQA Advanced Certificate. The first year of the SQA Advanced Diploma comprises a minimum 1,200 notional learning hours, with the total Diploma worth 240 SCQF Credit Points (2,400 notional learning hours). Those already holding an SQA Advanced Certificate can usually enter the second year of the SQA Advanced Diploma programme providing they have achieved between 12 SQA credits (usually all mandatory SQA Advanced Certificate units) and 15 SQA credits that are required in Year 1 of a Diploma programme⁵. Entry to Year 2 can also happen through SQA's credit transfer system (SQA, 2025)⁶, in recognition of other qualifications obtained, where appropriate.

³ SQA, (n.d.) *SQA Advanced Diploma and SQA Advanced Certificate courses*.

⁴ SQA, 2024. *Group Award Specification for SQA Advanced Certificate GT2A 47 / Advanced Diploma GT2C 48 in Business*.

⁵ For example, students accessing the Advanced Diploma in Hospitality Operations are required to have successfully completed all mandatory and optional units of the SQA Certificate, totalling 12 SQA credits, plus two or three optional units, totalling 15 SQA credits.

⁶ SQA, 2025. *Group Award Specification for: SQA Advanced Diploma in Computing: Software Development GM92 48*.

1.2 Structure and content

The SQA Advanced qualifications consist of SQA credit-based units; each unit worth one or two SQA credits up to the maximum required for the qualification, which is 12 SQA credits for the SQA Advanced Certificate and 30 SQA credits for the SQA Advanced Diploma. Some SQA Advanced Diploma qualifications, such as the SQA Advanced Diploma in Computing: Software Development, are available with a fixed unit framework where all units are mandatory. Other SQA Advanced Diplomas, such as the SQA Advanced Diploma in Business, are non-fixed frameworks comprising mandatory and optional units that can be selected by centres to deliver under SQA guidelines. In non-fixed frameworks, the number of optional units to be taken depends on how many SQA credits are needed after completing the mandatory units to achieve the total 12 SQA credits required for the SQA Advanced Certificate and 30 SQA credits for the SQA Advanced Diploma.

In the example of the SQA Advanced Diploma in Computing: Software Development, mandatory units are identical in the fixed and non-fixed framework versions and are worth the same SQA credits. Mandatory units covering introductory knowledge and understanding on a topic, such as computer systems and database design fundamentals, introduction to developing software etc., are mainly covered in Year 1 of the fixed framework Advanced Diploma and similarly recommended for Year 1 for centres delivering the non-fixed framework. Furthermore, the Advanced Diploma's mandatory units include all six mandatory units of the SQA Advanced Certificate in Computing.

Overall, mandatory and optional units covered in Year 2 of an SQA Advanced Diploma (fixed and non-fixed frameworks) intend to extend knowledge and understanding on a topic gained in Year 1.

1.3 Aims and learning outcomes

SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma subject specifications (SQA)⁷ include overall 'general' aims of the qualifications, as well as individual qualification-level aims detailing the subject-specific knowledge and skills that each SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma aim to develop. The general aims can be broadly summarised as follows:

- To ensure students will be prepared for employment.
- To develop study and research skills.
- To develop transferable skills including Core Skills for employment: communication, numeracy, information and communication technology, problem solving and working with others.

⁷ SQA, (n.d.) *SQA Advanced Diploma and SQA Advanced Certificate courses*.

