

NextGen: HN educator guide

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care

Qualification code: G9UD 47

Valid from: August 2026

This educator guide provides information about the Higher National Certificate (HNC) to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the HNC.

You must read it alongside the grading pack.

Published: June 2026 (version 1.0)

Copyright © Qualifications Scotland 2026

Contents

Purpose of the qualification	1
References	2
Structure	3
Framework	3
Aims of the qualification.....	5
General aims	5
Specific aims	5
Who is this qualification for?	7
Recognising prior learning.....	7
Articulation and progression	8
Professional recognition	8
Credit transfer arrangements	8
Recommended Core Skills entry profile	9
How the qualification meets employer and higher education institution needs	10
Table 1: mapping general qualification aims to units.....	11
Table 2: mapping National Occupational Standards (NOS) to units.....	13
Table 3: assessment strategy for the qualification	14
Meta-skills	16
Meta-skills in HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care.....	17
Learning for Sustainability	20
Context.....	20
Learning for Sustainability in NextGen: HN Qualifications.....	21
Grading	23
Whole-qualification grade outcomes	23
Whole-qualification grade descriptors	24
Quality assurance.....	25
Grading and meta-skills.....	25
Approaches to delivery and assessment.....	27
Sequencing or integrating units.....	29
Additional guidance on integrated or holistic assessment.....	30

Remediation and re-assessment in NextGen: Higher National Qualifications.....	32
Information for centres	34
Equality and inclusion.....	34
Internal and external verification	34
Glossary	35
Information for learners	36
HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care	36
Qualification information	36
Administrative information.....	39
History of changes.....	39

Purpose of the qualification

The Higher National Certificate (HNC) Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care provides learners with the essential knowledge, skills, and values required to provide quality care to women and individuals, infants, and families during the perinatal period. This qualification aims to develop competent care practitioners who can deliver safe, effective, and compassionate care across various perinatal settings.

Despite increases in funded places, there has been a decline in the numbers of applicants to undergraduate midwifery programmes (UCAS 2024). This qualification helps to address this by widening access to degree programmes and providing a recognised qualification for perinatal support workers.

Although there's been a reduction in birth rates, more pregnancies are impacted by pre-existing medical conditions, poverty, age and health inequalities (Campbell et al., 2014; MBRRACE–UK, 2025). Furthermore, ethnic minority women and individuals and those from deprived areas experience poorer outcomes and experiences in perinatal care (Amma Birth Companions, 2024). The role that perinatal support workers and midwives can play to improve this situation is fundamental to improving the experiences of these women and individuals and their babies. This qualification therefore ensures that learners understand the importance of providing person-centred, holistic, inclusive care that respects the rights and needs of women and individuals, infants and families. It is responsive to the diverse needs of women and individuals in perinatal contexts. The qualification also emphasises the significance of promoting maternal and infant health, safeguarding, and addressing health inequalities.

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care supports the development of critical and evaluative thinking skills, enabling learners to engage in evidence-based practice and continuous improvement in perinatal care delivery. It emphasises effective communication and interpersonal skills, as they are essential for establishing therapeutic relationships with patients, their families, and members of the multi-disciplinary team. This links with the maternity support worker and neonatal support worker development framework for Career Framework level 2 to 4

healthcare support workers (HCSWs) in perinatal services, developed by NHS Education Scotland and the recognised pillars of practice.

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care aims to prepare learners for a rewarding career in perinatal care, supporting their progression to further study, employment, and ongoing professional development. By embedding current Scottish legislation and policies into the curriculum, the qualification ensures that learners are well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of perinatal care and contribute to the delivery of high-quality, person-centred maternity services in Scotland.

References

- Amma Birth Companions, (2024) *Birth Outcomes & Experiences Report*.
- Campbell F., Conti G., Heckman JJ., Moon SH., Pinto R., Pungello E., Pan Y. (2014) 'Early childhood investments substantially boost adult health', *Science*, 343 (6178), 1478–1485.
- MBRRACE-UK, (2025) *Saving lives, improving mothers' care: lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland confidential enquiries into maternal deaths and morbidity 2021–23*.
- UCAS, (2024) *2024 cycle applicant figures*.

