Next Generation Higher National Unit Grading Pack

Higher National Certificate Social Sciences

Qualification code: GT65 47

This qualification is available in a restricted delivery model from academic session 2025

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

You must read it alongside the HNC Social Sciences Educator Guide.

Published: October 2025 (version 1.0)

Contents

Approach to grading 1
Whole-qualification grade outcomes 1
Whole-qualification grade descriptors 1
What the whole-qualification grade descriptors do and how they are used 2
Using the grading matrix 4
Meta-skills 5
Learning for Sustainability 5
Grading matrix 6
Additional grading guidance 14
Grading model 14
Worked example of grading model 17
Administrative information 31
History of changes 31

Approach to grading

Grading in Next Generation: Higher National (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.

SQA'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
Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science subjects and topics	The learner's project and assessment activities are in line with the project or assessment briefs and meet the assessment criteria as being of a **satisfactory standard**. They give **acceptable argument**, linking satisfactorily to discussions, demonstrating reasoned knowledge and understanding.	The learner's project and assessment activities are in line with the project or assessment briefs and meet the assessment criteria as being of a **high standard**. They give **strong argument** and show links between discussions and conclusions, demonstrating strong knowledge and understanding.	The learner's project and assessment activities are in line with the project or assessment briefs and meet the assessment criteria as being of an **excellent standard**. They give **convincing argument** and show links between discussions and conclusions, demonstrating comprehensive knowledge and understanding.

Criterion 1 guidance

Practitioners should make this judgement using learners' evidence of submitted work, including any projects and assessment activities. You should also consider information supplied by lecturers of learners' participation in in-class activities and engagement with the subject materials. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory unit Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems, and other named social sciences units, making up 12 SQA credits.

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints and evidence in social sciences	The learner applies and uses an **acceptable level of knowledge** of social sciences in specific assessment activity. They consolidate and integrate knowledge and skills **satisfactorily**, linking concepts and ideas in an acceptable way. They **provide some evidence** of possible alternative approaches and arguments, as well as **satisfactory understanding** of different interpretations.	The learner applies and uses **sound knowledge** of different social sciences in specific assessment activity. They consolidate and integrate required knowledge and skills to a **high standard**, linking concepts and ideas well. They **provide sound evidence** of possible alternative approaches and arguments and show **good understanding** of different interpretations.	The learner applies and uses **comprehensive knowledge** of social sciences in specific assessment activity. They consolidate and integrate required knowledge and skills to a **very high standard**, linking concepts and ideas in a very effective way. They **provide comprehensive evidence** of possible alternative approaches and arguments and show **excellent understanding** of different interpretations.

Criterion 2 guidance

Practitioners should make this judgement using learners' evidence of submitted work for assessment activities. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory unit Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems project, and other named social science units.

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Investigation and research skills	The learner demonstrates **a satisfactory range** of investigation and research skills, showing **appropriate** knowledge in project activity.	The learner demonstrates **a broad range** of investigation and research skills, showing **a broad range** of knowledge in project activity.	The learner demonstrates **a wide range** of investigation and research skills, showing **excellent knowledge** in project activity.

Criterion 3 guidance

Practitioners make this judgement using learners' evidence across all project activity. This should include the mandatory unit Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems, and any other named social sciences unit in which learners are assessed using a project or investigation.

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Critical thinking and evaluative skills	The learner can demonstrate **appropriate** critical thinking and evaluative skills and abilities in producing responses to assessments.	The learner can demonstrate **effective** critical thinking and evaluative skills and abilities in producing responses to assessments.	The learner can demonstrate **excellent** critical thinking and evaluative skills and abilities in producing responses to assessments.

Criterion 4 guidance

Practitioners should make this judgement using learners' evidence of submitted work, including projects and assessment activities. You should also consider information supplied by lecturers of learners' participation in in-class activities and engagement with the subject materials. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory unit Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems, and other named social sciences units

Criterion 5 descriptors

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills	The learner maintains their meta-skills portfolio to an **acceptable standard**, showing **adequate engagement** with the development of their meta-skills.	The learner maintains their meta-skills portfolio to a **high standard**, showing **clear commitment** to the development of their meta-skills.	The learner maintains their meta-skills portfolio to a **very high standard**, showing **strong commitment** to the development of their meta-skills.