The SQA Advanced Certificate is placed at Level 7 of the SCQF, and the SQA Advanced Diploma at Level 8, where students at these levels should be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills according to the SCQF Level descriptors presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptors for SCQF Level 7 and 8 (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), 2025).⁸

SCQF descriptor	Indicators of SCQF Level 7 (SQA Advanced Certificate)	Indicators of SCQF Level 8 (SQA Advanced Diploma)
Knowledge and understanding	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overall appreciation of the body of knowledge that constitutes a subject/discipline/sector. • Knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles of the subject / discipline / sector. • An awareness of the dynamic nature of knowledge and understanding. • An understanding of the difference between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other sources, and of the importance of this difference. 	<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of the subject / discipline / sector. • Specialist knowledge in some areas. • A discerning understanding of a defined range of core theories, concepts, principles and terminology. • Awareness and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms. • Awareness and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes.
Practice: Applied knowledge, skills and understanding	<p>Apply knowledge, skills and understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In practical contexts. • In using some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector. • To practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts. 	<p>Apply knowledge, skills and understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In using a range of professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector, a few of which are advanced and/or complex. • In carrying out routine lines of enquiry, development or

⁸ Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), 2025. *SCQF Level Descriptors*.

SCQF descriptor	Indicators of SCQF Level 7 (SQA Advanced Certificate)	Indicators of SCQF Level 8 (SQA Advanced Diploma)
		<p>investigation into professional level problems and issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adapt routine practices within accepted standards.
Generic cognitive skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas that are routine to a subject/discipline/sector. • Use a range of approaches to address defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings in a subject/discipline/sector. • Use a range of approaches to formulate and critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems and issues.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with a subject/discipline/sector, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form. • Use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts. • Select and use standard ICT applications to process and obtain a variety of information and data. • Use a range of numerical and graphical skills in combination. • Use numerical and graphical data to 	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills associated with a subject/discipline/sector, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey complex information to a range of audiences and for a range of purposes. • Use a range of standard ICT applications to process and obtain data. • Use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.

SCQF descriptor	Indicators of SCQF Level 7 (SQA Advanced Certificate)	Indicators of SCQF Level 8 (SQA Advanced Diploma)
	measure progress and achieve goals/targets.	
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level in practice or in a subject/discipline/sector. Accept supervision in less familiar areas of work. Exercise some managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others within a defined and supervised structure. Manage limited resources within defined areas of work. Take the lead in implementing agreed plans in familiar or defined contexts. Take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities when carrying out and evaluating tasks. Work, under guidance, with others to acquire an understanding of current professional practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level in practice or in a subject/discipline/sector. Exercise managerial responsibility for the work of others within a defined structure. Manage resources within defined areas of work. Take the lead on planning in familiar or defined contexts. Practise in ways that show awareness of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions when carrying out and evaluating tasks. Work, under guidance, with others to acquire an understanding of current professional practice. Manage, under guidance, ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.

1.4 Assessment and grading

All SQA Advanced qualifications include Graded Units. There is one Graded Unit (worth one SQA credit) in the SQA Advanced Certificate and three Graded Units in the SQA Advanced Diploma, including one Graded Unit in Year 1 worth one credit, and two Graded Units in Year 2 worth two credits. Methods of assessment in the Graded Units vary by subject; these can include, for example, open-book assessments such as case studies, practical exercises and observations, written projects, portfolios, and oral presentations.

SQA provides clear guidance to centres on designing valid and reliable assessments. For example, the Business Graded Unit 1, taken in both the SQA Advanced Certificate and Diploma, is assessed by a three-hour closed-book examination consisting of two papers based on a previously seen case study. The Business Graded Unit 2, taken towards the end of the second year of the SQA Advanced Diploma course, is an open-book project investigation that candidates complete over a period of time that is designed to integrate knowledge and skills gained from the mandatory units and develop additional planning, negotiation, research, analysis, time management and problem-solving skills. Generally, units are graded on a pass or fail basis, with the exception of Graded Units which are marked out of 100 and are given a letter grade, with C (50%) being the minimum pass grade (SQA, 2024) (SQA, 2025).⁹

