

Next Generation Higher National Unit Grading Pack

Higher National Diploma Physical Activity and Health

Qualification code: GV1P 48

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

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

You must read it alongside the Educator Guide.

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Approach to grading

Grading in 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 HND. You must align your judgements with the following whole-qualification grade descriptors.

Whole-qualification grade descriptors

Achieved with Distinction

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

significantly with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

Achieved with Merit

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

Achieved

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

What the whole-qualification grade descriptors do and how they are used

The whole-qualification grade descriptors outline the skills, knowledge and understanding a learner needs to show across the whole qualification to achieve that specific grade. They align with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level descriptors.

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

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

Please use this information, as well as the whole-qualification grade descriptors, to help you understand the standard at which learners should be assessed and graded.

Higher education institutes (HEIs) can use the grade descriptors to set admissions requirements, and employers can use them to help make decisions during a recruitment process.

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
Demonstrate an awareness of legislative changes and government initiatives in physical activity and public health. Use a range of credible sources to inform scope of practice.	The learner has demonstrated basic awareness of legislative changes in government initiatives in physical activity and public health. They have used a small range of credible sources to inform their scope of practice.	The learner has more often than not demonstrated a sound awareness of legislative changes in government initiatives in physical activity and public health. They have used a broad range of credible sources to inform their scope of practice that has exceeded minimum requirements .	The learner has consistently demonstrated high levels of awareness of legislative changes in government initiatives in physical activity and public health. They have used an extensive range of credible sources to inform their scope of practice.

Criterion 1 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include extended response essays or reports, individual and group presentations, infographics, leaflets or posters, nutritional analysis and reporting, individual training intervention plans, case study analysis, research investigation, research proposals and academic reports, business proposals, and CPD records.

There may also be an opportunity for research investigation, research proposals and research academic reports depending on the approach and subject area the learner chooses.

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Underpinning knowledge and understanding of exercise prescription and key behaviour change strategies to support clients in their physical activity and health journey.	The learner has demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of exercise prescription and key behaviour change strategies to support clients in their physical activity and health journey.	The learner has more often than not demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of exercise prescription and key behaviour change strategies to support clients in their physical activity and health journey that has exceeded minimum requirements .	The learner has consistently demonstrated high levels of knowledge and understanding of exercise prescription and key behaviour change strategies to support clients in their physical activity and health journey.

Criterion 2 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include extended response essays or reports; individual and group presentations; infographics, leaflets or posters; pre-screening assessment and analysis; nutritional analysis and reporting; health and performance testing and assessment; individual training intervention plans; and self-reflective client evaluations.

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Underpinning knowledge and understanding of long-term health conditions management through exercise interventions and collaborative working with other industry professionals.	The learner has demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of long-term health conditions management through exercise interventions and collaborative working with other industry professionals.	The learner has more often than not demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of long-term health conditions management through exercise interventions and collaborative working with other industry professionals that has exceeded minimum requirements.	The learner has consistently demonstrated high levels of knowledge and understanding of long-term health conditions management through exercise interventions and collaborative working with other industry professionals.

Criterion 3 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include extended response essays or reports; individual and group presentations; infographics, leaflets or posters; pre-screening assessment and analysis; nutritional analysis and reporting; health and performance testing and assessment; individual training intervention plans; and self-reflective client evaluations.

There may also be an opportunity for research investigation, research proposals and research academic reports depending on the approach and subject area the learner chooses.

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Develop and apply an evidence-based approach to planning and management of an exercise programme for a broad range of clients.	The learner has developed a basic evidence-based approach to planning and management of an exercise programme for a broad range of clients.	The learner has more often than not developed a sound evidence-based approach to planning and management of an exercise programme for a broad range of clients that has exceeded minimum requirements .	The learner has developed an extensive evidence-based approach to planning and management of an exercise programme for a broad range of clients.

Criterion 4 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include extended response essays or reports; individual and group presentations; pre-screening assessment and analysis; nutritional analysis and reporting; health and performance testing and assessment; individual training intervention plans; and self-reflective client evaluations.

Criterion 5 descriptors

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Applying critical thinking and analysis to work autonomously within the physical activity and health sector or environment.	The learner has demonstrated basic application of critical thinking and analysis to work autonomously within the physical activity and health sector or environment.	The learner has more often than not demonstrated a sound application of critical thinking and analysis to work autonomously within the physical activity and health sector or environment that has exceeded minimum requirements.	The learner has consistently demonstrated a high level of application of critical thinking and analysis to work autonomously within the physical activity and health sector or environment.

Criterion 5 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include extended response essays or reports; individual and group presentations; infographics, leaflets or posters; training method planning; client motivation and applying behaviour change strategy; pre-screening assessment and analysis; nutritional analysis and reporting; health and performance testing and assessment; individual training intervention plans; and self-reflective client evaluations.

