

NextGen: HN grading pack

HNC Complementary Health

Qualification code: G7Z8 47

Valid from: August 2026

This grading pack provides information about the process of grading the Higher National Certificate (HNC). It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to grade the HNC.

You must read it alongside the educator guide.

Published: April 2026 (version 1.0)

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Approach to grading

Grading in NextGen: HN Qualifications produces a valid and reliable record of a learner's level of achievement across the breadth of the qualification content.

As well as grading the whole qualification, you assess individual units on a pass or fail basis. Each unit has evidence requirements that learners must achieve before you can consider them for whole-qualification grading.

Whole-qualification grade outcomes

Learners who pass NextGen: HN Qualifications receive one of the following grade outcomes for the qualification as a whole:

- Achieved with Distinction
- Achieved with Merit
- Achieved

To determine a learner's whole-qualification grade, you use the grading matrix to assess and judge their performance across the key aspects of the HNC. You must align your judgements with the following whole-qualification grade descriptors.

Whole-qualification grade descriptors

Achieved with Distinction

The learner has achieved an excellent standard across the course content, going significantly beyond meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and consistently used them to apply skills to complete high-quality work. They engaged significantly with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

Achieved with Merit

The learner has achieved a very good standard across the course content, going beyond meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a very good knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and consistently used them to apply skills to complete work of a standard above that expected for an Achieved grade. They actively engaged with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

Achieved

The learner has achieved a good standard across the course content, credibly meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a good knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and used them to apply skills to complete work of the required standard. They engaged with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

What the whole-qualification grade descriptors do and how they are used

The whole-qualification grade descriptors outline the skills, knowledge and understanding a learner needs to show across the whole qualification to achieve that specific grade. They align with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level descriptors.

NextGen: HNC qualifications are at SCQF level 7. Learners who complete a NextGen: HNC can:

- convey knowledge of the subject's main theories, concepts and principles
- apply skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject in relevant practical and professional contexts
- use a broad range of approaches to address problems and issues in the context of the subject area

- exercise initiative and independence in carrying out activities, and have started to develop their professional practice and behaviours relevant to the context of the qualification
- differentiate between and appropriately apply the knowledge gained through practice, research and other sources

Please use this information, as well as the whole-qualification grade descriptors, to help you understand the standard at which learners should be assessed and graded.

Higher education institutes (HEIs) can use the grade descriptors to set admissions requirements, and employers can use them to help make decisions during a recruitment process.

Qualifications Scotland's quality assurance teams use the grade descriptors and the grading matrix to ensure that grades awarded in a particular NextGen: HN Qualification are at a consistent national standard, regardless of the setting in which they are achieved.

Successful learners receive their grade, along with the grade descriptor, on their certificate.

Using the grading matrix

You must use the grading matrix to judge the learner's whole-qualification grade. You can use the grading matrix at any time, but you only make a whole-qualification grading judgement when you are confident the learner has met all the evidence requirements of all the required units.

The criteria in the grading matrix reflect the knowledge, skills and qualities HEIs and employers can expect of a learner who has completed the qualification. These criteria align with the overall purpose of the qualification, and remain the same for its duration.

Each criterion has sector-specific descriptors of a typical learner's performance standard, aligned to the whole-qualification grade outcomes of Achieved, Achieved with Merit and Achieved with Distinction. These descriptors describe the standard a learner of that whole-qualification grade is expected to show.

The guidance accompanying each criterion can include, but is not limited to, information on:

- relevant types of assessment that may produce useful or meaningful evidence for judging that criterion
- mapping to content that is particularly relevant to that criterion
- mapping to meta-skills

This guidance may be updated over time.

When you make your final grading judgement, you must use a 'best fit' approach based on the learner's achievement across the grading matrix. This may be straightforward — for example, if the learner's evidence shows a consistent standard across the grading matrix criteria.

