

Next Generation Higher National Educator Guide

Higher National Certificate Social Services

Qualification code: GT6N 47

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

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

You must read it alongside the Grading Pack.

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Purpose of the qualification

The qualification gives learners the opportunity to gain skills they can apply and adapt to work effectively in a range of social service settings with individuals who have a range of conditions. Learners gain an understanding of the values and principles of social care, and how to integrate them with the necessary skills and knowledge. Individuals working in the social services sector must register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as a condition of employment. Completing Higher National Certificate (HNC) Social Services fulfils the qualification requirements for most parts of the register.

Learners understand government policy and the need to adapt to the changing world of social care.

Learners who complete HNC Social Services can progress to further study or employment.

HNC Social Services shares a minimum of four common core units (two Higher National Units and two or three SVQ Units) with HNC Childhood Practice, allowing credits to be transferred.

Structure

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

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

Framework

The HNC is made up of mandatory and optional units. Learners must complete all the mandatory units (12 SQA credits) and 3 SQA credits from the optional units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	3	24	7
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights*	3	24	7
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice*	3	24	7
H5RY 04 or H5LC 04	Promote Effective Communication or Promote Effective Communication	1 1	9 9	7 7
H5LD 04	Promote Health, Safety and Security in the Work Setting	1	10	7

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
H5LE 04	Develop your Practice through Reflection and Learning	1	9	7

* Common core units across HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice.

Optional units

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	2	16	7
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	2	16	7
J7DC 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	2	16	7
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	2	16	7
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	2	16	7

Optional SVQ units

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
H5SS 04	Support Individuals with Specific Communication Needs (Recommended for integration with J6EJ 47 Supporting People: Autism)	1	10	7
H5N0 04	Work with Children and Young People with Additional Requirements to Address their Development Needs (Recommended for J6EJ 47 Supporting People: Autism)	1	10	7
H5M3 04	Support Children and Young People Through Major Transitions (Recommended for J6EL 47 Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change)	1	9	7
H5S5 04	Promote Individuals' Positive Self-esteem and Sense of Identity (Recommended for J6EL 47 Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change)	1	10	7
H5N6 04	Contribute to Childcare Practice in Group Living (Recommended for J7DC 47 Supporting Individuals in Group Living)	1	9	7
H5T9 04	Promote Participation in Agreed Therapeutic Group Activities (Recommended for J7DC 47 Supporting Individuals in Group Living)	1	10	7

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
H5ME 04	Promote Positive Behaviour (Recommended for J7DA 47 Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies)	1	10	8
H5N8 04	Promote the Development of Positive Behaviour in Children and Young People (Recommended for J7DA 47 Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies)	1	10	8
H5S1 04	Contribute to the Planning Process with Individuals (Recommended for J7DB 47 Person-centred Approaches)	1	8	7
H5MM 04	Contribute to the Assessment and Planning Process with Children and Young People (Recommended for J7DB 47 Person-centred Approaches)	1	10	7

Aims of the qualification

General aims

1. Develop learners' transferable skills, such as Core Skills and meta-skills.
2. Develop learners' skills in critical and evaluative thinking.
3. Develop learners' skills in problem solving.
4. Develop learners' skills in communication and collaboration.
5. Develop learners' skills in self-reflection.
6. Develop learners' empathy and understanding.
7. Develop learners' understanding of effective care practice.
8. Develop learners' understanding of safe practice and safeguarding.
9. Develop learners' meta-skills that complement technical and professional knowledge and skills.
10. Develop learners' Learning for Sustainability skills, knowledge, understanding and values.

Specific aims

1. Enable learners to demonstrate an understanding of the values that underpin work in social service settings.
2. Enable learners to understand how practice and service standards should inform their practice.
3. Enable learners to integrate values, skills and knowledge effectively in a variety of social service settings.
4. Enable learners to develop skills appropriate for working with individuals in a range of social service settings.
5. Enable learners to have a person-centred focus in their practice.
6. Assist learners to practice in an anti-discriminatory and inclusive manner.
7. Prepare learners for employment in a social services setting.

