

NextGen: HN educator guide

HNC Childhood Practice

Qualification code: GV7G 47

Valid from: August 2026

This educator guide provides information about the Higher National Certificate (HNC) 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.

Published: August 2026 (version 1.2)

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Purpose of the qualification

To work in the childhood practice sector, you must register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Achieving HNC Childhood Practice fulfils the SSSCs requirements for the relevant part of registration. It enables learners to work effectively in a range of childhood practice settings with children and young people. They gain an understanding of the values and principles of working with children and young people, and learn how to integrate those values with the necessary knowledge and skills.

HNC Childhood Practice prepares learners to adapt to the changing world of childhood practice services.

HNC Childhood Practice shares common core units (two Higher National (HN) Units and up to three Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Units) with HNC Social Services, allowing transferable credits between the two qualifications.

Structure

HNCs are at SCQF level 7 and are made up of 120 SCQF credit points (15 Qualifications Scotland credits). HNCs must incorporate at least 80 credit points (10 Qualifications Scotland credits) at SCQF level 7.

Framework

The HNC is made up of mandatory and optional units. Learners must complete all the mandatory units and 2 Qualifications Scotland credits from the optional units.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6E5 47	Pedagogy in Practice	3	24	7
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	3	24	7
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	3	24	7
J8G8 47	Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People	1	8	7
H5LC 04	Promote Effective Communication	1	9	7
H5LD 04	Promote Health, Safety and Security in the work setting	1	10	7
H5LE 04	Develop your Practice through Reflection and Learning	1	9	7

The Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights and Developing Reflective Practice Units share a common core with HNC Social Services.

Optional units

Unit code	Unit title	Qualifications Scotland credits	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J7DF 47	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice	2	16	7
J7DD 47	Outdoor Learning and Sustainability	2	16	7
J7DE 47	Playwork in Practice	2	16	7
J7DG 47	Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals	2	16	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 values, skills, and knowledge effectively in a variety of childhood practice 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 range of childhood practice settings.
4. Enable learners to develop skills appropriate for working with children and young people in a range of childhood practice settings.
5. Enable learners to have an individual and 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 childhood practice 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 continuous professional learning.
11. Facilitate progression (if desired) 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 childhood practice settings, 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 childhood practice setting

Previous experience of work or volunteering in a childhood practice setting is recommended to meet the requirements of the programme.

Recognising prior learning

Qualifications Scotland 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 our website](#).

Articulation and progression

Learners who complete this qualification could go on to:

- other qualifications in childhood practice or related areas
- further study, employment and/or training

Learners can progress to further qualifications at SCQF level 8 or 9 in Childhood Practice or other related subjects, then on to PDA Childhood Practice: Leadership and Management at SCQF level 9. These qualifications meet the SSSC registration requirements for manager or lead practitioner in the sector.

Learners who achieve a Merit or Distinction in HNC Childhood Practice may gain accelerated entry to degree-level courses at higher education institutions.

Professional recognition

Learners who achieve the qualification meet the requirements for registration with the SSSC for most childhood practice 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 communications 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, 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

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
J6E5 47	Pedagogy in Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	X	X	X	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E6 47	Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J7DF 47	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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
J7DD 47	Outdoor Learning and Sustainability	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J7DE 47	Playwork in Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J7DG 47	Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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

Unit code	Unit title	NOS codes
J6E5 47	Pedagogy in Practice	H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04
J6E6 47	Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People	H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5MH, H5N8
J7DF 47	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice	H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5MB 04
J7DD 47	Outdoor Learning and Sustainability	H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, JOKG 04
J7DE 47	Playwork in Practice	H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, JOKE 04
J7DG 47	Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals	H5LC 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04

Table 3: assessment strategy for the qualification

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6E5 47	Pedagogy in Practice	• integrated project assignment with product
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	• a folder of evidence gathered holistically, including a reflective practice evaluation and product evidence for meta-skills development
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	• a folder of evidence gathered holistically, including an assignment, risk assessment and reflective practice evaluation
H5LC 04	Promote Effective Communication	• SVQ portfolio
H5LD 04	Promote Health, Safety and Security in the Work Setting	• SVQ portfolio, including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities
H5LE 04	Develop your Practice through Reflection and Learning	• SVQ portfolio, including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities

Optional HN units with optional SVQ units

You can fully integrate some optional HNC Childhood Practice Units into the SVQ Units.

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 [our meta-skills web page](#).

Meta-skills in HNC Childhood Practice

HNC Childhood Practice contains the project unit Developing Reflective Practice, which has a specific outcome on meta-skills. However, all unit specifications have examples of where you can find opportunities to evidence meta-skills, 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. They should reflect on their successes and future goals.