Meta-skills

Meta-skills are a key part of NextGen: HN Qualifications and learners can develop them throughout the qualification. A learner's engagement with developing their own meta-skills contributes to their qualification grade. You do not assess or grade competence or progress in individual meta-skills — for example, by judging the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Instead, you look at the process of development learners go through. This means learners need to provide evidence of planning, developing and reflecting on their meta-skills.

If qualification content also contributes to meta-skills development, it contributes to a learner's whole-qualification grading through the grading matrix approach.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability does not contribute to a learner's qualification grade.

The exception is where Learning for Sustainability content is part of the qualification content. In this case, the Learning for Sustainability content contributes to a learner's whole-qualification grade, through the grading matrix.

Grading matrix

You should introduce learners to the grading matrix early in the delivery session so that they are aware of the standard of work required to achieve with pass, achieve with merit, or achieve with distinction. You should give learners feedback on their performance and they should have the opportunity to discuss their progress with you at key points in the qualification. You should record details of these discussions for future reference and qualification verification evidence. You should retain records of professional discussions with work placement supervisors, feedback from clients, and learners' self-appraisals as evidence for grading decisions.

You assess learners against selected criteria that reflect course performance to award an appropriate grade.

Grades are based on learners' performance across the following mandatory units:

- JVOV 47 Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (2 credits)
- JVIQ 47 Signature Body Massage Treatments (2 credits)
- J7DQ 47: Aromatherapy (2 credits)
- JW98 47: Reflexology (2 credits)
- JLBH 47 The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health (3 credits)
- J82R 47 Research Skills (1 credit)

Subject delivery and assessment teams should use their professional judgement to align learner evidence against the grading matrix criteria to award a grade of achieved, achieved with merit, or achieved with distinction, with clear definitions for the decision.

HNC Complementary Health contains several of the National Occupational Standard (NOS) criteria and therefore all skills demonstrated in all units must achieve minimum competence in line with the professional standard.

Learners generate evidence to support each of the criteria in the following table. The following guidance should be used to support grading judgements on learner evidence for HNC Complementary Health.

Criterion 1 descriptors

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health	The learner: • achieves an adequate standard of work across the course content, credibly meeting the qualification requirements • shows reasonable knowledge and understanding of the concepts, principles and practices relating to the requirements of a complementary therapist	The learner: • achieves an excellent standard of work across the course content, often going beyond meeting the qualification requirements • shows excellent knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles relating to the requirements of a complementary therapist	The learner: • achieves an excellent standard across the course content, consistently going significantly beyond meeting the qualification requirements • shows excellent, comprehensive knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles relating to the requirements of a complementary therapist

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health (continued)	The learner: - demonstrates adequate research, analytical and presentation skills throughout most of their work - completes tasks but sometimes needs reminders, and work contains some errors - is occasionally inconsistent in their approach to professional conduct	The learner: - often demonstrates excellent research, analytical and presentation skills throughout their work - completes tasks independently with few errors - is consistent in their approach to professional conduct, behaving appropriately and communicating respectfully	The learner: - consistently demonstrates excellent research, analytical and presentation skills throughout their work - completes tasks independently without errors - exemplifies the highest standard of integrity and respect in their approach to professional conduct, consistently behaving appropriately and communicating respectfully

Criterion 1 guidance

You should retain learner evidence to support grading decisions. Examples of evidence can include:

- closed-book assessments
- open-book reports
- projects
- investigations
- logbooks
- records of professional discussion with tutors and/or mentors and assessors

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning	The learner: • demonstrates reasonable understanding of required skills to get relevant information from clients • uses client information to create appropriate basic treatment plans throughout the qualification • demonstrates adequate interaction with clients and responds when questioned with basic minimal information • uses standard responses to clients' requests and fulfils requests as asked. with adequate attention to detail	The learner: • often demonstrates an excellent understanding of the required skills to get relevant information from clients • regularly uses the information gained to create well-planned treatments throughout the qualification • regularly demonstrates excellent interaction with clients and anticipates questions, shares knowledge without being asked, and checks for the clients' understanding • pays attention to clients' requests and questions clients on preferences, adding thoughtful touches • shows excellent attention to detail	The learner: • consistently demonstrates an excellent understanding of the required skills to get relevant information from clients • consistently uses the information gained to create well-planned treatments throughout the qualification, demonstrating professional creativity and adaptability in their approach

