

NextGen: HN grading pack

HND Administration Management and Digital Business Technologies

Qualification code: GFXU 48

Valid from: August 2026

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

You must read it alongside the educator guide.

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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 HND. 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: HND qualifications are at SCQF level 8. Learners who complete a NextGen: HND can:

- convey an insightful understanding of the subject's core theories, concepts and principles, along with its scope and defining features
- apply skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject in relevant practical and professional contexts, showing some specialist knowledge and using a range of relevant techniques and materials
- describe and explain significant topical issues and specific areas of interest in the context of the subject
- exercise autonomy and initiative in carrying out activities and supporting or leading others
- developed professional practice and behaviours relevant to the context of the qualification
- formulate and critically evaluate evidence-based responses, appropriately applying research and academic processes.

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. If it is not straightforward, you must make a 'best fit' judgement — for example, if a learner shows a mix of standards across the grading matrix criteria, with no clear pattern.

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 contribute 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

Criterion 1 descriptors

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Explains strategic, tactical and operational decision making and explores the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning	The learner: • provides an adequate explanation of the different levels of decision making and the roles and responsibilities of the office manager in operational planning • covers key points adequately • uses language that is: ○ clear and adequately structured ○ mostly accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides a well-developed explanation of the different levels of decision making and the roles and responsibilities of the office manager in operational planning • covers key points adequately and develops some in more detail • uses language that is: ○ clear, coherent and well structured ○ accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides an in-depth explanation of the different levels of decision making and the roles and responsibilities of the office manager in operational planning • covers well-developed key points consistently throughout • uses language that is: ○ consistently clear, concise and well structured ○ highly accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 1 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Leading Projects and People Through Change:** outcome 1
- **Advanced Administration Software Applications:** outcomes 1, 2 and 5
- **Research Skills:** outcomes 1 and 2

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Analyses the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning and the strategies they use to support employees through organisational change	The learner: • provides an adequate analysis of the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning and the strategies they use to support employees through organisational change • covers key points adequately • uses language that is: ○ clear and adequately structured ○ mostly accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides a well-developed analysis of the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning and the strategies they use to support employees through organisational change • covers key points adequately and develops some in more detail • uses language that is: ○ clear, coherent and well structured ○ accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides an in-depth analysis of the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning and the strategies they use to support employees through organisational change • covers well-developed key points consistently throughout • uses language that is: ○ consistently clear, concise and well structured ○ consistently accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 2 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Leading Projects and People Through Change:** outcomes 2 and 4
- **Advanced Administration Software Applications:** outcomes 1 and 4
- **Research Skills:** outcomes 1 and 2

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Explains the principles of effective and sustainable teamwork	The learner: • provides an adequate explanation of the principles of effective and sustainable teamwork • covers key points adequately • uses language that is: ○ clear and adequately structured ○ mostly accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides a well-developed explanation of the principles of effective and sustainable teamwork • covers key points adequately and develops some in more detail • uses language that is: ○ clear, coherent and well structured ○ accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides an in-depth explanation of the principles of effective and sustainable teamwork • covers well-developed key points consistently throughout • uses language that is: ○ consistently clear, concise and well structured ○ consistently accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 3 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Leading Projects and People Through Change:** outcomes 3
- **Research Skills:** outcomes 1 and 2

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Understands the role of the office manager in managing a small project	The learner: • provides an adequate interpretation and definition of the role of the office manager in managing a small project • covers key points adequately • uses language that is: ○ clear and adequately structured ○ mostly accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides a well-developed interpretation and definition of the role of the office manager in managing a small project • covers key points adequately and develops some in more detail • uses language that is: ○ clear, coherent and well structured ○ accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • provides an in-depth interpretation and definition of the role of the office manager in managing a small project • covers well-developed key points consistently throughout • uses language that is: ○ consistently clear, concise and well structured ○ consistently accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 4 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Leading Projects and People Through Change:** outcomes 4
- **Advanced Administration Software Applications:** outcomes 4 and 5
- **Research Skills:** outcomes 3

Criterion 5 descriptors

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Uses advanced software features to support business operations	The learner: - demonstrates adequate knowledge and competence in using advanced software features to support business operations - covers key points adequately - uses language that is: - clear and adequately structured - mostly accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: - demonstrates well-developed knowledge and competence in using advanced software features to support business operations - covers key points adequately and develops some in more detail - uses language that is: - clear, coherent and well structured - accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: - demonstrates in-depth knowledge and advanced competence in using advanced software features to support business operations - covers well-developed key points consistently throughout - uses language that is: - consistently clear, concise and well structured - consistently accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 5 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- Leading Projects and People Through Change:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- Advanced Administration Software Applications:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- Research Skills:** outcomes 1, 2 and 3

Criterion 6 descriptors

Criterion 6	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Plans and applies research techniques, and reports on a research investigation	The learner: • demonstrates adequate knowledge of interpreting a brief • has an adequate ability to plan an investigation, use research techniques and report research findings • covers key points adequately • uses language that is: ○ clear and adequately structured ○ mostly accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • demonstrates well-developed knowledge of interpreting a brief • has a well-developed ability to plan an investigation, use research techniques and report research findings • covers key points adequately and develops some in more detail • uses language that is: ○ clear, coherent and well structured ○ accurate and relevant to the given brief	The learner: • demonstrates in-depth knowledge of interpreting a brief • has a comprehensive ability to plan an investigation, use research techniques and report research findings • covers well-developed key points consistently throughout • uses language that is: ○ consistently clear, concise and well structured ○ consistently accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 6 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Leading Projects and People Through Change:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- **Advanced Administration Software Applications:** outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 5
- **Research Skills:** outcomes 1, 2 and 3

Criterion 7 descriptors

Criterion 7	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 7 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

Criterion	Grade
Explains strategic, tactical and operational decision making and explores the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning	
Analyses the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning and the strategies they use to support employees through organisational change	
Explains the principles of effective and sustainable teamwork	
Understands the role of the office manager in managing a small project	
Uses advanced software features to support business operations	
Plans and applies research techniques, and reports on a research investigation	
Develops meta-skills	

Whole-qualification grade:

Principles for making a whole-qualification grading judgement

- There is no weighting applied to any of the seven grading criteria.
- Award a whole-qualification grade of the most grades achieved.
- If there are an equal number of grades, award the median point as shown in the worked example.

Worked example of grading model

Criterion	Grade
Explains strategic, tactical and operational decision making and explores the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning	Merit
Analyses the office manager's responsibilities in operational planning and the strategies they use to support employees through organisational change	Merit
Explains the principles of effective and sustainable teamwork	Achieved
Understands the role of the office manager in managing a small project	Achieved
Uses advanced software features to support business operations	Achieved
Plans and applies research techniques, and reports on a research investigation	Merit
Develops meta-skills	Distinction

Whole-qualification grade: Merit

Administrative information

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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 grading pack.

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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