There may also be an opportunity for research investigation, research proposals and research academic reports depending on the approach and subject area the learner chooses.

Criterion 6 descriptors

Criterion 6	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Application of suitable exercise techniques or strategies to support and work with a client and/or clients with a broad range of managed, stable long-term health conditions.	The learner has applied basic use of exercise techniques or strategies to support and work with a client and/or clients with a broad range of managed, stable long-term health conditions.	The learner has more often than not applied sound use of exercise techniques or strategies to support and work with a client and/or clients with a broad range of managed, stable long-term health conditions.	The learner has consistently applied a high level of application and analysis of exercise techniques or strategies to support and work with a client and/or clients with a broad range of managed, stable long-term health conditions.

Criterion 6 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include training method planning; client motivation and applying behaviour change strategy; pre-screening assessment and analysis; nutritional analysis and reporting; health and performance testing and assessment; individual training intervention plans; and self-reflective client evaluations.

Criterion 7 descriptors

Criterion 7	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Effectively plan and manage time to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with clients • meet agreed submission deadlines • maintain attendance and timekeeping • produce quality work • engage with peers and colleagues • communicate effectively (personal issues and medical issues) 	<p>The learner has demonstrated the basic ability to effectively plan and manage their time to meet agreed key deadlines but has submitted work late on more than one occasion.</p> <p>The learner has not communicated effectively in a consistent manner in relation to their attendance or timekeeping.</p>	<p>The learner has more often than not demonstrated a sound ability to effectively plan and manage their time to meet agreed key deadlines, that has exceeded minimum requirements, but may have submitted work late on one occasion.</p> <p>The learner has communicated effectively in a consistent manner in relation to their attendance or timekeeping.</p>	<p>The learner has demonstrated the sound ability to effectively plan and confidently manage their time. The learner has consistently met key deadlines and has not submitted work late.</p> <p>The learner has communicated effectively in a consistent manner in relation to their attendance or timekeeping.</p>

Criterion 7 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include first and second attempt submission deadlines being met; effective time management throughout the academic session; records of attendance and timekeeping; and the ability to work as part of a team or group.

Criterion 8 descriptors

Criterion 8	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Confidently apply a range of professional behaviours to achieve agreed aims when working with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• clients or participants• colleagues• peers	The learner has applied a basic range of professional behaviours and has worked well with clients, colleagues and peers to achieve an agreed aim.	The learner has more often than not confidently applied a broad range of professional behaviours and has worked effectively with clients, colleagues and peers to achieve an agreed aim.	The learner has confidently applied an extensive range of professional behaviours and has worked very effectively with clients, colleagues and peers to achieve an agreed aim.

Criterion 8 guidance

Evidence to support grading decisions may include individual and group presentations; infographics, leaflets or posters; training method planning; pre-screening assessment and analysis; nutritional analysis and reporting; health and performance testing and assessment; individual training intervention plans; self-reflective client evaluations; meta-skills portfolio evidence; and Learning for Sustainability evidence.

Criterion 9 descriptors

Criterion 9	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Develops meta-skills	<p>The learner adequately engages with the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving reasons for ratings or judgements made • setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories • using reflective practice strategies to track progress and analyse the links between course activities, experiences and meta-skills development 	<p>The learner demonstrates a clear commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving some insightful reasons for ratings or judgements made • setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories • using reflective practice strategies to track progress and demonstrate some insight into the impact of their course activities and experiences on their meta-skills development 	<p>The learner demonstrates strong commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving some insightful reasons for ratings or judgements made • setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories, and updating these as required • using reflective practice strategies very effectively to track progress and demonstrate insight into the impact of their course activities and experiences on their meta-skills development

Criterion 9 guidance

You must make your judgement alongside the separate meta-skills assessment guidance produced.

This guidance gives, in detail, the expectations of learners' engagement with meta-skills, in the context of their qualification.

Competence in individual meta-skills is not being judged here. For example, the quality of learners' feeling or creativity is not the focus. Rather, it is the process of development learners go through — planning, developing and reflecting — that should be evidenced and assessed.

Although one unit has a meta-skills outcome, evidence of meta-skills development can be gathered from any activity at any time during the HND. For meaningful reflection to take place, the process of meta-skills development should happen continually throughout the HND. The range of contexts in which this can happen is very wide, and dependent on the sector as well as individual preferences. Each unit signposts opportunities for meta-skills development.

