



➤ **Higher National
Next Generation**

NextGen: HN grading pack

HNC Administration and Digital Business Technologies

Qualification code: GH5Z 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.

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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. 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. The criteria may not always have equal value. You can decide some are more important to the final grade than others.

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

Criterion 1 descriptors

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Understands the role of the administrative function in an organisation	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows an adequate understanding of the role of the administrative function• uses language that is adequate, accurate and relevant to the given brief	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows a well-developed understanding of the role of the administrative function• uses language that is:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ clear and coherent○ accurate and relevant to the given brief	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• shows an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the role of the administrative function• uses language that is:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ consistently clear, logical and articulate○ highly accurate and relevant to the given brief

Criterion 1 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Administration Fundamentals:** outcomes 1 and 2
- **Administration Applications in Practice:** outcome 5

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Provides support across an organisation	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has an adequate understanding of how to provide administrative support across an organisation	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has a well-developed understanding of how to provide administrative support across an organisation	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of how to provide administrative support across an organisation

Criterion 2 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Administration Fundamentals:** outcomes 2 and 3
- **Administration Applications in Practice:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Uses office and productivity software to support administration in an organisation	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has an adequate understanding and ability to use office and productivity software • problem solves adequately • uses creative techniques that help meet the needs of a given product brief 	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a well-developed understanding and ability to use office and productivity software • problem solves effectively • uses creative techniques that help meet the needs of a given product brief 	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has an in-depth understanding and comprehensive ability in use of office and productivity software • problem solves insightfully • uses creative techniques that help meet the needs of a given product brief

Criterion 3 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Digital Technologies in Practice:** outcomes 1 and 4
- **Administration Applications in Practice:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Sources data relevant to tasks and organisation purpose	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can adequately source data relevant to tasks and organisation purpose 	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can efficiently source data relevant to tasks and organisation purpose • shows a well-developed awareness of the importance of testing the validity of information sources 	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can insightfully source data relevant to tasks and organisation purpose • shows in-depth and comprehensive evidence of having tested the validity of information sources

Criterion 4 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Digital Technologies in Practice:** outcome 2
- **Administration Applications in Practice:** outcomes 1, 2 and 3

Criterion 5 descriptors

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Plans, prioritises and organises work	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has an adequate ability to plan, prioritise and organise work • problem solves adequately • uses techniques that contribute to organisational efficiency 	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a well-developed ability to plan, prioritise and organise work • problem solves effectively • uses techniques that contribute to organisational efficiency 	<p>The learner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a comprehensive ability to plan, prioritise and organise work, showing attention to detail • problem solves effectively and insightfully • uses techniques that contribute to organisational efficiency

Criterion 5 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Digital Technologies in Practice:** outcome 1
- **Administration Applications in Practice:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- **Administration Fundamentals:** outcome 2 and 3

Criterion 6 descriptors

Criterion 6	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Carries out marketing to a simple brief	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has an adequate ability to carry out marketing to a simple brief	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has a well-developed ability to carry out marketing to a simple brief	The learner: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• has a comprehensive ability to carry out marketing to a simple brief

Criterion 6 guidance

Base your grading judgements on evidence from the following units:

- **Digital Technologies in Practice:** outcome 1 and 4
- **Administration Applications in Practice:** outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- **Administration Fundamentals:** outcome 2 and 3

Criterion 7 descriptors

Criterion 7	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
<p>Develops meta-skills</p>	<p>The learner adequately engages with the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>The learner demonstrates a clear commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>The learner demonstrates strong commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Understands the role of the administrative function in an organisation	
Provides support across an organisation	
Uses office and productivity software to support administration in an organisation	
Sources data relevant to tasks and organisation purpose	
Plans, prioritises and organises work	
Carries out marketing to a simple brief	
Develops meta-skills	

Whole-qualification grade:

Worked example of grading model

Criterion	Grade
Understands the role of the administrative function in an organisation	Achieved
Provides support across an organisation	Achieved
Uses office and productivity software to support administration in an organisation	Merit
Sources data relevant to tasks and organisation purpose	Merit
Plans, prioritises and organises work	Merit
Carries out marketing to a simple brief	Achieved
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 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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