

NextGen: HN grading pack

HNC Beauty Therapy

Qualification code: GM3M 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 Next Gen: 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.

Qualification Scotland's quality assurance teams use the grade descriptors and the grading matrix to ensure that grades awarded in a particular NextGen: HNC 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 which case the Learning for Sustainability content will contribute to a learner's whole-qualification grade through the grading matrix.

Grading matrix

Learners generate evidence to support each of the criteria in the following tables. The following guidance should be used to support grading judgements on learner evidence for HNC Beauty Therapy.

Criterion 1 descriptors

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Knowledge and understanding of the course concepts and the fundamental requirements of a beauty therapist	The learner: • has achieved a good standard of work, credibly meeting the qualification requirements • maintains basic standards of personal presentation, meeting expectations for professionalism • completes tasks, but sometimes needs reminders and their work contains some errors	The learner: • has achieved an excellent standard of work, exceeding the qualification requirements • maintains consistently high standards of personal presentation that align well with beauty therapy industry expectations • completes tasks independently, with few errors	The learner: • has consistently achieved an outstanding standard of work, going significantly beyond meeting the qualification requirements • maintains consistently excellent standards of personal presentation that align well with beauty therapy industry expectations • completes tasks independently, without errors

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Knowledge and understanding of the course concepts and the fundamental requirements of a beauty therapist (continued)	The learner: - usually arrives on time, but is occasionally late or misses some deadlines - is co-operative, but may lack enthusiasm or initiative - is occasionally inconsistent in their approach to professional conduct - meets minimum requirements	The learner: - consistently arrives on time and meets deadlines - is positive, co-operative and shows enthusiasm and initiative - is consistent in their approach to professional conduct by behaving appropriately and communicating respectfully - exceeds minimum requirements	The learner: - is always punctual, often early, highly time-conscious, and meets all deadlines - is exceptionally proactive, co-operative and shows enthusiasm and initiative - exemplifies the highest standards of integrity and respect in their approach to professional conduct by consistently behaving appropriately and communicating respectfully - significantly exceeds the minimum requirements, and always anticipates clients' needs

Criterion 1 guidance

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

- closed-book assessments
- open-book reports
- projects
- investigations
- consultation documents
- treatment plans
- record of professional discussions with tutors and/or mentors, assessors, and feedback from clients

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Provide industry-reflective practical treatments and interactions with clients	The learner: • has adequate interactions with clients and responds when questioned • provides basic information • uses standard responses • fulfils requests, as asked • pays adequate attention to detail • delivers an adequate standard of practical work	The learner: • has excellent interactions with clients • anticipates questions • shares knowledge without being asked • checks the clients' understanding • pays attention to clients' preferences • adds thoughtful touches • pays excellent attention to detail • consistently delivers an excellent standard of practical work	The learner: • has outstanding interactions with clients • not only anticipates clients' needs, but also provides clarity and confidence, and builds rapport and client trust over time • has a warm and engaging tone when interacting with clients, delivering a bespoke client interaction • delivers treatments flawlessly and adapts effortlessly under pressure • pays outstanding attention to detail • consistently delivers an outstanding standard of practical work

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Provide industry-reflective practical treatments and interactions with clients (continued)	The learner: • meets deadlines and delivers as expected • performs treatments with basic competence, but may need some guidance • meets the minimum evidence requirements of practical skills	The learner: • always meets deadlines and delivers as expected • performs treatments with an excellent level of competence, without guidance • exceeds the minimum evidence requirements of practical skills	The learner: • always meets deadlines and delivers as expected, sometimes ahead of schedule • performs treatments with an outstanding level of competence, without guidance • consistently exceeds the minimum evidence requirements • demonstrates an outstanding level of practical skills

Criterion 2 guidance

Evidence to support your grading decisions can include:

- client consultation documentation
- your observation checklists
- learner feedback sheets
- evaluation documentation
- client feedback

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant underpinning knowledge to reflect a sound grasp of the core theoretical concepts in the mandatory units	The learner: • demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding to achieve the minimum requirements • demonstrates knowledge of basic facts and terminology • demonstrates a thorough understanding of beauty therapy concepts, although it may be superficial • has limited interpretation of beauty therapy concepts that is mostly descriptive or re-states learned content, which follows a basic structure and contains occasional errors	The learner: • demonstrates excellent knowledge and understanding that exceeds minimum requirements • demonstrates knowledge of key facts accurately, with minimal gaps • demonstrates an excellent level of understanding of beauty therapy concepts • applies beauty therapy concepts with relevant examples and some analytical insight • has limited interpretation and use of appropriate language and terminology of beauty therapy concepts	The learner: • consistently demonstrates an outstanding level of knowledge and understanding that significantly exceeds the minimum requirements • demonstrates comprehensive, precise knowledge of relevant information and facts consistently • demonstrates an outstanding level of understanding of beauty therapy concepts • explains beauty therapy concepts with depth, insight, and integration • confidently applies learning to unfamiliar contexts

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Demonstrate an understanding of the relevant underpinning knowledge to reflect a sound grasp of the core theoretical concepts in the mandatory units (continued)			The learner: • shows originality and critical thinking • has fluent, professional writing, effectively using subject-specific language and terminology

Criterion 3 guidance

Evidence to support your grading decisions can include:

- reports
- closed-book papers
- individual and group presentations
- client treatment plans and consultation documentation
- self-reflective client evaluations

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	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 4 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

You should introduce learners to the grading matrix early in the course so that they are aware of the standard of work to achieve, achieve with merit, or achieve with distinction. You should give learners feedback on their performance and discuss their progress with you, their tutors and/or mentors at key points in the curriculum. You should record details of these discussions for future reference and qualification verification evidence. You should also retain any records of professional discussions with work placement supervisors, client feedback and learners' self-appraisal as evidence for your grading decisions.