1.5 Certification and progression

On successful completion of the SQA Advanced qualifications, candidates are awarded an SQA Advanced Certificate or an SQA Advanced Diploma in their field of study. They receive a final certificate and accompanying transcript detailing the units undertaken. SQA Advanced Certificate holders may advance to further study, including to the second year of an SQA Advanced Diploma when awarded 12-15 SQA credits. SQA has a Diploma to Degree programme (SQA)¹⁰ to support progression for holders of the SQA Advanced Diploma to the second or third year of study at an SQA Progression Partner university. Additionally, knowledge gained in the SQA Advanced Certificate prepares individuals for entry level employment opportunities, with the SQA Advanced Diploma covering specialisations required in intermediate to advanced level roles (SQA, 2024).¹¹

2. Comparative Analysis with the Indian education system

India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020)¹² structures school education in five stages starting at age six (foundation stage, Class I) through preparatory and middle school to completion of secondary school at age 16 (Class X) and senior secondary school at age 18

⁹ SQA, 2024. *Group Award Specification for SQA Advanced Certificate GT2A 47 / Advanced Diploma GT2C 48 in Business*; SQA, 2025. *SQA Advanced Diploma. Guide for Parents and Students*.

¹⁰ SQA (n.d). *Higher Education Institutions*.

¹¹ SQA, 2024. *Group Award Specification for SQA Advanced Certificate GT2A 47 / Advanced Diploma GT2C 48 in Business*.

¹² Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020. *National Education Policy 2020*.

(Class XII).¹³ Medium of instruction is varied, with the NEP2020 promoting multilingualism through the ‘three-language formula’ which offers flexibility for States, regions and students in the languages studied. Students sit national board or state board examinations at the end of secondary school (Class X) and senior secondary school (Class XII). The names of the examinations vary by board and state and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: India Class X and XII board examinations

Central / state board	Class X examinations¹⁴	Class XII examinations¹⁵
Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).	All India Secondary School Examination (AISSE).	All India Senior School Certificate Examination (AISSCE).
Council for the Indian School Certification Examination (CISCE).	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ISCE).	Indian School Certificate (ISC).
State boards ¹⁶ .	Secondary School Certificate (SSC) / Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC).	Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) / Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) / Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) / Matriculation Examination.

Class XII examinations are conducted by approved school boards, and they are overseen by the central body named ‘PARAKH¹⁷’. More specifically, Class XII examinations are one of the typical criteria¹⁸ to enter higher education. Internationally, Class XII examinations are similarly considered at institutional discretion for undergraduate admission by universities worldwide.

India’s National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) (National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), 2023)¹⁹ organises levels of learning in the Indian education system, integrating academic and vocational education under NEP2020 guidelines. It’s overseen by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), which is the

¹³ Prior to NEP2020, school education covered ages six to sixteen (secondary school) and sixteen to eighteen (senior secondary school).

¹⁴ Commonly known as the Class 10 Board exam.

¹⁵ Commonly known as Standard Class 12.

¹⁶ For example, Kerala Board of Public Examinations, West Bengal State Board, Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education.

¹⁷ Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development.

¹⁸ Other criteria to enter higher education can include, for example, entrance examinations, proof of language proficiency, subject-specific requirements and minimum marks in prerequisite qualifications.

¹⁹ National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), 2023.

regulatory, approval and monitoring body for vocational education and training in India, holding the national register (National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), 2025)²⁰ of approved qualifications.

Operating under NCVET, the National Skills Qualifications Committee (NSQC)²¹ approves qualifications that align with the NSQF. In accordance with NEP2020, NSQF levels align with India's National Credit Framework (NCrF) and National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF)²². The NSQF framework levels are shown in Table 3 alongside the education stage and currently aligned academic and vocational qualifications.

Table 3: NSQF framework levels, education stage and aligned qualifications

Education stage	NSQF framework levels	Education stage / qualifications aligned under NEP2020
Postgraduate	8.0	Ph.D.
Postgraduate	7.0	Masters Degree (2 Years) (after 4-Year UG degree) / MTech 2nd Yr / Engineering PG Degree.
Postgraduate	6.5	Masters Degree (1 or 2 Years) (after 4- or 3 Year UG Degree) / PG Degree / M.Vocation / M.S.c (Engineering).
Undergraduate	6.0	UG Degree (Hons / Hons with Research) (4 Years) / PG Diploma / B.Tech / B.Engineering.