Criterion 5 guidance

Practitioners must make this judgement alongside the separate meta-skills assessment guidance.

This guidance details how learners should engage with the process of developing meta-skills, and how they should do this in the context of their particular qualification.

You are not judging a learner's competence in a particular meta-skill — for example, the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Rather, you make your assessment based on learners' evidence of the development process they go through, in terms of planning, developing and reflecting.

Although there is a meta-skills outcome in the mandatory unit, you can gather evidence of learners' meta-skills development from any activity at any time during the course. For meaningful reflection to take place, learners' meta-skills development should happen continually throughout the course. The range of contexts in which this can happen is very wide, and is dependent on the sector, as well as individual preferences. Each unit offers opportunities for learners to develop meta-skills.

Criterion 6 descriptors

Criterion 6	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback)	The learner's assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the assessment briefs and meet the criteria to a **satisfactory standard**. They show **satisfactory communication skills**, applied in assessment responses. They offer **appropriate responses** that convey understanding and demonstrate use of correct terminology. They **understand and act on** lecturers' feedback.	The learner's assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the assessment briefs, and meet the criteria as being of a **high standard**. They show **good communication skills**, applied in assessment responses. They offer **appropriate responses** that are **logically structured** and clearly convey understanding and demonstrate use of correct terminology. They **understand and improve work** based on lecturers' feedback.	The learner's assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the assessment briefs, and meet the criteria as being of an **excellent standard**. They show **excellent communication skills**, applied in assessment responses. They offer **appropriate responses** that are **well-structured** and that coherently convey understanding and demonstrate use of correct terminology. They **understand and improve work** based on lecturers' feedback, and **applying the feedback** to other assessment tasks.

Criterion 6 guidance

Practitioners make this judgement using learners' evidence of submitted work and project activity, including any remediation or reassessments, submitted to agreed criteria. This evidence should come from the mandatory unit Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems, as well as other named social sciences units.

Criterion 7 descriptors

Criterion 7	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Demonstrating effective professional behaviours, including time-management, working constructively with others and working independently	The learner demonstrates the ability to manage workload **satisfactorily**, meeting agreed key deadlines almost all of the time. The learner **typically demonstrates** a professional approach when working with others to achieve a shared goal. The learner demonstrates the ability to work independently to an **acceptable standard** on most tasks.	The learner demonstrates the ability to manage workload **effectively**, typically meeting agreed key deadlines. The learner **consistently demonstrates** a professional approach when working with others to achieve a shared goal. The learner demonstrates the ability to work independently to a **high standard** on almost all tasks.	The learner demonstrates the ability to manage workload **exceptionally well**, consistently meeting key deadlines. The learner **always demonstrates** a professional approach when working with others to achieve a shared goal. The learner demonstrates the ability to work independently to a **very high standard** on all tasks.

Criterion 7 guidance

Practitioners make this judgement using learners' evidence of meeting key deadlines, confirmed in the assessment process and by lecturers. You should also use reports from lecturers, and evidence from project activity and assessment responses to judge how constructively learners worked with others. This should include reflecting on how clearly they explained ideas and proposals relating to joint tasks, and the recorded levels of supervision they needed for projects and other assessment activities. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory unit Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems, and other named social sciences units.

Additional grading guidance

Grading model

You can only grade learners when they have successfully completed the full 15 SQA credits.

The grading model enables course teams to holistically judge the performance of each learner across the key aspects of the qualification, and to decide on an overall qualification grade.

Grades are based on learners' performance across the 3 SQA credits of the common core project unit, Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems, plus 9 SQA credits of the named social sciences subjects:

- Economics
- Criminology
- Geography
- History
- Philosophy
- Politics
- Psychology
- Social Anthropology
- Sociology

You must use one A and B combination of subject units in the grading, for example, Politics A and Politics B.