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary therapy health: treatment planning (continued)			The learner: • consistently displays outstanding interaction with clients and not only anticipates needs but also creates clarity and confidence, and builds rapport and client trust over time • makes client interaction feel bespoke • uses a warm and engaging tone • delivers treatments flawlessly and adapts effortlessly under pressure • shows outstanding attention to detail

Criterion 2 guidance

You should retain learner evidence to support grading decisions. Examples of evidence may include:

- investigations of client's health concerns, conditions and holistic and complementary treatment protocols
- treatment logbooks
- a record of client consultations
- a record of treatment planning
- a record of professional discussions with tutors and/or mentors and assessors
- client feedback

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Practical application: treatment delivery	The learner: • uses treatment plans satisfactorily to meet the treatment aims • delivers an adequate standard of practical work • mostly meets deadlines but sometimes needs reminders and/or support, and delivers as expected • performs treatments with basic competence, possibly with some guidance needed • meets the minimum evidence requirements of practical skills	The learner: • uses the treatment plans effectively and often adapts techniques where required to meet the client's needs and treatment aims • delivers an excellent standard of practical work • almost always meets deadlines and delivers as expected • performs treatments with an excellent level of competence without guidance • often exceeds the minimum evidence requirements of practical skills	The learner: • uses the treatment plans effectively and consistently adapts techniques and modalities where required to meet the client's needs and treatment aims • delivers an outstanding standard of practical work consistently • always meet deadlines, sometimes ahead of schedule • performs treatments with an outstanding level of competence without guidance • consistently exceeds the minimum evidence requirements

Criterion 3 guidance

You should retain learner evidence to support grading decisions. Examples of evidence can include:

- self-reflective logbooks
- learner's self-evaluation worksheets
- assessor's formative and summative observation checklists
- record of professional discussions with tutors and/or mentors and assessors

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Evaluation and application skills	The learner: • applies knowledge and skills in evaluation techniques to demonstrate: ○ a basic analysis of their performance ○ a basic appraisal of the effectiveness of the treatments ○ a basic ability to make recommendations for future performance	The learner: • applies knowledge and skills in evaluation techniques to demonstrate: ○ excellent analysis of their performance in most instances ○ a well-formed appraisal of the effectiveness of the treatments in most instances ○ an effective ability to make recommendations for improving or maintaining future performance in most instances	The learner: • applies knowledge and skills in evaluation techniques to consistently demonstrate: ○ excellent analysis of their performance ○ perceptive and well-structured appraisal of the effectiveness of the treatments ○ insightful and articulate recommendations for improving or maintaining future performance

Criterion 4 guidance

You should retain learner evidence to support grading decisions. Examples of evidence may include:

- closed-book assessments
- open-book reports
- projects
- investigations
- logbooks
- records of client consultations
- treatment planning details
- treatment delivery logs
- learner's self-evaluation
- a record of professional discussions with tutors and/or mentors and assessors

Criterion 5 descriptors

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Develops meta-skills	The learner adequately engages with the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by: • carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving reasons for ratings or judgements made • setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories • using reflective practice strategies to track progress and analyse the links between course activities, experiences and meta-skills development	The learner demonstrates a clear commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by: • carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving some insightful reasons for ratings or judgements made • setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories • using reflective practice strategies to track progress, analyse and demonstrate some insight into the impact of their course activities and experiences on their meta-skills development	The learner demonstrates strong commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by: • carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving some insightful reasons for ratings or judgements made • setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories, and updating these as required • using reflective practice strategies very effectively to track progress, analyse and demonstrate insight into the impact of their course activities and experiences on their meta-skills development

Criterion 5 guidance

Maps to all units.