Structure

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) are at SCQF level 7 and are made up of 120 SCQF credit points (15 Qualifications Scotland credits). HNCs must incorporate at least 80 credit points (10 Qualifications Scotland credits) at SCQF level 7.

HNCs contain 15 credits to increase opportunities for learners returning to education. Refer to the 'Meta-skills' section of this guide for more information.

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care consists of 120 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7.

Framework

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care has 8 mandatory units. Learners must complete all the mandatory units

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
JRG7 47	Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings	4	32	7
JNDL 47	Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills	2	16	7
JRFA 47	Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period	1	8	7
JVUJ 47	Perinatal Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practice	1	8	7
JGRT 47	Physiological Adaptations and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period	2	16	7
JZBH 47	Preparation for Perinatal Practice	2	16	7

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
JCHU 47	Anatomy and Physiology in Reproductive Health	2	16	7
JL25 47	Understanding Personal and Professional Development	1	8	7

Aims of the qualification

General aims

1. Develop transferable abilities, such as core skills.
2. Enhance independent learning, academic writing, and research capabilities.
3. Engage in reflective practice to foster personal effectiveness.
4. Promote critical and evaluative reasoning.
5. Support career advancement and academic progression across diverse environments.
6. Deliver care that is compassionate and inclusive.
7. Adhere to safe and effective professional practices.
8. Develop meta-skills that complement technical and professional knowledge and skills.
9. Develop Learning for Sustainability skills, knowledge, understanding and values.

Specific aims

1. Develop understanding of the principles and values underpinning perinatal care practice, with a particular emphasis on person-centred and holistic approaches for women and individuals, infants and families during pregnancy, labour, birth, and postnatal periods.
2. Develop the theoretical knowledge and practical skills required to deliver safe, effective, and compassionate care across a variety of perinatal settings.
3. Develop critical and evaluative thinking skills to support evidence-based practice and drive continuous improvement in perinatal care delivery.
4. Promote effective communication and interpersonal skills essential for establishing therapeutic relationships with patients, families, and multidisciplinary teams.
5. Apply ethical reasoning and demonstrate professional integrity in all aspects of perinatal care, including complex scenarios such as informed consent, safeguarding, and confidentiality.

6. Support learners in recognising and responding appropriately to the diverse needs of women and individuals in perinatal contexts, ensuring care is inclusive and culturally sensitive for all service users.
7. Encourage reflective practice to empower learners to critically assess their performance in perinatal care and identify opportunities for professional development and enhanced effectiveness.
8. Prepare learners to participate in safe and effective decision making in perinatal settings.
9. Facilitate the development of meta-skills to complement competence and support high-quality perinatal care delivery.
10. Promote recognition of the importance of lifelong learning and ongoing professional development to support career progression and maintain excellence in perinatal practice in the healthcare sector.

Who is this qualification for?

This qualification is suitable for college-based learners, as well as employees within the healthcare sector, with different modes of entry, full or part-time.

Entry to this qualification is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners have one or more of the following:

- Previous study in a related subject at SCQF level 6 or above
- SCQF level 6 in literacy through Higher English or an equivalent qualification
- Previous experience of working in care is desirable but not essential

In addition, for progression to HEI undergraduate nursing degrees, learners need:

- SCQF level 5 in numeracy or equivalent
- for non-native speakers, a Higher ESOL at A or B or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) at 6.5 for writing and 7 for reading, listening and speaking

Recognising prior learning

Qualifications Scotland recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. Formal learning is learning certificated by a recognised awarding or professional body. Non-formal learning includes learning such as employers' in-house training courses. Informal learning is learning based on experience from a variety of environments that is not formally assessed.

It is unlikely that a learner would have the appropriate prior learning and experience to meet all the requirements of a full HNC.

You can find more information and guidance about the [recognition of prior learning on our website](#).