How does the qualification grading model work?

Course teams make qualification grading judgements using a detailed criteria matrix that covers the range of knowledge and skills, and professional behaviours required.

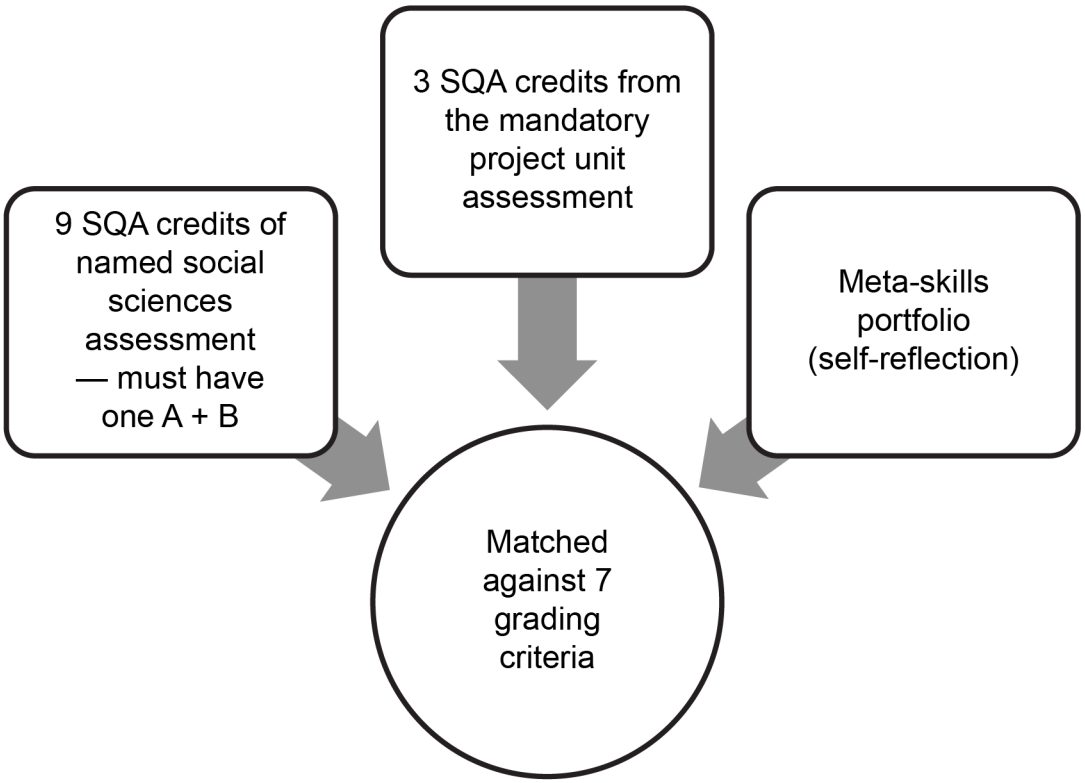
Learners receive a whole-qualification grade based on evidence they produce for the common core unit and the named social sciences units of the qualification. The grading model is designed to support a qualification with a framework and a common mandatory unit, but with different units making up the whole qualification that can lead to different occupations.

Grading criteria

We have produced a set of criteria for grading that covers the assessment evidence and performance in class activities and engagement. You should use this to determine the overall grade for the qualification. The criteria are:

1. Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science subjects and topics
2. Knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints and evidence in social sciences
3. Investigation and research skills
4. Critical thinking and evaluative skills
5. Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills
6. Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback)
7. Demonstrating effective professional behaviours, including time-management, working constructively with others and working independently

Grading model diagram



Worked example of grading model

The following worked examples show how judgements could be made. Each one gives a different selection of named social sciences units studied. The course team should look at all named social sciences units and the common core unit (Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems) and choose 12 SQA credits' worth of the strongest to make decisions on. There must be one A and B combination in the grading decision for each learner.

