

Next Generation Higher National Unit Grading Pack

Higher National Certificate Childhood Practice

Qualification code: GV7G 47

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

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

You must read it alongside the Educator Guide.

Published: August 2025 (version 1.0)

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2025

Contents

Approach to grading	1
Whole-qualification grade outcomes	1
Whole-qualification grade descriptors	1
What the whole-qualification grade descriptors do and how they are used.....	2
Using the grading matrix	4
Meta-skills	5
Learning for Sustainability	5
Grading matrix.....	6
Additional grading guidance	18
Grading model.....	18
Worked example of grading model.....	21
Administrative information.....	25
History of changes.....	25

Approach to grading

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

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

Whole-qualification grade outcomes

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

- Achieved with Distinction
- Achieved with Merit
- Achieved

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

Whole-qualification grade descriptors

Achieved with Distinction

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

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

Achieved with Merit

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

Achieved

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

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

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

NextGen: HNC qualifications are at SCQF level 7. Learners who complete a NextGen: HNC can:

- convey knowledge of the subject's main theories, concepts and principles
- apply skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject in relevant practical and professional contexts
- use a broad range of approaches to address problems and issues in the context of the subject area
- exercise initiative and independence in carrying out activities, and have started to develop their professional practice and behaviours relevant to the context of the qualification
- differentiate between and appropriately apply the knowledge gained through practice, research and other sources

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

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

SQA's quality assurance teams use the grade descriptors and the grading matrix to ensure that grades awarded in a particular NextGen: HN Qualification are at a consistent national standard, regardless of the setting in which they are achieved.

Successful learners receive their grade, along with the grade descriptor, on their certificate.

Using the grading matrix

You must use the grading matrix to judge the learner's whole-qualification grade. You can use the grading matrix at any time, but you only make a whole-qualification grading judgement when you are confident the learner has met all the evidence requirements of all the required units.

The criteria in the grading matrix reflect the knowledge, skills and qualities HEIs and employers can expect of a learner who has completed the qualification. These criteria align with the overall purpose of the qualification, and remain the same for its duration.

Each criterion has sector-specific descriptors of a typical learner's performance standard, aligned to the whole-qualification grade outcomes of Achieved, Achieved with Merit and Achieved with Distinction. These descriptors describe the standard a learner of that whole-qualification grade is expected to show.

The guidance accompanying each criterion can include, but is not limited to, information on:

- relevant types of assessment that may produce useful or meaningful evidence for judging that criterion
- mapping to content that is particularly relevant to that criterion
- mapping to meta-skills

This guidance may be updated over time.

When you make your final grading judgement, you must use a 'best fit' approach based on the learner's achievement across the grading matrix. This may be straightforward — for example, if the learner's evidence shows a consistent standard across the grading matrix criteria. If it is not straightforward, you must make a 'best fit' judgement — for example, if a learner shows a mix of standards across the grading matrix criteria, with no clear pattern. The criteria may not always have equal value. You can decide some are more important to the final grade than others.

Meta-skills

Meta-skills are a key part of NextGen: HN Qualifications and learners can develop them throughout the qualification. A learner's engagement with developing their own meta-skills contributes to their qualification grade. You do not assess or grade competence or progress in individual meta-skills — for example, by judging the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Instead, you look at the process of development learners go through. This means learners need to provide evidence of planning, developing and reflecting on their meta-skills.

If qualification content also contributes to meta-skills development, it contributes to a learner's whole-qualification grading through the grading matrix approach.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability does not contribute to a learner's qualification grade.

If qualification content is also Learning for Sustainability content, it does contribute to a learner's whole-qualification grade through the grading matrix approach.

Grading matrix

Criterion 1 descriptors

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Personal values and principles	The learner has detailed their own personal values and principles.	The learner has given a very good level of detail on their own personal values and principles.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of their own values and principles.
	There is evidence of values and principles embedded in the learner's work with a child or young person.	They have effectively applied values and principles in their work with a child or young person.	They have worked to an excellent standard in applying their own values and principles to their work with a child or young person.

Criterion 1 guidance

For this criterion, you should base grading on learners' recognition and description of their own personal values and principles and how they apply these in a childhood practice setting. Learners who produce work at a high standard provide detail on how they have applied these values in practice.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities related to Developing Reflective Practice (J6E4 47) outcomes 1 and 2.