Articulation and progression

Learners who complete this qualification could go on to:

- further study or other qualifications in perinatal care or related areas
- employment and/or training
- maternity support worker and neonatal support worker roles
- undergraduate midwifery degrees at Scottish universities

Professional recognition

There is no professional qualification attached to this HNC. However, HNC Healthcare Practice provides a range of underpinning knowledge and skills relevant to the following qualifications awarded by Qualifications Scotland or other awarding bodies:

- a range of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Care
- a range of Professional Development Awards (PDAs) in Care

Credit transfer arrangements

Centres can make decisions about transferring credit. They can transfer credit if the subject-related content of the units is broadly equivalent. Centres should consider the currency of a learner's achievement before transferring credit.

You should consider credit transfer for learners who have already achieved the PDA Developing Professional Practice in Health and Social Care: maternity support.

Recommended Core Skills entry profile

Learners should have the following Core Skills at the stated SCQF levels before starting this qualification. This information can help identify learners who may need additional support.

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile
Communication	SCQF level 6
Numeracy	SCQF level 5
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	SCQF level 5
Problem Solving	SCQF level 5
Working with Others	SCQF level 5

How the qualification meets employer and higher education institution needs

This qualification is designed in collaboration with employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), practitioners and professional bodies to meet the sector need.

The following tables show how the qualification can benefit employers and HEIs by equipping learners with the necessary skill set:

- Table 1 shows how units map to the general aims of the qualification.
- Table 2 shows how the units map to National Occupational Standards (NOS).
- Table 3 shows the assessment strategy for the qualification.

Table 1: mapping general qualification aims to units

Key: aim is directly relevant to unit (X), aim is optional in this unit (O), aim is not applicable to this unit (N/A)

Unit code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6	Aim 7	Aim 8	Aim 9	Aim 10
JRG7 47	Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JNDL 47	Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	O
JRFA 47	Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	X	O
JVUJ 47	Perinatal Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practice	X	N/A	X	N/A	O	X	X	X	X	X
JCHU 47	Anatomy and Physiology in Reproductive Health	X	O	X	N/A	N/A	O	O	N/A	X	X
JGRT 47	Physiological Adaptations and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
JL25 47	Understanding Personal and Professional Development	N/A	O	X	O	O	O	X	O	X	X

Unit code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6	Aim 7	Aim 8	Aim 9	Aim 10
JZBH 47	Preparation for Perinatal Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X

Table 2: mapping National Occupational Standards (NOS) to units

Unit code	Unit title	NOS codes
JNDL 47	Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills	SFHCHS6, SFHCHS8, SFHCHS9, SFHCHS11, SFHCHS12, SFHCHS14, SFHCHS19, SFHCHS36, SFHCHS185, SFHCHS239, SFHGEN2, SFHGEN4, SFHGEN5, SFHGEN6, SFHGEN7, SFHGEN8, SFHGEN14, SFHGEN15, SFHGEN16, SFHGEN23, SFHGEN39, SFHGEN57, SFHGEN62, SFHGEN80, SFHGEN81, SFHGEN96, SFHGEN97, SFHGEN98, SFHIPC4, SFHIPC9, SFHMCN1, SFHMCN10, SFHMCN13, SFHMCN14, SFHMCN16, SFHMCN17, SFHMCN12, SFHMCN25, SFHMCN27, SCDHSC002, SCDHSC0033, SCDHSC0023, SFHGEN12, SFHIPC3, SCDHSC0226, SCDHSC0035
JZBH 47	Preparation for Perinatal Practice	SFHGEN80, SCDHSC0033, SCDHSC0035, SCDHSC3100, SCDHSC3111, SCDHSC0234, SCDHSC0226, SCDHSC0241, SFHGEN98, SFHGEN23, SFHGEN12, SFHCHS69, SFHGEN63, SCDHSC0032

Table 3: assessment strategy for the qualification

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
JRG7 47	Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings	• Integrated project (outcomes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7) • Reflective account (outcome 3)
JNDL 47	Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills	• Placement assessment document and simulated practice (outcomes 1 and 2) • Online or closed book calculations assessment — 80% pass mark (outcome 3)
JRFA 47	Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period	• Single integrated assessment project which could be a report, case study, presentation, or a portfolio of evidence
JVUJ 47	Perinatal Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practice	• Single integrated research project
JCHU 47	Anatomy and Physiology in Reproductive Health	• Multiple-choice or restricted-response assessment — 60% pass mark (outcomes 1 and 2) • Investigative report (outcome 3)
JGRT 47	Physiological Adaptations and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period	• Integrated portfolio of evidence