Learner 1 — Achieved

The learner in this example meets a satisfactory standard overall, showing satisfactory knowledge across the qualification. You can see that they are stronger in one subject, but the standard of the rest is similar to a satisfactory level, and more in keeping with an Achieved grade. It is acceptable for a learner to be stronger or weaker in parts of a subject for some criteria in the programme, as long as the majority of the work for 12 SQA credits is at the Achieved standard and not at a higher standard. You should award the learner the overall grade that matches closest with the majority judgement holistically across the 12 SQA chosen credits.

You could use any of the subjects in the example below towards the grade. There are 9 SQA credits between Criminology, Sociology and Economics. There are only 8 SQA credits if History is chosen as one of the subjects, as the learner has only taken the B unit. It is best to use the three subjects with both A and B pairings. Most of the work for these units and the common core unit is at the level required for Achieved. If the History B unit was stronger than one of the other B units, you would consider it in place of the weaker unit. There are several A and B unit pairings in this grading.

You grade seven criteria across the common core unit and three subjects if you collate the A and B for a subject, or across six or seven units if you are treating units separately. Some units do not have investigation skills listed. However, if you have used an investigation as part of your assessment for a unit, remember to count it in. This learner shows evidence in more areas that are compatible with the grade of Achieved. Some areas show evidence for Achieved with Merit and a couple of areas show evidence for Achieved with Distinction.

This learner demonstrated a **good standard** of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. They worked independently to an **acceptable standard,** demonstrating **appropriate** critical thinking skills. They showed **adequate** engagement with the development of their meta-skills and **typically worked well** with colleagues and peers.

Learner 1	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Criminology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Economics A and B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Optional unit (1 credit) — does not count towards grading**
Criterion 1: Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science subjects and topics	Achieved agreed aims in the project and class activities	Achieved agreed aims in the assessment and class activities	Achieved agreed aims in the assessment and class activities	Achieved agreed aims convincingly in the assessments and class activities	Achieved agreed aims in the assessments and class activities	Not applicable

Learner 1	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Criminology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Economics A and B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Optional unit (1 credit) — does not count towards grading**
Criterion 2: Knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints and evidence in social sciences	Satisfactory knowledge and understanding applied in the project	Satisfactory knowledge and understanding applied in assessments	Satisfactory knowledge and understanding applied in assessments	Comprehensive knowledge and understanding shown in assessments	Satisfactory knowledge and understanding shown in assessments.	Not applicable
Criterion 3: Investigation and research skills	Demonstrated a broad range of skills. Good standard of work	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Criterion 4: Critical thinking and evaluative skills	Satisfactory standard	Satisfactory standard	Satisfactory standard	High standard	Satisfactory standard	Not applicable

Learner 1	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Criminology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Economics A and B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Optional unit (1 credit) — does not count towards grading**
Criterion 5: Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills	Maintained portfolio to acceptable standard and engaged in the process of self-reflection	Engaged in the process of self-reflection, particularly for critical thinking	Engaged in the process of self-reflection	Engaged in the process of self-reflection well	Engaged in process of self-reflection	Not applicable
Criterion 6: Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback)	Satisfactory standard of submission	Satisfactory standard of submission	Satisfactory standard of submission	High standard of submission	Satisfactory standard of submission	Not applicable

Learner 1	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Criminology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Economics A and B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Optional unit (1 credit) — does not count towards grading**
Criterion 7: Demonstrating effective professional behaviours, including time-management, working constructively with others and working independently	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines most of the time Worked effectively with others most of the time, but preferred to work alone. Worked independently to a satisfactory standard	Worked effectively to meet all key deadlines Worked effectively with others consistently. Worked independently to a satisfactory standard	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines almost all of the time Worked effectively with others most of the time. Worked independently to a satisfactory standard	Worked effectively to meet all key deadlines Worked effectively with others consistently. Worked independently to a high standard	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines almost all of the time Worked effectively with others consistently. Worked independently to a satisfactory standard	Not applicable

Overall grade for Learner 1 — Achieved

Learner 2 — Achieved with Merit

The learner in this example meets a high standard overall. You can see that they are strong across three subjects and the common core unit. It is acceptable for a learner to be weaker or stronger in some parts of a subject or for some criteria for a subject, as long as the majority of the work for 12 SQA credits is at the standard for Achieved with Merit. Although excellent in one subject, the weight of evidence is at the standard for Achieved with Merit. The learner should be awarded the grade that matches closest with the majority of judgements holistically across the 12 SQA credits chosen for the qualification.