8. Enable learners to become reflective practitioners.
9. Enable learners to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy, procedures and practice methods.
10. Enable learners to engage in continuing professional learning.
11. Facilitate progression (for those who want) to Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level courses, or employment.

Who is this qualification for?

This qualification is suitable for college-based learners as well as employees in social services, with different modes of entry, full or part-time.

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

- previous study in a related subject at SCQF level 6 or above
- previous experience of working within a social services setting

Previous experience of work or volunteering within a social services setting is recommended to meet the requirements of the programme.

Recognising prior learning

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

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

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

Articulation and progression

Learners who complete this qualification could go on to:

- other qualifications in social services or related areas
- further study, employment and/or job roles

Learners who achieve a Merit or Distinction in HNC Social Services may gain accelerated entry into degree-level courses at higher education institutions.

Professional recognition

Learners who achieve the qualification meet the requirements for registration with the SSSC for most social service roles.

Credit transfer arrangements

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

Recommended Core Skills entry profile

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

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile
Communication	Level 5
Numeracy	Level 5
Information and Communication technology (ICT)	Level 5
Problem Solving	Level 5
Working with Others	Level 5

How the qualification meets employer and higher education institution needs

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

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

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

Table 1: mapping qualification aims to units

General aims

Key: aim is directly relevant to unit (X), aim is optional in this unit (O)

Unit code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6	Aim 7	Aim 8
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	O
J7CD 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O

Specific aims

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

Unit code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6	Aim 7	Aim 8	Aim 9	Aim 10	Aim 11
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	O	O
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	X	X	X	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	O
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O
J7CD 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
J7DB 47	Person-Centred Approaches	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O

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

Unit code	Unit title	NOS codes
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5S1 04, H5MM 04
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5S1 04, H5MM 04
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5SS 04, H5N0 04
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5M3 04, H5S5 04
J7DC 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5N6 04, H5T9 04
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5ME 04, H5N8 04
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5S1 04, H5MM 04

The assessment evidence produced by learners can be mapped to underpinning knowledge and practice evidence in any further SVQ Units where the activities meet the scope of the unit. This benefits those who require a full SVQ Qualification as well as HNC Social Services for registration.

Table 3: assessment strategy for the qualification

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> integrated project assignment with outcome-focused assessment
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a folder of evidence gathered holistically including reflective practice evaluation for outcomes 1, 2, 3 product evidence for outcomes 5 and 6 product evidence for meta-skills development for outcome 7; this must include evidence of self-assessment, planning, development and self-reflection of meta-skills
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a folder of evidence gathered holistically; outcomes 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 can be met through a knowledge-based assignment, research project or reflection on real work activities evidence for outcomes 3 and 4 should be gathered from real work activities and could form part of a larger project with Approaches to Assessment in Social Services
H5RY 04 or H5LC 04	Promote Effective Communication or Promote Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SVQ portfolio including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
H5LD 04	Promote Health, Safety and Security in the Work Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SVQ portfolio including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities
H5LE 04	Develop your Practice Through Reflection and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SVQ portfolio including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities

Optional HN Units with optional SVQ Unit

You can fully integrate the optional units into the mandatory units if learners are taking them as part of HNC Social Services. We expect you to integrate the majority of evidence for the optional units with the Approaches to Assessment in Social Services unit, gathered through one project.

Meta-skills

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meta-skills in Social Services

Meta-skills are higher-order skills that support the development of other skills and promote success in any context. They enable learners to respond to professional challenges and opportunities by reflecting on, developing, applying and adapting industry skills and sector knowledge.

Throughout the qualifications, learners develop meta-skills while studying industry- and sector-specific content. You can integrate meta-skills into contextualised teaching activities and include them in integrated and holistic assessment approaches.

You should embed meta-skills in learning and project tasks as a context for planning, practice, and reflection. You should encourage learners to be self-aware, set active goals and monitor their progress.

The process of developing meta-skills is not linear and you should make learners active participants in their learning. At the start of the process, you should introduce meta-skills to learners and explore the concept of self-assessment with them. You should set goals and make development and evaluation plans together. The process should become cyclical, with reflective practice informing new self-awareness, goal setting and review.