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
JL25 47	Understanding Personal and Professional Development	• Reflective account (outcome 1) • Academic competency assessed across the qualification (outcome 2) • Folio (outcome 3)
JZBH 47	Preparation for Perinatal Practice	• Readiness for placement activities (outcome 1) • Investigative report (outcome 2) • Statement of support for progression to employment or further study (outcome 3) • Curriculum Vitae (outcome 3) • Carry out practice interview (outcome 3) • Complete placement visit and/or liaison form (outcome 3) • Placement document showing achievement of: ○ agreed placement hours (outcome 4) ○ achievement of all relevant proficiencies (outcome 4) ○ evaluation of service user, supervisor, or assessor feedback from practice placement and reflection of learning (outcome 4)

Meta-skills

Every NextGen: HN Qualification gives learners the opportunity to develop meta-skills.

Meta-skills are transferable behaviours and abilities that help people to adapt and succeed in life, study and work. There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Each of these is made up of four meta-skills and a number of sub-skills.

- Self-management — focusing, integrity, adapting, initiative
- Social intelligence — communicating, feeling, collaborating, leading
- Innovation — curiosity, creativity, sense-making, critical thinking

From early in the qualification, we want learners to identify and understand the meta-skills they can develop, and to appreciate the personal and professional value of these skills. We want to support learners to continue to articulate, use and build on them long after they have achieved their qualification. In this way, we help learners to develop broad skills profiles, enabling them to thrive in a changing world.

Every NextGen: HN unit signposts opportunities for learners to develop meta-skills, and there is an assessed outcome in one of the mandatory units. When you make your whole-qualification grade decisions, you consider learners' commitment to engaging with meta-skills development.

You do not assess learners on their competence or progress in individual meta-skills. Instead, you assess them on evidence that they have engaged with a personal process of development. Meta-skills development is founded on a clear process of self-assessment, goal setting, action planning and reflective practice.

You can find meta-skills teaching, learning and assessment resources on [our meta-skills web page](#).

Meta-skills in HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care integrates the development of meta-skills, such as self-management, social intelligence, and innovation, alongside essential clinical knowledge. In perinatal practice, learners develop meta-skills through practical exercises including simulations, hands-on placement experiences, and reflective accounts. This helps them to navigate the unique challenges women and individuals face across the perinatal period. Using frameworks such as Skills Development Scotland's Skills 4.0 model, you help learners to focus on meta-skills most relevant to perinatal care, such as clear communication, empathy, effective teamwork, and critical thinking.

Throughout the curriculum, learners participate in reflective practice and goal setting, aided by tutors and clinical mentors. This ensures learners develop the capabilities required to support expectant and new mothers, collaborate with multidisciplinary teams, and respond flexibly to the changing needs encountered in perinatal care environments.

Embedding meta-skills into the perinatal curriculum encourages learners to plan, act, and reflect on their progress. Skills such as self-awareness, goal setting, and monitoring personal development become integral to building clinical abilities, conducting patient assessments, and working in multidisciplinary healthcare teams specific to perinatal care.

The cultivation of meta-skills is a dynamic and ongoing process. Learners should be engaged from the outset, carrying out self-assessment, setting goals, and continually reviewing their progress. Reflective practice is central to this, empowering learners to evaluate their experiences, adapt approaches, and set new objectives for improvement in perinatal care settings.

Traditional teaching methods in perinatal care education, such as patient simulations, case scenarios and clinical placements, naturally foster the growth of meta-skills. By mapping these opportunities throughout the qualification, learners can more easily identify and demonstrate progress in areas like focusing, teamwork, and critical thinking. In HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care, particular units

emphasise reflection as a core element of learning. The unit Understanding Personal and Professional Development introduces learners to reflective practice, encouraging its application throughout the qualification. Introducing reflective practice helps learners enhance their personal development and set meaningful goals. Regular formative reflection builds the self-awareness vital for competent perinatal care.