In the example below, you would disregard Sociology as the weakest named social sciences subject. You would use the other three subjects and the common core unit for grading, as they are the stronger units. Take the strongest units across all subjects to make your judgement — you must use one A and B pairing in the grading.

You grade seven criteria across the common core unit and three subjects if you collate the A and B for a subject, or across six or seven units if you are treating units separately. Some units do not have investigation skills listed. However, if you have used an investigation as part of your assessment for a unit, remember to count it in. This learner shows evidence in more areas that are compatible with the grade of Achieved with Merit. Some areas show evidence for Achieved and some areas show evidence for Achieved with Distinction.

This learner demonstrated a **very good standard** of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. They worked independently to a **high standard,** demonstrating **effective** critical thinking skills. They showed a **clear commitment** to engagement with the development of their meta-skills and **consistently worked well** with colleagues and peers.

Learner 2	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Politics A and B**	**History A and B**
Criterion 1: Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science subjects and topics	Achieved agreed aims to a high standard in the project and class activities	Achieved agreed aims to a high standard in the project and class activities	Good approach shown in the assessments and class activities	Achieved agreed aims to a high standard in assessments and class activities	Excellent approach shown in the assessments and class activities
Criterion 2: Knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints and evidence in social sciences	Sound knowledge and understanding shown in the project	Sound knowledge and understanding shown in the project and the other assessment	Satisfactory knowledge and understanding shown in assessments	Satisfactory knowledge and understanding shown in assessments	Excellent level of knowledge and understanding shown in assessments
Criterion 3: Investigation and research skills	Demonstrated a broad range of skills. High standard of work	Demonstrated a broad range of skills. High standard of work	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Criterion 4: Critical thinking and evaluative skills	High standard	High standard	High standard	High standard	Very high standard

Learner 2	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Politics A and B**	**History A and B**
Criterion 5: Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills	Maintained portfolio to high standard. Engaged well in process	Engaged well in process	Engaged in process to acceptable standard	Engaged well in process, reflecting on several meta-skills used in this subject	Engaged well in process
Criterion 6: Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback)	High standard of submission	High standard of submission	High standard of submission	High standard of submission. Improved work after feedback	Very high standard of submission

Learner 2	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Politics A and B**	**History A and B**
Criterion 7: Demonstrating effective professional behaviours, including time-management, working constructively with others and working independently	Worked effectively to meet all key deadlines Consistently worked effectively with others. Worked independently to a very high standard	Worked effectively to meet all key deadlines Consistently worked effectively with others. Worked independently to a high standard	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines almost all of the time Consistently worked effectively with others. Worked independently to a high standard	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines almost all of the time Consistently worked effectively with others. Worked independently to an acceptable standard	Worked effectively to meet all key deadlines Worked well with others. Worked independently to a high standard

Overall grade for Learner 2 — Achieved with Merit

Learner 3 — Achieved with Distinction

The learner in this example meets an excellent standard overall. They have studied six subject disciplines. Course teams should consider 9 SQA credits of the disciplines studied, alongside the common core unit (3 SQA credits). You can see that the learner is stronger across the common core unit (3 SQA credits) and three subjects, Psychology, Sociology and Politics (8 SQA credits), and shows a strong approach in one of the single credits, Criminology (1 SQA credit), which totals 12 SQA credits. It is acceptable for a learner to be weaker or stronger in parts of a subject in the programme, as long as the majority of the work for 9 named social sciences credits plus the mandatory project common core unit is at the higher standard. You do not need to have every box for a subject noting ‘very high standard’ or ‘excellent’. You should make judgements holistically across the 12 SQA credits of the qualification chosen for grading.