You assess learners against the selected criteria that reflects course performance and allows the delivery and assessment teams to award an appropriate grade. Grading for HNC Beauty Therapy is based on learners successfully completing 15 credits. However, grades are based on learners' performance across the following 5 mandatory units:

- Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (2 credits)
- Skin Therapy Treatments and Product Knowledge (3 credits)
- Signature Body Massage Treatments (2 credits)
- Face and Body Electrotherapy (2 credits)
- Customised Beauty Treatment Packages and Professional Practice (3 credits)

You should use your professional judgment to align the learner evidence against the grading matrix criteria to award a grade of achieved, achieved with merit, or achieved with distinction, with clear definitions for your decision.

HNC Beauty Therapy contains several National Occupational Standard (NOS) criteria, and therefore all skills demonstrated in all units must achieve minimum competence in line with professional standards.

Worked example of grading model

Learner A — Achieved

The learner has demonstrated a basic understanding of the key concepts that underpin the knowledge and understanding of the outcomes contained in the mandatory units. The learner has **met the minimum evidence requirements** of the practical components to satisfy the skills sections within each of the outcomes across the mandatory units. The learner's theory work is of a minimum standard, and the learner has not included any additional evidence or information to support a higher grade.

Learner B — Achieved with Merit

The learner has often demonstrated a sound level of understanding of the key concepts that underpin the knowledge and understanding of the outcomes within the mandatory units. The learner has often demonstrated a sound level of practical skills to satisfy the skills sections in each of the outcomes across the mandatory units. The learner's theory work has **exceeded the minimum** standards and included additional detail and information to support a higher grade.

Learner C — Achieved with Distinction

The learner has consistently demonstrated a high level of understanding of the key concepts that underpin the knowledge and understanding of the outcomes contained in the mandatory units. The learner has consistently demonstrated a high level of practical skills to satisfy the skills sections in each of the outcomes across the mandatory units. The learner's theory work has an excellent level of additional detail and information to support a higher grade and has **significantly exceeded the minimum requirement**.

The table in [Appendix 1: grading collation](#) offers an example of how grading information may be collated for each mandatory unit. [Appendix 2: achievement overview and final grade](#) offers an example of how the mandatory unit grading and final grading can be collated to generate a final grade for each learner. However,

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

Appendix 1: grading collation

Learner Name:				Date:			
Mandatory Unit	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Overall Grade		
Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy (2 credits)	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐		
	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐		
	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐		
	Rationale:	Rationale:	Rationale:	Rationale:	Comments:		

Evidence:

Assessor Signature: _____ Internal Verifier Signature: _____

Learner Name:				Date:			
Mandatory Unit	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Overall Grade		
Skin Therapy Treatments and Product Knowledge (3 credits)	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐		
	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐		
	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Comments:		

Evidence:

Assessor Signature: _____ **Internal Verifier Signature:** _____

Learner Name:				Date:			
Mandatory Unit	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Overall Grade		
Signature Body Massage Treatments (2 credits)	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐		
	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐		
	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐		
	Rationale:	Rationale:	Rationale:	Rationale:	Comments:		

Evidence:

Assessor Signature: _____ **Internal Verifier Signature:** _____

Learner Name:				Date:			
Mandatory Unit	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Grade Outcome		
Face and Body Electrotherapy (2 credits)	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐		
	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐		
	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Rationale:	Distinction ☐ Comments:		

Evidence:

Assessor Signature: _____ **Internal Verifier Signature:** _____

Learners Name:				Date:			
Mandatory Unit	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Overall Grade		
Customised Beauty Treatment Packages and Professional Practice (3 credits)	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐	Achieved ☐		
	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐	Merit ☐		
	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐	Distinction ☐		
	Rationale:	Rationale:	Rationale:	Rationale:	Comments:		

Evidence:

Assessor Signature: _____ **Internal Verifier Signature:** _____

Appendix 2: achievement overview and final grade

Learner's Name	Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy	Skin Therapy Treatments and Product Knowledge	Signature Body Massage Treatments	Face and Body Electrotherapy	Customised Beauty Treatment Packages and Professional Practice	Overall grade

Learner's Name	Human Anatomy and Physiology for Beauty and Complementary Therapy	Skin Therapy Treatments and Product Knowledge	Signature Body Massage Treatments	Face and Body Electrotherapy	Customised Beauty Treatment Packages and Professional Practice	Overall grade

Assessor Signature: _____ Internal Verifier Signature: _____

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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