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

Mapping opportunities to develop meta-skills across the qualification

Self-management

Meta-skill	Unit code	Unit title
Focusing	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals
Integrity	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals

Meta-skill	Unit code	Unit title
Adapting	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals
Initiative	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals

Social intelligence

Meta-skill	Unit code	Unit title
Communication	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals
Feeling	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals

Meta-skill	Unit code	Unit title
Collaborating	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals
Leading	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals

Innovation

Meta-skill	Unit code	Unit title
Curiosity	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals
Creativity	• J6E5 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals

Meta-skill	Unit code	Unit title
Sense-making	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E4 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Developing Reflective Practice • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals
Critical thinking	• J6E5 47 • J6E3 47 • J6E6 47 • J7DF 47 • J7DD 47 • J7DE 47 • J7DG 47	• Pedagogy in Practice • Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights • Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice • Outdoor Learning and Sustainability • Playwork in Practice • Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals

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. Qualifications Scotland uses LfS as an umbrella term.

Learning for Sustainability in NextGen 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

The Learning for Sustainability (LfS) 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:

- poverty
- good health and wellbeing
- quality education
- affordable and clean energy
- decent work and economic growth
- reduced inequalities

Similarly, 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.

There are further opportunities to integrate the LfS outcome with other units in this qualification, for example Pedagogy in Practice outcomes 4, 5, and 6 integrate well with Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights outcomes 5 and 7.

There are additional requirements for those working in early years settings regarding promoting LfS. The 'Target 2030 A Movement for People Planet and Prosperity Action Plan' describes this role: 'Every setting should have a whole-setting approach to sustainability that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels. In line with GTCS Professional Standards, every practitioner, setting and education leader should demonstrate Learning for Sustainability in their practice.'

Pedagogy in Practice outcome 6 addresses these requirements.

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

Find out more about Qualifications Scotland'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 units to UN SDGs

SDGs 1 to 9

Key: SDG is directly relevant to unit (X), SDG is not applicable to this unit (N/A)

Unit code	Unit title	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9
J6E5 47	Pedagogy in Practice	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	X
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	X	X
J6E6 47	Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People	X	N/A	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	X
J7DF 47	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice	X	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J7DD 47	Outdoor Learning and Sustainability	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Unit code	Unit title	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9
J7DE 47	Playwork in Practice	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
J7DG 47	Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals	N/A	N/A	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X

SDGs 10 to 17

Key: SDG is directly relevant to unit (X), SDG is not applicable to this unit (N/A)

Unit code	Unit title	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
J6E5 47	Pedagogy in Practice	X	N/A	N/A	X	N/A	N/A	X	X
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	X	X
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	N/A
J6E6 47	Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	X

Unit code	Unit title	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
J7DF 47	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	X
J7DD 47	Outdoor Learning and Sustainability	X	X	X	X	N/A	N/A	X	X
J7DE 47	Playwork in Practice	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	X
J7DG 47	Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and other Professionals	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X	X

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

You can deliver this qualification as full time, part time or through distance learning. All learners must be working in a childhood practice setting or carrying out a centre-agreed placement. Much of the content requires evidence from practice in day-to-day activities, along with an appropriate teaching framework. Learners in childhood practice settings already 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 qualification without work experience) who wish to complete the qualification through a part time or distance learning route, may benefit from more time, for example completing the qualification over 2 years. In these situations, it is beneficial for learners to start their placement early, to support them to gather the evidence they need. In all modes of delivery, you should avoid a unitised approach to delivery and integrate the units to avoid over-assessment. A thematic approach to delivery works very well.

Learners' practical experience is fundamental to the qualification, and they cannot achieve units without reflecting on their work practice. This qualification requires learners to participate in, and reflect on, practical activities, while supporting at least one individual within a childhood practice setting.

The HNC contains three mandatory core units, and optional blocks, which are 3 Qualifications Scotland credits each. Within the framework, there are also three mandatory SVQ units.

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, however, where overlaps between units occur, you should deem an assessment from one unit to meet some or all of the evidence requirements from other linked units.

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

To meet Qualifications Scotland's commitment to identifying opportunities for developing the skills, knowledge and understanding, and values of LfS while working towards the 'Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity; Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023–2030', this qualification contains a sustainability outcome. There are opportunities to integrate this outcome with other outcomes from Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights, and Developing Reflective Practice. 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.

For grading purposes, learners must produce a portfolio containing all their assessment evidence from the HN core units. The assessment evidence can be mapped to SVQ through an SVQ portfolio. Learners should keep their SVQ portfolio to progress to the full SVQ, if required.

Given the holistic nature of the qualification, all assessment evidence should be annotated to ensure it meets all evidence requirements, and that external quality assurers can source the evidence. This may include indicating where to find the evidence requirements in marking sheets and assessments. Any SVQ performance criteria or knowledge should also be indicated clearly on assessments where it is claimed.

Sequencing or integrating units

You should deliver and assess HNC Childhood Practice in a fully integrated approach. There are opportunities for integration of units during delivery and assessment.