Additional grading guidance

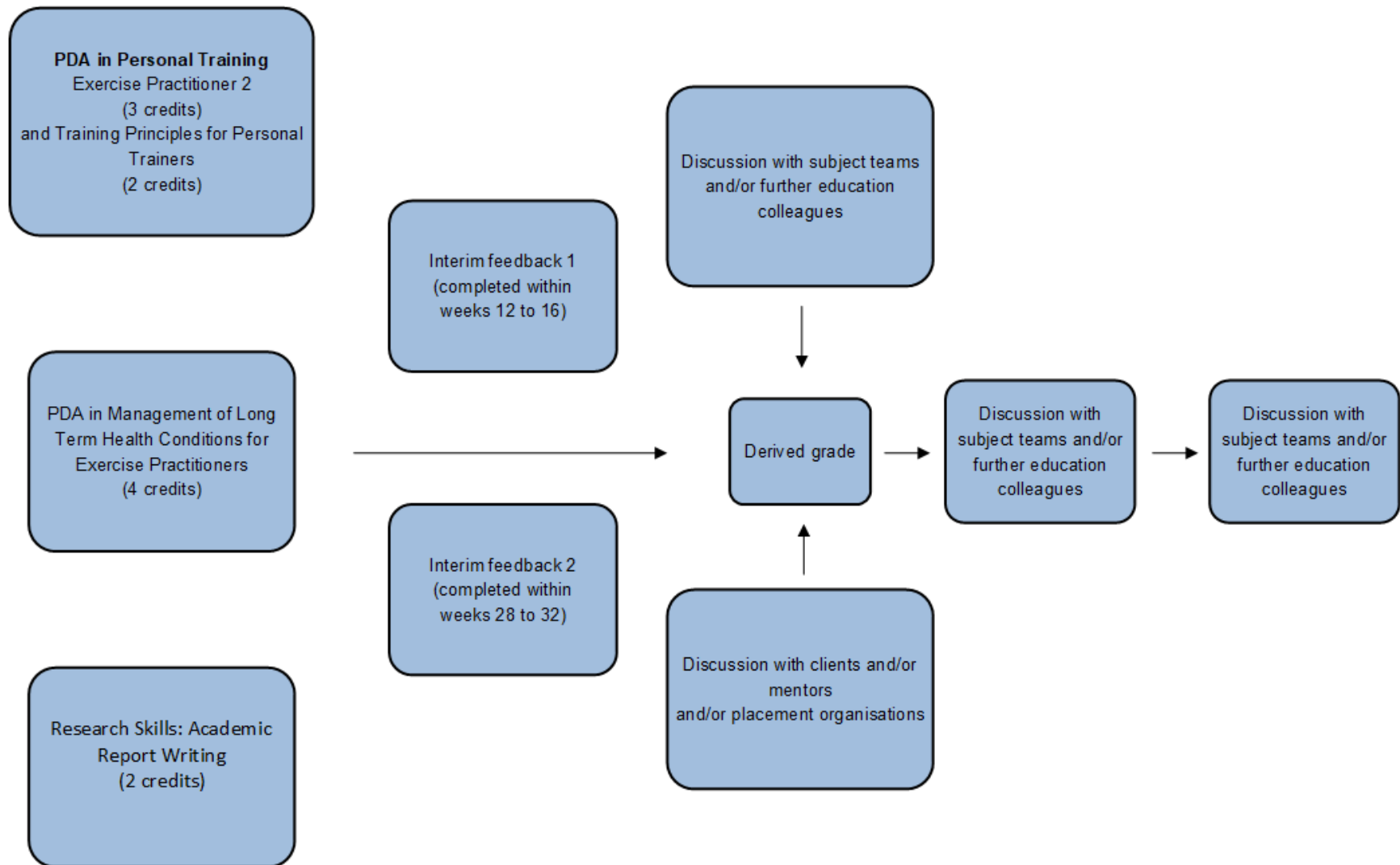
Grading model

Grading for the HND Physical Activity and Health is based on learners successfully completing the full 15 credits. However, grades are based on the performance of learners across the following 11 mandatory credits:

- Exercise Practitioner 2 (3 credits)
- Training Principles for Personal Trainers (2 credits)
- Management of Long Term Health Conditions for Exercise Practitioners (4 credits)
- Research in Sport, Physical Activity and Health (2 credits)

You may wish to develop a mapping document to evidence where learners generate evidence for meta-skills and Learning for Sustainability within the qualification to help with grading decisions.

Grading model diagram



Worked example of grading model

As the HND Physical Activity and Health contains several of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) professional standards, all skills in each of the units must demonstrate minimum competence in line with the professional standard. The following worked examples are graded using the grading matrix.

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 practical skills to satisfy the skills sections within each of the outcomes across the mandatory units. The learner evidence and/or portfolio is of a minimum standard, and the learner has not included any additional detail to support a higher grade.

Learner B — Achieved with Merit

The learner has demonstrated more often than not a sound level of understanding of the key concepts that underpin the knowledge and understanding of the outcomes contained in the mandatory units. The learner has more often than not demonstrated a sound level of practical skills to satisfy the skills sections in each of the outcomes across the mandatory units. The learner evidence and/or portfolio has exceeded the minimum standard and included additional detail 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 client portfolio has an excellent level of additional detail to support a higher grade.

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 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 email nextgen@sqa.org.uk.

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