You must refer to the meta-skills assessment guidance when grading meta-skills. You can find meta-skills teaching, learning and assessment resources on our [meta-skills web page](#).

Additional grading guidance

Grading model

We recommend you introduce learners to how you integrate whole-course grading at the start of delivery, when you are introducing course content.

You should schedule regular feedback sessions at key points and whenever needed. Give learners dedicated time to discuss their progress and performance one-to-one with you. Clearly record discussion points and any agreed recommendations to help learners maintain or improve their performance.

You should collate learners' assessment and grading evidence throughout the course, as appropriate.

We recommend that learners have discussions with clients and work placement supervisors to gather feedback at appropriate times, to help learners gain further insight into their progress throughout the course.

Subject team meetings

We recommend you have mid-course subject team meetings to discuss learners' progress. However, you can only award a final whole-qualification grading judgement when you are confident that the learner has met all the evidence requirements of all the required units.

You must retain all learners' grading evidence to comply with Qualifications Scotland requirements

Final grading judgements and awards are subject to internal and external qualification verification.

We have provided tables to show how you can collate grading information for each mandatory unit and your final grading decisions and how you can collate grading information for each mandatory unit.

We have also provided a table with all of the mandatory units to collate your final grading decisions.

However, centres may develop their own recording documentation to suit their specific delivery and quality assurance processes.

Grading for each mandatory unit

Below are six tables to record the mandatory unit grading rationale and evidence to match the learner's performance to the appropriate criteria within the grading matrix.

Learner's name

Date

Mandatory unit: Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (2 credits)

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 1 Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 2 Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning				
Criterion 3 Practical application: treatment delivery				
Criterion 4 Evaluation skills and application				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 5 Develops meta-skills				

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Learner's name

Date

Mandatory unit: The Principles and Practices of
Complementary Health (3 Credits)

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 1 Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health				
Criterion 2 Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 3 Practical application: treatment delivery				
Criterion 4 Evaluation skills and application				
Criterion 5 Develops meta-skills				

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Learner's name

Date

Mandatory unit: Signature Body Massage
(2 Credits)

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 1 Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health				
Criterion 2 Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 3 Practical application: treatment delivery				
Criterion 4 Evaluation skills and application				
Criterion 5 Develops meta-skills				

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Learner's name

Date

Mandatory unit: Aromatherapy (2 Credits)

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 1 Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health				
Criterion 2 Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 3 Practical application: treatment delivery				
Criterion 4 Evaluation skills and application				
Criterion 5 Develops meta-skills				

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Learner's name

Date

Mandatory unit: Reflexology (2 Credits)

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 1 Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health				
Criterion 2 Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 3 Practical application: treatment delivery				
Criterion 4 Evaluation skills and application				
Criterion 5 Develops meta-skills				

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Learner's name

Date

Mandatory unit: Research Skills

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 1 Knowledge and understanding of course concepts, principles and practices relating to complementary health				
Criterion 2 Practical application of knowledge and skills relating to complementary health: treatment planning				

Criterion	Achieved — rationale and evidence	Achieved with merit — rationale and evidence	Achieved with distinction — rationale and evidence	Overall grade
Criterion 3 Practical application: treatment delivery				
Criterion 4 Evaluation skills and application				
Criterion 5 Develops meta-skills				

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Mandatory units for final grading

	Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy	The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health	Signature Body Massage Treatments	Aromatherapy	Reflexology	
Learner's name	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Final grade

	Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy	The Principles and Practices of Complementary Health	Signature Body Massage Treatments	Aromatherapy	Reflexology	
Learner's name	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Grade awarded	Final grade

Assessor's signature: _____

Internal verifier's signature: _____

Administrative information

Published: June 2026 (version 1.0)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this guide.

If a unit is revised:

- no new centres can be approved to offer the previous version of the unit
- centres should only enter learners for the previous version of the unit if they can complete it before its finish date

For more information on NextGen: HN Qualifications please visit the [NextGen: HN web page](#).

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