Centres should decide the delivery and assessment timetable. However, we suggest that you introduce learners to self-reflection early in the programme, through a baseline meta-skills assessment and in planning which skills they would like to develop. Some reflection on their values and principles regarding practice and service standards could also be a good starting point. Before learners carry out projects, they should have some of the underpinning knowledge from Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights. An integrated project between Pedagogy in Practice and an optional unit could start when learners are established in their placements, or when they have a good understanding of what will be required to support a child or young person. 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 SVQ Units alongside or overlapping the HN Units. There are opportunities to map SVQ units to the projects and assessments of the HN component, claiming any remaining gaps in evidence through observation, professional discussion or reflective accounts. You should consider where you can map SVQ evidence to HN Unit evidence requirements early in the delivery process. This allows the process of gathering SVQ evidence to start early, without the risk of repetition and over-assessing.

There is no set word count for HNC Childhood Practice, and we recognise that where there is integrated assessment, or a range of products used as evidence, then flexibility in the word count is required. Centres may provide guidance on the word count for each of their assessments, however they could allow learners to add more information to assessment evidence to claim SVQ Unit criteria, where required.

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, Qualifications Scotland 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, Pedagogy in Practice asks for knowledge evidence as well as evidence of performance. The evidence of performance covers various activities, however there is the opportunity to link this evidence in a project with other units.

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.

Remediation and re-assessment in NextGen 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 Childhood Practice requires learners and delivery staff to have easy access to digital devices.

Learners must carry out guided research, which requires access to web resources, libraries and workplace or placement resources.

Learners must attend a relevant work placement or work setting for a minimum of 60 days during the qualification. In exceptional circumstances where a learner can't achieve 60 days, placement and assessor authentication that they are competent may allow for a reduction in the placement requirement. Previous work experience at the same level in the sector can also be considered when reaching a final decision about competency and timescales.

Learners should carry out placements in a relevant childhood practice setting. Centres should refer to any current guidance on placements.

Delivery staff should have some understanding and experience of childhood practice settings 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 qualifications.

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

Learners should adhere to codes of practice or conduct where 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 protects them
- communicate using their preferred methods of communication and language
- access information about themselves

Internal and external verification

You must make sure all assessment methods you use in this qualification are internally verified according to your centre's policies and Qualifications Scotland's guidelines. Information on how to request prior verification for your assessment from Qualifications Scotland is available on our [prior verification web page](#).

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

More information on internal and external verification is available in our [Guide to Assessment](#) and in [NextGen: HN Quality Assurance — Guidance for Centres](#).

Glossary

Qualifications Scotland credits: 1 Qualifications Scotland credit equals 8 SCQF credit points.

Qualifications Scotland credit value indicates the contribution the unit makes to an Qualifications Scotland qualification. An Qualifications Scotland 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 Childhood Practice

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 Childhood Practice supports you to develop the knowledge, skills and practice experience you need to work in a range of different settings.

The specific aims of the qualification are to:

- enable you to demonstrate an understanding of the values, skills, and knowledge effectively in a variety of childhood practice settings
- enable you to understand how practice and service standards should inform your practice
- enable you to integrate values, skills, and knowledge effectively in a range of childhood practice settings
- enable you to develop skills appropriate for working with children and young people in a range of childhood practice settings
- enable you to have an individual and person-centred focus in your practice
- assist you to practice in an anti-discriminatory and inclusive manner
- prepare you for employment in a childhood practice setting
- enable you to become reflective practitioners

- enable you to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy, procedures, and practice methods
- enable you to engage in continuous professional learning
- facilitate progression to HND or degree-level courses, or employment

Before enrolling on HNC Childhood Practice, we recommend that you have experience of working or volunteering in a childhood practice setting, to meet the requirements of the programme. You should understand the values and communication skills essential in the delivery of care. You can demonstrate communication skills through 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 Childhood Practice consists of academic units (HN units) and vocational units (SVQ units). You must 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.

While working through the qualification, you learn a series of subjects relevant to work in childhood practice settings, and which meet the aims of the qualification. You must carry out a placement in a childhood practice setting, if you are not already employed in childhood practice.

You carry out a series of projects and assessments to cover the unit evidence requirements. You collate all evidence you produce into a portfolio, which is graded as Achieved, Achieved with Merit, or Achieved with Distinction. Your assigned tutor 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 childhood practice 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

Published: August 2026 (version 1.2)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
1.1	In the 'Framework' section on page 3, '3 Qualifications Scotland credits' amended to '2 Qualifications Scotland credits'. What you need to do differently You may wish to update your teaching notes.	January 2026
1.2	'Valid from' date on front cover updated to 'August 2026' and 'Prototype educator guide for use in pilot delivery only' line deleted. On 1 February 2026, Qualifications Scotland replaced SQA as the new national awarding body. We have updated the logo and 'SQA' throughout the document to reflect this. What you need to do differently There is no change to learning, teaching and assessment.	August 2026

Please check [our website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this educator 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](#).

Thank you to everyone who helped us develop this qualification. Your expertise, time and thoughtful input was invaluable.

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