In the example below, you would disregard History and Philosophy, as they are slightly weaker named social sciences units, so would not be used for grading. You would use the other two A and B pairings plus the Politics B unit and the 1 SQA credit Criminology A unit for grading. Take the strongest units across all subjects to make your judgement — you must use one A and B pairing in the grading.

You grade seven criteria across the common core unit and three subjects if you collate the A and B for a subject, or across six or seven units if you are treating units separately. Some units do not have investigation skills listed. However, if you have used an investigation as part of your assessment for a unit, remember to count it in. This learner shows evidence in more areas that are compatible with the grade of Achieved with Distinction. Some areas show evidence for Achieved. Some areas show evidence for Achieved with Merit.

This learner demonstrated an **excellent standard** of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. They worked independently to a **very high standard,** demonstrating **excellent** critical thinking skills. They showed **strong commitment** to engagement with the development of their meta-skills and **always worked well** with colleagues and peers.

Learner 3	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Politics B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Criminology A**	**Philosophy A — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**
Criterion 1: Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science subjects and topics	Achieved agreed aims convincingly in the project and class activities	Achieved agreed aims convincingly in the project and class activities	Achieved agreed aims to a high standard in the assessments and class activities	Achieved agreed aims convincingly in the assessment and class activities	Achieved agreed aims to a high standard in the assessment and class activities	Achieved agreed aims convincingly in the assessment and class activities	Satisfactory approach shown in the assessments and class activities

Learner 3	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Politics B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Criminology A**	**Philosophy A — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**
Criterion 2: Knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints and evidence in social sciences	Comprehen-sive knowledge and under-standing shown in the project	Comprehen-sive knowledge and under-standing applied in the project and other assessments	Sound knowledge and under-standing applied in assessments	Comprehen-sive knowledge and under-standing shown in assessments	Sound knowledge and under-standing shown in assessments	Comprehen-sive knowledge and under-standing applied in assessments	Satisfactory knowledge and under-standing shown in assessments
Criterion 3: Investigation and research skills	Extensive range of investigation and research skills	Broad range of investigation and research skills	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Criterion 4: Critical thinking and evaluative skills	Excellent skills shown	Excellent skills shown	Effective skills shown	Excellent skills shown	Appropriate skills shown	Effective skills shown	Appropriate skills shown

Learner 3	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Politics B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Criminology A**	**Philosophy A — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**
Criterion 5: Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills	Maintained portfolio to satisfactory standard and engaged in self-reflection process	Engaged well in self-reflection process	Engaged well in self-reflection process	Engaged well in self-reflection process	Engaged well in self-reflection process	Engaged well in self-reflection process	Engaged well in self-reflection process
Criterion 6: Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback)	Excellent standard of submission	Excellent standard of submission	Very high-quality submission, using feed-forward points in subsequent assessment	High standard of submission	High standard of submission	Excellent standard of submission	Satisfactory standard of submission

Learner 3	**Social Sciences: An Evidence-Based Approach to Social Problems**	**Psychology A and B**	**Sociology A and B**	**Politics B**	**History B — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**	**Criminology A**	**Philosophy A — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner**
Criterion 7: Demonstrating effective professional behaviours, including time-management, working constructively with others and working independently	Worked convincingly to meet all key deadlines Always demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a very high standard	Worked convincingly to meet all key deadlines Always demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a very high standard	Worked convincingly to meet all key deadlines Consistently demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a high standard	Worked convincingly to meet all key deadlines Consistently demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a high standard	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines almost all of the time Typically demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a high standard	Worked effectively to meet all key deadlines Always demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a very high standard	Worked satisfactorily to meet key deadlines almost all of the time Always demonstrated a professional approach. Worked independently to a high standard

Overall grade for Learner 3 — Achieved with Distinction

Administrative information

Published: October 2025 (version 1.0)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check SQA's 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.