²⁰ NCVET national register of approved qualifications.

²¹ The NSQC comprises representation from select Central Ministries, the regulatory bodies of education and skilling (namely the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)), Director General Training (DGT), CBSE, select State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs), select Industry Associations, the Awarding Bodies, and sectoral representatives (NCVET, 2023).

²² The NHEQF covers Levels 4.5-8.

Education stage	NSQF framework levels	Education stage / qualifications aligned under NEP2020
Undergraduate	5.5	UG Degree (3 Years) / B.Vocation / B.Sc. Engineering.
Undergraduate	5.0	UG Diploma (2 Years of UG course + 4 credit skills enhancement course) / NCVET approved Diploma (Advanced) (2 years).
Undergraduate	4.5	UG Certificate (1 Year of UG course + 4 credit skills enhancement course) / NCVET approved Diploma (3 rd year) / Year 1 of NCVET Diploma (Advanced).
Senior secondary school	4.0	Class XII (through CBSE / CISCE / State Boards / NIOS) Diploma of Vocation.
Senior secondary school	3.5	Class XI (through CBSE / CISCE / State Boards / NIOS) Certificate of Vocation.
Secondary school	3.0	Class X (through CBSE / CISCE / State Boards / NIOS).
Secondary school	2.5	Class IX (through CBSE / CISCE / State Boards / NIOS).
Middle school	2.0	Class VIII (through State Boards / National Institute of Open Schooling).

Education stage	NSQF framework levels	Education stage / qualifications aligned under NEP2020
Middle school	1.67	Class VII.
Middle school	1.33	Class VI.
Preparatory school	1.0	Class V (through State Boards / National Institute of Open Schooling).
Preparatory school	0.8	Class IV.
Preparatory school	0.6	Class III.
Foundation	0.4	Class II.
Foundation	0.2	Class I.
Foundation	0.1x3	Pre-School (3 years).

In reference to Table 3, the SQA Advanced Certificate is positioned similarly to NSQF qualification framework Level 4.5 (first year of undergraduate-level study) overall. This is because in both education systems qualifications at that level accept nationally recognised

and comparable upper secondary qualifications for admission, and upon successful completion, can enable entry to Year 2 of undergraduate-level study at institutional discretion and/or entry-level employment positions.

The SQA Advanced Diploma, is positioned similarly to the NSQF qualification framework Level 5.0 (second year of undergraduate-level study) overall. This is because in both education systems qualifications at that level accept entry qualifications nationally recognised as comparable to Year 1 of undergraduate-level study, and upon successful completion can enable entry to Year 3 of undergraduate-level study at institutional discretion, and/or intermediate to advanced level employment positions.

The comparability of the SQA Advanced Certificate to NSQF Level 4.5 and SQA Advanced Diploma to NSQF Level 5.0 overall is supported by analysis of national framework level descriptors, and the design, content, and learning outcomes of example qualifications in India. These indicate similar fundamental knowledge, skills and accountability developed by the SQA Advanced Certificate and NSQF Level 4.5 qualifications, progressing to more specialist content, project management skills and managerial responsibilities within defined areas of work expected in the SQA Advanced Diploma programme and NSQF Level 5.0 qualifications. Beyond NSQF Level 5.0, the NSQF Level 5.5-6 descriptors refer to acquiring advanced knowledge and management skills, corresponding more closely to the SCQF Level 9 descriptors for autonomy than the SCQF Level 8 descriptors in which the SQA Advanced Diploma is nationally recognised at.

The SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma are similar in overall duration to the academically orientated UG Certificate (NSQF Level 4.5) and UG Diploma / NCVET Diploma (Advanced) (NSQF Level 5.0), lasting one and two-years respectively. In terms of notional learning hours, there is a difference in the number expected in the SQA Advanced Certificate (960 hours) and UG Certificate (1,200 hours). The SQA Advanced Diploma comprises the same number of notional learning hours overall (2,400 hours) as the UG Diploma, with each year comprising 1,200 learning hours in both programmes. The SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma, UG Certificate, and UG Diploma are all standalone credit-based qualifications, but the UG Certificate and UG Diploma can also be first-year (after semester 2) and second-year (after semester 4) exit qualifications of three / four-year UG Degree programmes.

The NCVET Diploma (NSQF Level 4.5) and Diploma (Advanced) (NSQF Level 5.0) are vocation and skill-based qualifications designed to meet industry needs and can include extensive practical training and internships. They can vary in duration from Short-Term training (SST) of less than 1,200 notional learning hours, to Long-term Training (LTT) of 1,200 hours or more

(National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET)).²³ The NCVET Diploma at NSQF Level 4.5 is a LTT three-year (3,600-hour) programme, but students can exit at various points prior to completing the whole programme and achieve recognised qualifications for the level of knowledge and skills they have acquired up to the point they exit. Year 1 of the NCVET Diploma is aligned to NSQF Level 3.5, Year 2 is aligned to NSQF Level 4.0, and completion of the third year is aligned to NSQF Level 4.5, which is comparable to completing the first year of undergraduate-level study. The NCVET (Advanced) Diploma at NSQF Level 5.0 is also a LTT of two years (2,400 notional learning hours), with the first year aligning to Year 1 of undergraduate-level study (NSQF Level 4.5) and the second year aligning to Year 2 of undergraduate-level study (NSQF Level 5.0).

In all the SQA Advanced qualifications and Indian qualification examples reviewed, overall similarities in their structure, content, delivery and assessment methods were observed. These included:

- Core and optional/elective units, and skill enhancement courses aiming to develop personal development and/or workplace skills.
- A similar range of topics covered relevant to the subject area. For example, in business, these included: people and organisation management, accounting, emerging technologies, preparing financial forecasts, international contexts, legal and ethical issues, and business communication.
- A similar mix of teaching, learning, evaluation and assessment methods.

Looking further at the Indian undergraduate curriculum content, the SQA Advanced qualifications show similarity with the broader content of the UG Certificate (NSQF Level 4.5) and UG Diploma (NSQF Level 5.0) qualifications, in terms of the SQA qualification's aims of developing a broad understanding of subjects for progression to a degree or professional qualification. Additionally, some of the unit topics that the SQA Advanced Diploma in Business, for example, covers at introductory level (e.g. strategy, business law and supply chain) is included in Year 3 (NSQF Level 5.5) of a three/four-year Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A) UG Degree. This example suggests that SQA Advanced Diploma Business graduates will be well grounded in studying these topics at the depth expected at NSQF Level 5.5 standard, supporting progression to Year 3 of undergraduate-level study as per SQA's overall Diploma to Degree programme expectations.

A similar range of teaching, learning, evaluation and assessment methods of the SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma are included in the UG Certificate and UG Diploma. Examples include face-to-face and online teaching and learning, closed- / open-

²³ NCVET, (n.d.). SOP for Development, Alignment & Implementation of Skill Based Courses / Vocational Education, Training and Skilling based Qualifications in Higher Education & School Education. <https://ncvet.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SOP-for-Development-Alignment-Implementation-of-Skill-Based-Courses.pdf>.

book examinations, assignments, essays, case studies, oral presentations, and practical hands-on evaluations. The NCVET Diploma and Diploma (Advanced) qualifications also use blended learning and assessment approaches, however, being vocational and skill-based, they contain more practical and hands-on methods than the SQA Advanced qualifications and the UG Certificate and UG Diploma. Internships / work experience components are also required in the UG Certificate, UG Diploma and NCVET Diploma and NCVET Diploma (Advanced) qualifications, as per NEP2020 requirements for incorporation in all undergraduate-level curriculums.²⁴

3. Key findings

The SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma are well-designed and internationally relevant programmes. In particular they:

- Are developed with colleges, universities and employers – the qualification design process includes consultation with key external stakeholders designed and reference to National Occupational Standards, to help ensure the relevance of the SQA Advanced qualifications to learners and to labour market needs.
- Have established progression routes in key destination countries such as the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the USA, enabling students to top-up, with further study, to a Bachelor degree in a number of universities.
- Are career-focussed, practical learning: integrating core skills relevant to employment and with a structure that provides a well-rounded overview of the subject area as well as a specialisation through its combination of mandatory and optional units.