Many traditional learning and teaching activities used to develop industry or sector-specific skills, knowledge and understanding also support the development of meta-skills. You can map these in course materials and resources and during learning.

HNC Social Services contains the project unit Developing Reflective Practice with a specific outcome on meta-skills. However, all unit specifications have examples of where opportunities to evidence meta-skills can be found, mapped to the activities required to complete the unit. The SVQ Unit Develop your Practice through Reflection and Learning also introduces learners to the fundamentals of reflective practice.

Meta-skills are central to successfully engaging with and completing assignments and projects. You should encourage learners to plan how they will use and develop meta-skills in their coursework and to reflect on their success and future goals. Learners

could indicate a preference to develop the meta-skill of focusing, for example. There are plenty of opportunities to develop this through study and guided research. They may want to focus on the skill of collaboration, which they can evidence through working with multi-disciplinary teams in the workplace or placement.

Your role is key to helping learners understand, develop and reflect on their own meta-skills and those central to course activities, assessment projects and their target industry or sector. You and any employer partners or guest speakers could guide learners by taking on a coaching and mentoring role.

You should introduce learners to the fundamentals of reflective practice. You could use several models of reflective practice. You do not need to use a theoretical perspective. Any reference to these models should support learners' understanding of the nature and value of reflective practice in self-understanding and making change.

Introducing reflective practice can support your learners' personal development and goal setting. Frequent formative peer-to-peer, assessor, client (if appropriate) and group reflection activity can support learners through reflective practice.

You can create descriptions of abilities and skills that relate to meta-skills with your learners. These can come from self-profiling, exploring the industry and sector, and discussion with peers and employers. You should consider the meta-skills needed to complete coursework and meet personal goals to set a context for reflection.

Exploring learning and working styles, personality traits and preferences, personal profiling and self-assessment tools can help learners to develop an understanding of their strengths and areas for development.

You can use case studies and scenario-based activities to demonstrate the value of meta-skills and learners can apply them. You can provide opportunities for peer reflection. A group of learners could share experiences and reflections about how to apply meta-skills in the context of their coursework. You could adopt the role of facilitator to draw learners' attention to situations where meta-skills were or could have been applied.

Reflective discussions can focus on how and where meta-skills are being developed. Your discussions with learners could include positive recognition and guidance on future development based on previous performance. As learners progress, you could introduce industry content that requires skills like problem recognition and problem solving, both of which combine multiple meta-skills.

You can deliver the knowledge and skills for practical aspects of projects in sequence. However, learners benefit from learning and teaching that integrates meta-skills with project planning and development. This approach supports learners to engage in reflective practice throughout the project and develops their self-awareness and an appreciation for continuous learning. It also maximises your opportunities to support, coach and mentor learners through their projects.

Learning for Sustainability

Context

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

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

LfS combines:

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

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

LfS is designed to nurture a generation of learners who know the value of the natural world and are committed to the principles of social justice, human rights, global citizenship, democratic participation and living within the ecological limits of the planet. It aims to respond to global challenges by developing learners' skills, knowledge, understanding and values relating to sustainability, so they can interact with the world in a socially-responsible way.

LfS is about building learners' capacity to deal with the unpredictable challenges facing our rapidly changing world. It encourages transformational change through learning, by which learners are able to critically analyse, communicate and collaborate on complex social, environmental and economic challenges. This gives learners increased confidence, opportunities to develop a range of meta-skills, and enhanced motivation and readiness to learn.

Learning for Sustainability in Next Generation Higher National Qualifications

Sustainability is a core component in this qualification.

Learners who complete this qualification should have:

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

Sustainability is embedded as an outcome in the Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights Unit (J6E3 47).

Learners who complete this outcome can:

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

Learners should have a general understanding of the SDGs and the three pillars of sustainability. They must apply two SDGs to policy or procedures in social services.

The sustainability outcome in Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights can be integrated with other related outcomes in the unit. Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights asks learners to evidence their understanding of the impact of health inequalities. Developing Reflective Practice asks learners to reflect on methods they use to support their own physical and mental wellbeing. This can relate to the sustainable goals of good health and wellbeing, and quality education

You can cover any of the SDGs that are relevant to the subject area.