Meta-skills are essential for completing assignments and excelling in clinical practice. You should encourage learners to intentionally develop and apply skills such as maintaining concentration during complex perinatal procedures (focusing) or collaborating in healthcare teams during placements. Support from tutors, clinical assessors, and supervisors is crucial in helping learners identify, nurture, and reflect on their meta-skills in alignment with course outcomes and professional standards. These mentors act as coaches, offering feedback and guidance throughout both classroom and placement-based learning.

While you should guide learners to concentrate on the meta-skills most relevant to their clinical and personal circumstances, the learning environment should also support individual development. Each learner has unique strengths and areas for growth. The goal is to demonstrate continuous improvement in meta-skills, rather than achieving a fixed level. Using self-assessment tools, learners can identify their preferred learning styles and strengths, enabling them to prioritise which meta-skills to focus on as they progress towards professional practice in perinatal care. Case studies and scenario-based exercises demonstrate practical application of these skills, while group reflection sessions provide opportunities for collective learning from shared experiences.

As a facilitator, highlight instances where meta-skills have positively impacted perinatal clinical practice and encourage learners to engage in reflective dialogue about placement experiences. Recognise achievements and provide guidance for future development based on previous performance. As learners advance, introduce perinatal care topics that require problem identification and problem-solving, both of which depend on a blend of meta-skills.

Group discussions encourage learners to recognise strengths and areas for improvement, with teaching adapted to individual needs. Ultimately, incorporating meta-skills into coursework and clinical placements equips learners for the evolving demands of perinatal care and prepares them for lifelong learning in this specialised sector.

Learning for Sustainability

Context

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UK in 2015, has shaped the development of Scottish, national and international sustainability policy. It sets out the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), which are central to the Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#). Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is a commitment to embedding the SDGs in Scottish education.

LfS embraces global citizenship, sustainable development, social justice, human rights, climate change, biodiversity loss, equality and inclusion. Learners develop their capacity to deal with the unpredictable social, economic and environmental challenges facing our rapidly changing world.

LfS combines:

- education for sustainable development (ESD)
- global citizenship
- outdoor learning

ESD is the internationally used term for sustainability education. Although LfS has a broader remit, the terms are largely interchangeable. Colleges and universities tend to use ESD, while schools usually use LfS. Both focus on a broad range of social, economic and environmental themes and approaches across all levels of education. Qualifications Scotland uses LfS as an umbrella term.

Learning for Sustainability in NextGen: HN Qualifications

Sustainability is a core component in this qualification.

Learners who complete this qualification should have:

- a general understanding of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- a general understanding of the SDGs
- a deeper understanding of subject-specific sustainability
- the confidence to apply the skills, knowledge, understanding and values they develop in the next stage of their life

Sustainability is embedded as an outcome in the Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings unit.

Learners who complete this outcome can:

- assess their own knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the SDGs
- review unit content against the SDGs to identify a sustainability-related issue
- apply knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the SDGs to propose improvements

You can cover any of the SDGs that are relevant to the subject area, however the following sustainability goals relate well to this qualification:

- SDG 3 — reduce inequalities within and among countries and good health and wellbeing. Reducing inequalities includes:
 - empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all
 - providing equal opportunity
 - reducing inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices
 - wage and social protection policies to achieve equality
 - safe migration and mobility of people

- SDG 10 — ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. This includes:
 - reducing maternal mortality rates
 - ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age
 - reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment
 - promoting mental health and wellbeing
 - strengthening the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol
 - ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information and education and integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
 - universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, ensuring access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
 - strengthening the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

Find out more about Qualifications Scotland's approach on the [NextGen: HN Learning for Sustainability web page](#). There is an LfS reflective template available in the resources section. You may find it helpful as a starting point for considering how the SDGs are, or could be, embedded in a qualification, unit or assessment.

Grading

Please see the grading pack for this qualification for more information on making grade judgements.

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 provided in the grading pack 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.

Achievement in individual units is determined on a pass or fail basis, with each unit having specific evidence requirements that learners must fulfil before being considered for overall qualification grading. Judgements regarding the quality of assessment evidence are made using a grading matrix aligned with the qualification's key criteria.