In the context of the Indian education system, the SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma have been considered in relation to NSQF entry, learning outcome, and progression indicators, as well as the duration, structure, content, delivery, learning and assessment methods of qualifications aligned to the NSQF. On this basis, the SQA Advanced Certificate can be considered overall comparable to NSQF Level 4.5, UG Certificate / NVET Diploma standard, and the SQA Advanced Diploma can be considered overall comparable to NSQF Level 5.0, UG Diploma / NVET Diploma (Advanced) standard.

4. Methodology

Based on Ecctis' well-established benchmarking methodology, this independent evaluation and comparative analysis comprised a review of the SQA Advanced Certificate and Advanced Diploma as well as national qualification frameworks and awards in the Indian education system. This process took into consideration the following core criteria:

- Entry requirements

²⁴ Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020. *National Education Policy 2020, p46.*

- Duration
- Structure and content
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes
- Associated outcomes.

Relevant information on the Indian education system and comparable qualifications has been obtained from official websites of Indian education authorities and institutions.

5. Notes

1. SQA, (n.d.). What we do.
2. SQA, (n.d.). What we do.
3. SQA, (n.d.) SQA Advanced Diploma and SQA Advanced Certificate courses.
4. SQA, 2024. *Group Award Specification for SQA Advanced Certificate GT2A 47 / Advanced Diploma GT2C 48 in Business*.
5. For example, students accessing the Advanced Diploma in Hospitality Operations are required to have successfully completed all mandatory and optional units of the SQA Certificate, totalling 12 SQA credits, plus two or three optional units, totalling 15 SQA credits.
6. SQA, 2025. *Group Award Specification for: SQA Advanced Diploma in Computing: Software Development GM92 48*.
7. SQA, (n.d.) SQA Advanced Diploma and SQA Advanced Certificate courses.
8. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), 2025. SCQF Level Descriptors.
9. SQA, 2024. *Group Award Specification for SQA Advanced Certificate GT2A 47 / Advanced Diploma GT2C 48 in Business*. SQA, 2025. *SQA Advanced Diploma. Guide for Parents and Students*.
10. SQA (n.d). Higher Education Institutions.
11. SQA, 2024. *Group Award Specification for SQA Advanced Certificate GT2A 47 / Advanced Diploma GT2C 48 in Business*.
12. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020. *National Education Policy 2020*.
13. Prior to NEP2020, school education covered ages six to sixteen (secondary school) and sixteen to eighteen (senior secondary school).
14. Commonly known as the Class 10 Board exam.
15. Commonly known as Standard Class 12.
16. For example, Kerala Board of Public Examinations, West Bengal State Board, Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education.
17. Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development.
18. Other criteria to enter higher education can include, for example, entrance examinations, proof of language proficiency, subject-specific requirements and minimum marks in prerequisite qualifications.
19. National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), 2023. *NSQF Notification*.
20. NCVET national register of approved qualifications.
21. The NSQC comprises representation from select Central Ministries, the regulatory bodies of education and skilling (namely the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)), Director General Training (DGT), CBSE, select State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs), select Industry Associations, the Awarding Bodies, and sectoral representatives (NCVET, 2023).

22. The NHEQF covers Levels 4.5-8.
23. NCVET, (n.d.). SOP for Development, Alignment & Implementation of Skill Based Courses / Vocational Education, Training and Skilling based Qualifications in Higher Education & School Education.
24. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020. *National Education Policy 2020*.