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

Mapping of units to UN SDGs

Unit code	Unit title	SDGs
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16, SDG 17
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 16, SDG 17
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 16
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16, SDG 17
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals during Transition, Loss and Change	SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 16, SDG 17
J7DC 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16, SDG 17
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16, SDG 17
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 11, SDG 16, SDG 17

Grading

Please see the Grading Pack for this qualification for more information on making grade judgements.

Grading in NextGen: HN Qualifications produces a valid and reliable record of a learner's level of achievement across the breadth of the qualification content.

As well as grading the whole qualification, you assess individual units on a pass or fail basis. Each unit has evidence requirements that learners must achieve before you can consider them for whole-qualification grading.

Whole-qualification grade outcomes

Learners who pass NextGen: HN Qualifications receive one of the following grade outcomes for the qualification as a whole:

- Achieved with Distinction
- Achieved with Merit
- Achieved

To determine a learner's whole-qualification grade, you use the grading matrix provided in the Grading Pack to assess and judge their performance across the key aspects of the HNC. You must align your judgements with the following whole-qualification grade descriptors.

Whole-qualification grade descriptors

Achieved with Distinction

The learner has achieved an excellent standard across the course content, going significantly beyond meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and consistently used them to apply skills to complete high-quality work. They engaged significantly with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

Achieved with Merit

The learner has achieved a very good standard across the course content, going beyond meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a very good knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and consistently used them to apply skills to complete work of a standard above that expected for an Achieved grade. They actively engaged with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

Achieved

The learner has achieved a good standard across the course content, credibly meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a good knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and used them to apply skills to complete work of the required standard. They engaged with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

Approaches to delivery and assessment

Learners can study this qualification on a full-time or part-time basis, or through distance learning. You can deliver the HNC on a part-time or day release basis, where learners are already working in a social service setting. Much of the content requires evidence from practice in day-to-day activities. Learners in social service settings have practice experience and the mandatory training relating to their role, which forms the basis for their learning journey.

Direct entry learners (those coming straight into the course without work experience) who wish to complete the course through a part-time or distance learning route, may benefit from more time to complete the course, for example completing the course over two years. In these situations, it is beneficial for learners to start their placement early so they have time to gather the evidence required. Practice experience is fundamental to the qualification and learners cannot achieve units without reflection on their work practice. Learners must participate in and reflect on practical activities, while supporting at least one individual within a social service. Preferably, they would focus on more than one individual, however we recognise that with the increasing amount of home support roles, this may not always be possible.

HNC Social Services contains three mandatory core units (3 SQA credits each) and three mandatory SVQ Units. In the optional section of the framework, learners can choose one HN Unit of 2 SQA credits with one SVQ Unit. The SVQ Unit they choose should reflect where they are placed in a children or adult's social service. For example, if a learner is placed or works in a residential childcare service, they require HNC Social Services with units from SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 7. SVQ and HN delivery teams should work together to plan evidence gathering and timetables, to avoid over-assessing.

Fewer, larger units support a holistic and integrated approach to both delivery and assessment. Each HN Unit has very specific evidence requirements and assessment

guidance. Where overlaps between units occur, an assessment from one unit can meet some or all of the evidence requirements from other linked units.

The design principles of the NextGen: HN format require learners to complete at least one project unit with a meta-skills outcome. Although a number of units require a project, the unit Developing Reflective Practice contains the relevant meta-skills outcome. We expect this outcome to contain evidence from various stages of the qualification, as learners assess, develop and then evaluate their meta-skills. The process of developing meta-skills should be evidenced across the qualification. The evidence must include a self-assessment and plan in the initial stages, evidence of activities to develop meta-skills, then reflection on their development of meta-skills towards the end of delivery.

HNC Social Services contains a sustainability outcome which supports SQA's commitment to identifying opportunities for developing the skills, knowledge and understanding, and values of Learning for Sustainability while working towards the Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity; Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023–2030. You can integrate this outcome with outcomes from Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights, and possibly Developing Reflective Practice. For example, Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights outcomes 1 and 2 ask for evidence that learners understand people's rights and equalities, as well as factors that influence health. Setting an assessment regarding legislation about rights, health inequalities and government frameworks around welfare, alongside outcome 7 on sustainability, will reduce the overall assessment load for learners.