To successfully achieve the qualification, learners must pass all criteria outlined in the grading model. For the grade of Achieved with Merit, learners must attain Merit level or higher in at least 7 out of 10 assessment criteria, while the remaining 3 must be at a minimum of Achieved level. For Achieved with Distinction, they must meet 7 criteria at Distinction level, with the remaining 3 at either Achieved or Merit level.

The grading model is designed to:

- promote a comprehensive evaluation of the learner's performance throughout the qualification, rather than focusing solely on individual units
- emphasise a learner's strengths in the values, knowledge, and skills essential for social services
- encourage and motivate learners during the academic year
- distinguish candidates' levels of achievement for employers and progression to higher education
- maintain consistency of grading standards across different centres

Quality assurance

At three key points during the qualification, marking teams must complete a grading template for each learner, covering all work completed so far. It is important for marking teams to clearly summarise the rationale behind the grade awarded for each criterion, referencing the specific evidence supporting their decision. This information enables the external quality assurer to confirm the accuracy of assessors' grading judgements.

Grading and meta-skills

Meta-skills play a central role in HNC Healthcare Practice, with learners developing these skills throughout their studies. However, individual meta-skills are neither directly assessed nor assigned grades. For instance, the qualification does not evaluate the quality of a learner's emotional insight or creativity, nor does it measure progress in any single meta-skill. Instead, the qualification focuses on the learner's overall journey in planning, developing, and reflecting on their meta-skills, which

forms part of the holistic judgement. Learners should present evidence demonstrating how they have engaged in these processes. The grading matrix features criteria related to meta-skills, which you should use to guide this overall assessment. For additional guidance, refer to [Meta-skills — Assessment and grading information for centres](#).

Approaches to delivery and assessment

You can deliver HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care through several formats, including:

- full-time study
- day release
- other part-time options
- blended learning

You can adopt a blended approach that combines delivery methods, tailored to the specific requirements of each unit and learners' employment circumstances. When designing the delivery schedule, centres must address the unique needs and circumstances of all learners, particularly those who are currently employed. Wherever feasible, teaching should build on learners' existing knowledge and understanding.

To carry out the Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills, and Preparation for Perinatal Practice units, centres or course providers must confirm that learners are either already employed in a relevant care setting, or that they are able to secure a placement in an appropriate environment. Furthermore, centres must ensure that they have suitably qualified and vocationally experienced staff and appropriate resources and equipment for the delivery and assessment of the qualification.

The qualification's structure offers units focused both on developing theoretical knowledge and on applying that knowledge in practical settings. Centres must arrange suitable placements to enable learners to complete the practice-based units successfully.

We recommend that centres collaborate with placement providers to devise clear guidance on both delivery and assessment. Any local arrangements for placements should, wherever possible, tap into relevant educational support networks. When using NHS placements, centres should work closely with designated practice educator facilitators (PEFs), as such partnerships enhance and reinforce the support provided by placement supervisors, assessors, and further education institutions. It

is not necessary for registered midwives to supervise learners during their perinatal clinical placement.

The Council of Deans agreed that the placement availability for learners in perinatal settings in the NHS is 35 hours, however learners can access additional placements in alternative settings to enhance their transferrable skills.

The approach to delivery and assessment in this qualification is varied to give learners and centres the opportunity to deliver a variety of teaching, learning and assessment approaches. Your centre could use the following suggested delivery methods:

- lectures
- tutorials
- study packs
- problem-based scenarios
- group work
- presentations
- online materials, including TURAS
- IT-based teaching materials
- projects
- clinical skills simulation
- virtual learning environments and digital approaches to learning and assessment

Although you can teach certain units through open or online learning, you must not deliver the whole qualification solely by these means. This is primarily because practical units require assessment of occupational competence, and values-based components require direct delivery and evaluation of learner performance. You must embed assessment of teamwork and communication skills across this qualification, as these competencies cannot be evaluated effectively through solely online teaching and learning methods.

During the qualification, you should give learners clear guidance regarding the presentation of information, as outlined in Understanding Personal and Professional Development. You should consistently use standard referencing conventions, such as the Harvard referencing system, to enable learners to confidently incorporate

wider evidence into their research and academic work. This also underpins evidence-based practice in healthcare professions and helps ensure compliance with copyright regulations, thereby preventing plagiarism.