Criterion 2 descriptors

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Knowledge	The learner has evidenced knowledge and understanding relevant to the qualification and applied this to their work role.	The learner has demonstrated very good knowledge and provided detailed examples of how they've applied their knowledge to their work role.	The learner has demonstrated excellent knowledge and provided a broad range of detailed examples of how they've applied their knowledge to their work role.

Criterion 2 guidance

Evidence for this criterion should apply to how well learners have covered the knowledge section of each unit. Learners should be aware of common theories, legislation and knowledge applicable to their work setting. They should apply this knowledge to a child or young person's situation and their work with individuals. Grading is based on the depth and the quality of their knowledge. Knowledge can relate to the learning programme or any research beyond what is taught, as long as it is relevant to the evidence requirements.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the breadth of the units, including the optional HN units.

Criterion 3 descriptors

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
The skills required for effective care	The learner has demonstrated a good understanding of the skills required and applied these in practice.	The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the skills required and effectively applied these in practice.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the skills required and applied these highly effectively in practice.

Criterion 3 guidance

You should validate learners' application of skills by witness testimony.

You can take evidence for this from the skills section of the units. Learners should understand the practice standards for their role and have demonstrated this through their work with an individual.

Criterion 4 descriptors

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Interpretation of written tasks (this should relate to assignment briefs, and the amount of remediation required)	The learner has demonstrated an understanding of the written task and applied their learning in their response.	The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the written task and effectively applied their learning in their response.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the written task and applied their learning extensively within their response.

Criterion 4 guidance

This criterion is about learners understanding the assessment brief in relation to their learning. You should consider how the learner met each evidence requirement and if there was a need for remediation. If most or all learners have remediation for the same evidence requirements, then you should include more clarity in the brief and in delivery.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the breadth of the units, including the optional HN units.

Criterion 5 descriptors

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Evidence requirements of the unit	The learner has provided sufficient quantitative and qualitative evidence to meet the evidence requirements.	The learner has provided a broad range of quantitative and qualitative evidence to meet the evidence requirements.	The learner has provided an extensive range of quantitative and qualitative evidence to meet the evidence requirements.

Criterion 5 guidance

This criterion is about the learner's depth of response in meeting the evidence requirements. You should consider the quality and quantity of response content within the word count.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the units, including the optional HN units.

Criterion 6 descriptors

Criterion 6	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Standard of presentation	<p>The learner has a good standard of written and oral presentation.</p> <p>The learner's presentation effectively conveys their ideas with a clear structure, but some areas for improvement or clarification.</p> <p>The learner provides very basic referencing, and the assessment is in the format set in the assessment brief.</p>	<p>The learner has a high standard of written and oral presentation.</p> <p>The learner's presentation effectively conveys their ideas with a clear structure.</p> <p>The learner provides basic referencing, and the assessment is in the format set in the assessment brief.</p>	<p>The learner has an excellent standard of written and oral presentation.</p> <p>The learner's presentation shows evidence of a well-developed and planned approach that conveys their ideas with a methodical and clear structure.</p> <p>The learner provides detailed referencing, and the assessment is in the format set in the assessment brief.</p>

Criterion 6 guidance

This criterion is about the evidence provided by learners and how they structure and set it out according to the assessment brief. You should consider the academic requirements of the SCQF level and learners' use of referencing.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the units, including the optional HN units. You should consider both written and oral presentation of work for grading.

Criterion 7 descriptors

Criterion 7	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Engagement with children, young people, and their families	The learner has collaborated effectively, but on a limited basis, with a range of others. They have demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the importance of collaboration.	The learner has collaborated effectively with a range of others. They have demonstrated a very good understanding of the importance of collaboration.	The learner has collaborated highly effectively with a range of others. They have demonstrated an excellent understanding of the importance of collaboration.

Criterion 7 guidance

Learners should collaborate with children and/or young people, professionals, and groups across functions. You should also consider other forms of collaboration that may be legitimate. Witness testimonies from the workplace should validate collaboration.