You must collate a folder containing all assessment evidence from the HN Units for grading purposes. You can map the assessment evidence to the SVQ through an SVQ portfolio. Learners should keep an SVQ portfolio, as they will need it if they want to progress to the full SVQ.

Given the holistic nature of the qualification, all assessment evidence should be annotated to ensure learners meet all evidence requirements, and to help external quality assurers locate the evidence. Annotations may therefore include

cross-referencing of evidence requirements to assessments and page numbers, and clear identification of SVQ performance criteria or knowledge. Learners should complete annotations with the support of the assessor who makes the final judgement.

Sequencing or integrating units

HNC Social Services allows for full integration of delivery and assessment.

Centres should determine their own delivery and assessment timetable. We recommend that you introduce learners to self-reflection early in the programme, through a baseline meta-skills assessment and a skills development plan. You could start by encouraging them to reflect on their values and principles regarding practice and service standards. Learners will find some of the underpinning knowledge from Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights beneficial early in the programme, before they do any projects. When learners are established in their placement, or when they have a good understanding of what is required to support a specific individual, they could start an integrated project between Approaches to Assessment in Social Services and an optional unit. Finally, learners could complete reflective tasks, such as their meta-skills evaluation, integrated with the relevant evidence requirements from Developing Reflective Practice.

We recommend that you deliver the SVQ Units alongside the HN Units. There are plenty of opportunities to map the SVQ Units to the projects and assessments of the HN component, with any remaining gaps in evidence being claimed through observation, professional discussion or reflective accounts. We recommend that you consider where SVQ evidence can be mapped to HN Unit evidence requirements early in the delivery process. In this way, you can start gathering SVQ evidence early without the risk of repetition and over-assessment.

There is no set word count for HNC Social Services assessments or evidence requirements. We recognised the need for flexibility where integrated assessments, or a range of products used as evidence are involved. Centres can provide guidance on the

word count for each of their assessments, and can allow learners to add more information to assessment evidence to claim SVQ Unit criteria, where required. There is guidance within the units on suggested wordcount.

Additional guidance on integrated or holistic assessment

Holistic or integrated assessment focuses on assessing a number of outcomes in a unit together, or in some cases, assessing the unit as a whole, rather than by outcome.

When assessing a unit of competence holistically, the assessment activities integrate a number of aspects of the competence. Holistic or integrated assessment can reduce the time spent on assessment and can promote greater equity in the assessment process.

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

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

Sometimes more than one piece of evidence is needed for a unit. For example, if a unit is about building a wall, a learner would need to produce evidence of performance (following the correct procedures and processes when building the wall) and product (a completed wall).

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

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this qualification.

If you want to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

Support materials

There are currently no support materials available for HNC Social Services. Centres can adapt their existing materials or refer to a list of existing assessment support packs (ASPs) on [SQA's website](#), to adhere to the integrated nature of HNC Social Services.

Remediation and re-assessment in Next Generation Higher National Qualifications

Remediation

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

Remediation is not permitted for closed-book assessments.

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

Re-assessment

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

Resource requirements

HNC Social Services is digital-by-design and therefore requires learners and delivery staff to have easy access to digital devices.

Learners must carry out guided research as part of their studies, which means they need access to web resources, libraries and workplace or placement resources.

Learners who are not already employed in a social service setting must attend a relevant work placement or work setting for 60 days during the qualification. In exceptional circumstances where the 60 days cannot be achieved, this placement requirement can be reduced, as long as both the placement provider and an assessor can confirm that the learner is sufficiently competent. Assessors can consider previous work experience at the same level in the sector to decide on a learner's competency.

Learners should do their placements in a relevant social service setting. Centres should refer to current guidance on placements.

Delivery staff should have some understanding and experience of social services and be qualified to at least SCQF level 8 in a related subject. Where staff are involved in delivering NOS, they should have achieved relevant assessing and verification qualifications, and meet the assessment strategies for the qualification.