Sequencing or integrating units

As this qualification is grounded in reflective practice and meta-skills development, you should introduce learners to self-reflection, reflective methodologies, and the exploration of learning styles early on, through the Understanding Personal and Professional Development unit. This unit also familiarises learners with academic writing standards and essential research skills, both of which are crucial for successfully completing the qualification.

In addition to fostering reflective abilities, early engagement with professional standards and ethical principles deepens learners' understanding of perinatal practice. Therefore, we recommend that you deliver the Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings unit near the beginning of the qualification.

There are opportunities to integrate teaching across units, for example the investigation of health inequalities in Perinatal Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practice can be linked to the health inequalities component in Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings. This could also involve integration with Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period outcome 1. The inclusion of health inequalities outcomes further aligns with teaching on UN sustainability goals, as outlined in the Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings unit outcome 7.

You can incorporate meta-skills reflections and the development of action plans into the reflective practice elements of the Understanding Personal and Professional Development unit, as well as the final reflective outcome in the Preparation for Perinatal Practice unit.

Before commencing their placement, learners should complete the Preparation for Perinatal Practice unit to ensure they have gained the foundational knowledge and skills.

Additional guidance on integrated or holistic assessment

Holistic or integrated assessment focuses on assessing a number of outcomes in a unit together, or in some cases, assessing the unit as a whole, rather than by outcome. When assessing a unit of competence holistically, the assessment activities integrate a number of aspects of the competence. Holistic or integrated assessment can reduce the time spent on assessment and can promote greater equity in the assessment process.

When developing or revising a NextGen: HN Qualification, Qualifications Scotland works with a development team to devise an appropriate assessment strategy that accommodates holistic or integrated assessment. However, the practice of integrating units for the purposes of learning and teaching is a centre-led activity.

Units are designed to facilitate holistic or integrated assessment approaches that prevent large, unwieldy assessments.

Sometimes more than one piece of evidence is needed for a unit.

For example, if a unit is about carrying out an antenatal check, a learner would need to provide evidence of performance (following the correct procedures and communication techniques during the assessment) and product (accurately completed antenatal documentation and recorded findings).

Evidence requirements must do what they say: specify requirements for evidence of learner competence in the unit. The evidence must be of sufficient quality for an assessor or verifier to judge that the learner has achieved the unit.

Possible assessment integration examples

Unit and outcome or outcomes	Integrates with
Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings outcome 2	Preparation for Perinatal Practice outcome 2
Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings outcome 3	- Understanding Personal and Professional Development outcome 1 - Preparation for Perinatal Practice outcome 4
Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings outcomes 4, 5 and 7	- Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period outcomes 2 and 3 - Perinatal Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practice outcome 2
Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings outcome 5	Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period outcome 1
Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings outcome 4	Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills outcome 1
Understanding Personal and Professional Development outcome 2	Assessed across all written assessments

Remediation and re-assessment in NextGen: Higher National Qualifications

Remediation

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify learners' responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, the assessor must formally note such instances, in writing or as a recording, and make them available to the internal and external verifier.

Remediation is not permitted for closed-book assessments.

The size and structure of the larger NextGen: HN units should mean that the assessor or lecturer is close enough to ongoing assessment activity in project-based units to identify the requirement for remediation as it occurs.

Re-assessment

We must give learners who fail the unit a re-assessment opportunity or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Where we have introduced larger units to the framework, we expect instances of re-assessment to be minimal, due to the approach to assessment and remediation. Where re-assessment is required in a project-based unit, a substantially different project must be used.

Resource requirements

Each unit in HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care includes links to relevant resources. Additionally, we encourage you to use the resources available on the NHS NES website, where appropriate. If the assessments provided by NES align with the evidence requirements of the HNC units, they may be suitable for use as unit or outcome assessments.

There are appropriate resources in specific learning zones on [TURAS](#) that are relevant to this qualification, for example:

- infection prevention and control
- mental health and wellbeing
- person-centred care
- public health
- trauma-informed practice: an introduction
- equality and diversity
- breastfeeding
- perinatal and infant mental health
- postpartum contraception
- women, children, young people and families: embedding trauma-informed care within maternity services in Scotland

We recommend that you explore these resources and select appropriate ones for learners to access.