Evidence can come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- Developing Reflective Practice (J6E4 47) outcome 6
- Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights (J6E3 47) outcomes 3 and 4
- Pedagogy in Practice (J6E5 47) outcome 6

- Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People (J6E6 47) outcomes 4 and 5
- Outdoor Learning and Sustainability (J7DD 47) outcome 3
- Playwork in Practice (J7DE 47) outcomes 4 and 5
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice (J7DF 47) outcomes 3 and 4
- Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and Other Professionals (J7DG 47) outcomes 5 and 6

Criterion 8 descriptors

Criterion 8	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Impact on a child or young person's wellbeing or outcomes	The learner has reflected on the impact of their role and has worked to some extent to improve the wellbeing and/or outcomes for children and young people.	The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the impact of their role and has worked with endeavour to improve the wellbeing and/or outcomes for children and young people.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the impact of their role and has consistently endeavoured to improve the wellbeing and/or outcomes for children and young people.

Criterion 8 guidance

You should check that there is validation of the impact on the child or young person's wellbeing and/or outcomes in the witness testimonies from the workplace.

Learners should provide examples of reflection on their role.

Evidence can come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- Developing Reflective Practice (J6E4 47) outcome 7
- Pedagogy in Practice (J6E5 47) outcomes 7 and 8
- Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People (J6E6 47) outcomes 5 and 6
- Outdoor Learning and Sustainability (J7DD 47) outcomes 3 and 4
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice (J7DF 47) outcomes 3 and 4

Criterion 9 descriptors

Criterion 9	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Reflecting on the impact of their practice	The learner has reflected independently on the impact of their practice.	The learner has reflected independently on the impact of their practice across a broad range of practice areas, and understands the benefits of reflection.	The learner has reflected independently on the impact of their practice across an extensive range of practice areas. There is evidence of their reflection and its benefits in their practice.

Criterion 9 guidance

This criterion relates to how well learners have reflected on the impact of their practice. The opportunities offered by their work situation or placement may affect the overall impact of their practice. However, this criterion relates to the depth of reflection, rather than overall impact.

Evidence can come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- Developing Reflective Practice (J6E4 47) outcome 7
- Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights (J6E3 47) outcome 3
- Pedagogy in Practice (J6E5 47) outcomes 7 and 8
- Additional Support Needs: Positive Support Strategies for Children and Young People (J6E6 47) outcomes 5 and 6
- Outdoor Learning and Sustainability (J7DD 47) outcomes 3 and 4
- Playwork in Practice (J7DE 47) outcome 6
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Childhood Practice (J7DF 47) outcome 4
- Partnerships: Supporting Collaborative Working with Families and Other Professionals (J7DG 47) outcome 6

Criterion 10 descriptors

Criterion 10	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Meta-skills development	<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 a 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

Guidance

Maps to all units.

You must refer to the meta-skills assessment guidance when grading meta-skills. You can find meta-skills teaching, learning and assessment resources on [SQA's meta-skills web page](#).

It is important to remember that you are not judging competence in individual meta-skills here, for example the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Rather, it is the process of development the learner goes through, including planning, developing and reflecting, that should be evidenced and assessed.

Although there is a meta-skills outcome in one unit, evidence of meta-skills development can be gathered from any activity at any time during the course. For meaningful reflection to take place, the process of meta-skills development should happen continually throughout the qualification. 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.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities related to Developing Reflective Practice (J6E4 47) outcome 7.

Additional grading guidance

Grading model

You can complete the model to grade each learner holistically across HNC Childhood Practice, using the learner's portfolio of evidence. Markers should grade each question with either Achieved, Achieved with Merit or Achieved with Distinction and provide an example or explanation. Learners should have an indication of the grades they are expected to achieve throughout the duration of the qualification.

You should calculate overall grades from the final grades for each criterion. You should note that:

- to achieve the qualification, learners must pass all criteria in the grading matrix
- to achieve an award of Merit, learners need to meet 7 out of the 10 assessment criteria at Merit level or above, with the remaining criteria at Achieved level or above
- to achieve an award of Distinction, learners need to meet a minimum of 7 assessment criteria at Distinction level, plus 3 more at Achieved or Merit level

The grading model should look like this:

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
1. Personal values and principles	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
2. Knowledge	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
3. The skills required for effective care	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
4. Interpretation of written tasks (This should relate to assignment briefs, and the amount of remediation required.)	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
5. Evidence requirements of the unit	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
6. Standard of presentation	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
7. Engagement with children, young people, and their families	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
8. Impact on a child or young person's wellbeing or outcomes	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
9. Reflecting on the impact of their practice	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
10. Meta-skills development	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]

Overall grade:

Worked example of grading model

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
1. Personal values and principles	Not yet assessed	Achieved with Merit AB has reflected on their values and principles and effectively analysed these in assessment 2.	Achieved with Merit In assessment 3, AB worked in a sensitive manner with a child, and it was evident that their values are embedded in their work.
2. Knowledge	Achieved with Merit In assessment 1, AB provided detailed links to relevant legislation and theory and was able to link these effectively to their work practice.	Achieved with Merit AB continues to provide excellent examples of knowledge, particularly with regards to theory relevant to the child they are working with.	Achieved with Merit AB continues to demonstrate excellent knowledge. In assessment 3, they implemented this knowledge while working with a child to effectively assess their needs.
3. The skills required for effective care	Not yet assessed	Achieved In assessment 2, AB demonstrated a thorough understanding of the skills required while completing their risk assessment.	Achieved AB continues to show a thorough understanding of the skills required. In assessment 3, they applied these while supporting a child.

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
4. Interpretation of written tasks (This should relate to assignment briefs, and the amount of remediation required.)	Achieved AB has been able to interpret the assignment and produce a good response.	Achieved In assessment 2, AB understood what was required with some initial prompts, and produced their risk assessment.	Achieved AB continues to understand the assessment question after initial prompting.
5. Evidence requirements of the unit	Achieved with Distinction AB provided several examples to meet the evidence requirements for assessment 1. The examples given were outstanding and very detailed.	Achieved with Merit In assessment 2, AB provided very detailed responses to cover the evidence requirements.	Achieved with Merit AB continues to thoroughly meet the evidence requirements to a high standard, particularly with knowledge evidence.
6. Standard of presentation	Achieved AB has a good standard of writing and has used appropriate references and formatting, after some initial guidance.	Achieved In assessment 2, AB has grown more confident with their writing skills and referencing, and has made a good start to compiling their evidence portfolio.	Achieved AB continues to have a good standard of written work. They presented oral evidence in a methodical manner for assessment 3, and their evidence portfolio is presented to a good standard.

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
7. Engagement with children, young people, and their families	Not yet assessed	Achieved with Merit According to the witness authentication, family members commented to the placement supervisor how helpful AB was. They were always prepared to provide help, and they took the initiative to find information on a local support group they could contact.	Achieved with Merit AB continues to evidence collaboration with a range of professionals, children and young people, and family members. Feedback from the placement supervisor continues to be positive and AB has provided excellent evidence as to why this is important.
8. Impact on a child or young person's wellbeing or outcomes	Not yet assessed	Achieved Included in their portfolio were examples of where a child challenged AB verbally and physically. AB was able to deal with the situation and understand the circumstances the child had experienced. While not excusing the behaviour, they were able to retain a positive relationship and redirect the child to look at alternative activities to distract them.	Achieved AB has reflected further on the positive impact they have had with a child. This was evidenced thoroughly through evaluation for assessment 3.

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
9. Reflecting on the impact of their practice	Not yet assessed	Achieved When conflicts occurred, AB was able to resolve them. AB then reflected on how they could use these skills further, in various situations.	Achieved AB continues to reflect on the outcomes from their work, with some good practice examples.
10. Meta-skills development	Achieved AB carried out a thorough baseline assessment of their meta-skills. They have identified which skills they would like to develop throughout the duration of the qualification.	Achieved AB has kept their record of meta-skills up to date and reflected on the importance of this.	Achieved AB continues to engage with their meta-skills development. They have developed meta-skills throughout and made progress with 'collaboration', which is the skill they chose to focus on. AB has thoroughly evaluated the process they have carried out to develop this skill.

Overall grade: Achieved

Administrative information

Published: August 2025 (version 1.0)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this guide.

If a unit is revised:

- no new centres can be approved to offer the previous version of the unit
- centres should only enter learners for the previous version of the unit if they can complete it before its finish date

For more information on NextGen: HN Qualifications please visit the [NextGen: HN web page](#).

The information in this grading pack may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@sqa.org.uk.