Information for centres

Equality and inclusion

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

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

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

Values

You should emphasise to learners the importance of adhering to codes of practice or conduct applicable to their role, and the principles and values that underpin their work setting, including the rights of children, young people and adults. These include the rights to:

- be treated as an individual
- be treated equally and not be discriminated against
- be respected
- have privacy
- be treated in a dignified way
- be protected from danger and harm
- be supported and cared for in a way that meets their needs, takes account of their choices and also protects them
- communicate using their preferred methods of communication and language
- access information about themselves

Internal and external verification

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

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

External quality assurers (EQAs) visit centres early in the delivery process, and can provide support where required. They have responsibilities to ensure that centres meet quality assurance criteria. This involves sampling judgements for both evidence requirements and grading decisions. Given the integrated nature of the qualification, it is particularly important to ensure that evidence is auditable and traceable. This may involve some mapping of the evidence requirements to each assessment, annotating the evidence requirements within learner evidence, and/or indicating page numbers where evidence requirements are met. SVQ claims must also be traceable.

EQAs also sample grading decisions. Within the grading model, centres should summarise how they came to the decision about the grade awarded for each criterion, indicating which assessments evidence this. This provides sufficient information for the EQA to verify assessors' judgements on grading.

Not all criteria are likely to be evidenced in the first or possibly second stage of grading. EQAs can verify grading decisions on criteria completed at the time of verification.

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

Glossary

SQA credits: 1 SQA credit equals 8 SCQF credit points.

SQA credit value indicates the contribution the unit makes to an SQA qualification. An SQA credit value of 1 represents approximately 40 hours of learning, teaching and assessment.

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

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

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

Information for learners

HNC Social Services

This information explains:

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

Qualification information

HNC Social Services helps you to develop the knowledge, skills and practice experience you need to work in a range of different social service settings.

The specific aims of the qualification are to:

1. enable you to demonstrate an understanding of the values that underpin work in social service settings
2. enable you to understand how practice and service standards should inform your practice
3. enable you to integrate values, skills and knowledge effectively in a variety of social service settings
4. enable you to develop skills appropriate for working with individuals in a range of social service settings
5. enable you to have a person-centred focus in your practice
6. assist you to practice in an anti-discriminatory and inclusive manner
7. prepare you for employment in a social services setting
8. enable you to become reflective practitioners
9. enable you to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy, procedures and practice methods

10.enable you to engage in continuing professional learning

11.facilitate progression to Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level courses, or employment

Before you enrol on HNC Social Services, we recommend that you have previous experience of work or volunteering in a social services setting. You should understand the values and communication skills that are essential in the delivery of care. You can demonstrate your communication skills through the achievement of:

- certificated courses
- Core Skills Communication at Higher level
- Higher English
- other communication units at SCQF level 5 or 6

Alternatively, you can provide a reference, preferably from employers and/or through verbal and/or written evidence at interview.

HNC Social Services consists of academic units (HN Units) and vocational units (SVQ Units). You need to pass all units to achieve the qualification. The qualification has fewer, larger units which can be integrated. You work on more than one unit at a time, and your assessments may cover more than one unit.

As well as completing the prescribed units, you must complete a placement in a social service setting, if you are not already employed in a social service. In this way, you can generate evidence at the required level, while working on projects.

You carry out a series of projects and assessments to cover the unit evidence requirements. You collate all the evidence you produce into a portfolio which is graded as either Achieved, Achieved with Merit or Achieved with Distinction. Your assigned tutor and/or assessor will keep you informed of your progress and let you know which grade you are likely to achieve if you maintain the same standard of work.

Learners who achieve the qualification can meet the requirements for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) for most social service roles.

Meta-skills

You reflect on your own practice, knowledge and skills, with a focus on meta-skills.

Meta-skills are higher-order skills that support the development of other skills and promote success in any context. They enable you to respond to professional challenges and opportunities by reflecting on, developing, applying and adapting industry skills and sector knowledge. Throughout your qualification, you develop knowledge and skills that provide evidence of meeting meta-skills, which you then record and evaluate.

There are three categories of meta-skills: self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Each of these is made up of four meta-skills and a number of sub-skills.

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

Administrative information

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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 unit.

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 email nextgen@sqa.org.uk.

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