Learners and delivery staff should have easy access to digital devices. Learners must carry out guided research as part of their studies, which means they need access to web resources, libraries and workplace or placement resources.

Information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The units in this HNC are designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should consider the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements web page](#).

Internal and external verification

You must make sure all instruments of assessment you use in this qualification are internally verified according to your centre's policies and Qualifications Scotland's guidelines.

Qualifications Scotland carries out external verification to ensure that internal assessment meets the national guidelines for this qualification.

More information on internal and external verification is available in Qualifications Scotland's [Guide to Assessment](#) and in [Next Generation: Higher National Quality Assurance — Guidance for Centres](#).

Glossary

Qualifications Scotland credits: 1 Qualifications Scotland credit equals 8 SCQF credit points.

Qualifications Scotland credit value indicates the contribution the unit makes to a Qualifications Scotland qualification. A Qualifications Scotland credit value of 1 represents approximately 40 hours of learning, teaching and assessment.

SCQF: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland's national framework for describing qualifications. We use SCQF terminology in this guide to refer to credits and levels. [For more information on the SCQF, visit the SCQF website.](#)

SCQF credit points indicate the amount of learning required to complete a qualification. NextGen HNCs and HNDs are worth 120 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels indicate how hard the qualification is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. NextGen HNCs are at SCQF level 7 and NextGen HNDs are at SCQF level 8.

Information for learners

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care

This information explains:

- what the qualification is about
- what you should know or be able to do before you start
- what you need to do during the qualification
- opportunities for further learning and employment

Qualification information

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care is an SCQF level 7 qualification that includes 8 mandatory units, worth a total of 120 SCQF credit points. The units are:

- Professional Practice in Healthcare Settings
- Perinatal Practice: Foundation Skills
- Preparation for Perinatal Practice
- Health and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period
- Perinatal Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practice
- Anatomy and Physiology in Reproductive Health
- Physiological Adaptations and Wellbeing in the Perinatal Period
- Understanding Personal and Professional Development

The qualification gives you the knowledge and skills to progress to an undergraduate degree in midwifery, to work as a healthcare support worker in a perinatal setting or to work as a doula.

Entry is at your centre's discretion. You should, however, have effective communication and interpersonal skills. You can demonstrate these with:

- relevant qualifications at SCQF level 6
- experience of working in the health or social care sectors

If progression to an undergraduate midwifery degree is your aim, you should also have achieved:

- SCQF level 5 in numeracy or equivalent
- if you are a non-native English speaker, a Higher ESOL at A or B or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) at 6.5 for writing and 7 for reading, listening and speaking

HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care integrates the development of meta-skills, such as self-management, social intelligence, and innovation, alongside essential clinical knowledge. You develop meta-skills through clinical experiences on placement, simulation of clinical activities, academic work and reflection on your practice and learning.

You are assessed in different ways:

- showing what you can do during placements
- creating portfolios
- practical assignments
- classroom tasks
- investigative reports
- case studies
- group presentations

Your progress is checked unit-by-unit, and through a final grading looking at your overall achievement. This final grading could be Achieved with Distinction, Achieved with Merit, or Achieved.

If you're already working in healthcare, this pathway helps you take your career to the next level and expand your skills. You are encouraged to reflect on your own practice and learn independently, while also building specialist knowledge and important transferrable skills.

The main goal of the qualification is to help you become a confident and skilled member of the healthcare workforce, which means better care for patients. You learn how to put perinatal care practice into action, giving you a solid base for further study

or moving into a new job in health. HNC Healthcare Practice: Perinatal Care can lead to a number of different career options. You can progress to university to year 1 of an undergraduate degree in midwifery, you can work as a senior healthcare support worker in maternity care, or move into the private sector as a doula. This qualification opens doors to further study and a rewarding career in healthcare.

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 educator 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](#).

Thank you to everyone who helped us develop this qualification. Your expertise, time and thoughtful input was invaluable.

The information in this educator guide may be reproduced in support of Qualifications Scotland qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, Qualifications Scotland must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@qualifications.gov.scot.

Copyright © Qualifications Scotland 2026