



Group Award Specification for:

**Professional Development Award in Dental Nursing
at SCQF level 7**

Group Award Code: GV8T 47

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to:

- Assist centres to implement, deliver and manage the qualification.
- Provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the qualification.
- Inform course managers teaching staff, assessors, learners, employers and higher education institutes (HEIs) of the aims and purpose of the qualification.
- Provide details of the range of learners the qualification is suitable for and progression opportunities.

Rationale

The Professional Development Award (PDA) in Dental Nursing is a sector-specific qualification which has been developed to provide trainee dental nurses with the critical knowledge and understanding that underpins the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Dental Nursing which was accredited in 2025.

The dental sector in Scotland was widely consulted on the need for a specific qualification to explicitly assess underpinning knowledge which:

- complemented and underpinned the work-based SVQ
- would be part of a registerable qualification that met the General Dental Council (GDC) requirements

It was agreed that the continuing use of a PDA at SCQF level 7 would meet that need.

This group award specification (GAS) supports the delivery of the PDA in Dental Nursing which was validated in April 2025.

It replaces the previous version, (the PDA in Dental Nursing G9C4 47).

This GAS exemplifies the updated structure which has reduced from 5 SQA credits to 4.

Mandatory summative assessments have been added into each individual unit, replacing the separate examination component.

When achieved together, the PDA and the SVQ in Dental Nursing provide successful learners with the qualifications required to seek registration with the General Dental Council (GDC).

GDC registration is a statutory requirement in the United Kingdom for all dental care professionals including dental nurses.

2. Qualification structure

This group award is made up of 4 SQA unit credits. It comprises 32 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7, all of which are mandatory and therefore satisfies the design principles.

2.1 Structure

To achieve the PDA in Dental Nursing the learner must successfully complete all of the following units.

4 code	2 code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J8TE	34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	1	8	7
J8TF	34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	1	8	7
J8TG	34	Dental Radiography	1	8	7
J8TH	34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	1	8	7

3. Aims of the qualification

The primary aim of this qualification is to provide knowledge and skills in specified areas which, along with the SVQ in Dental Nursing, will provide a route to registration for dental nurses with the General Dental Council.

3.1 General aims of the qualification

1. To support the learner in the management of their own personal resources and professional development to achieve work objectives, and career and personal goals.
2. To develop pathways towards higher level qualifications for this sector and enhance professional development.

3.2 Specific aims of the qualification

1. To develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin the SVQ in Dental Nursing at SCQF level 7.
2. To enable learners to explicitly evidence their knowledge and understanding in relation to:
 - infection prevention and control in the dental environment
 - oral health assessment and treatment planning
 - dental radiography
 - prevention and management of common oral diseases
3. To provide a route to registration as a dental nurse with the General Dental Council.

4. Recommended entry to the qualification

Entry to this qualification is at the discretion of the centre. The following information on prior knowledge, skills, experience or qualifications that provide suitable preparation for this qualification has been provided by the Qualification Design Team (QDT) as guidance only.

Learners would benefit from having attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and / or experience:

There are no pre-entry qualifications for this award although it is likely that learners will be concurrently undertaking the SVQ in Dental Nursing and should have completed a thorough induction and/or introductory level dental nursing units.

Entry will be at the discretion of the centre. However, due to the nature of the award, learners must be either in employment within an oral health care environment or have access to a suitable placement or, where appropriate, a realistic workplace environment, which will allow them to achieve the required competencies.

4.1 Core Skills entry profile

The Core Skill entry profile provides a summary of the associated assessment activities that exemplify why a particular level has been recommended for this qualification. The information would be used to identify if additional learning support needs to be put in place for learners whose Core Skills profile is below the recommended entry level or whether learners should be encouraged to do an alternative level or learning programme.

Learners will naturally use and develop aspects of all five Core Skills as they work through the units making up the qualification through teaching and learning approaches.

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities
Communication	5	Interactions with patients and other staff, record-keeping, treatment planning
Numeracy	3	Minimal opportunities for naturally occurring Numeracy development have been identified in this work-based qualification.
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	5	Use of ICT systems to input records and reports, for processing other information and to retrieve patient information. There are opportunities for learners to collect evidence towards achievement of this Core Skill. Learners may also use Digital Assessment to complete their assessments.
Problem Solving	4	Assessments require evidence of an understanding of theoretical concepts and an ability to give examples of how to relate theory to practice
Working with Others	5	Working with Others is a key skill for dental nursing and will be developed through completion of the work-based units aligned with the PDA.

5. Additional benefits of the qualification in meeting employer needs

This qualification was designed to meet a specific purpose and what follows are details on how that purpose has been met through mapping of the units to the aims of the qualification. Through meeting the aims, additional value has been achieved by linking the unit standards with those defined in national occupational standards and / or trade / professional body requirements. In addition, significant opportunities exist for learners to develop the more generic skill, known as Core Skills through doing this qualification.

5.1 Mapping of qualification aims to units

Note: For details of the aims, see section [3.1 General aims of the qualification](#) and section [3.2 Specific aims of the qualification](#).

Unit code	Unit title	General aims	Specific aims
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	1, 2	1, 2, 3
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	1, 2	1, 2, 3
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	1, 2	1, 2, 3
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	1, 2	1, 2, 3

5.2 Mapping of National Occupational Standards (NOS)

The units of the PDA Dental Nursing have been mapped to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Dental Nursing at SCQF level 7 to reflect the specific knowledge and understanding that underpins practice.

Unit code	Unit title	National Occupational Standards (NOS) codes
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	SFHOH1, SFHOH3, SFHOH5, SFHOH6, SFHOH7, SFHOH8, SFHOH34
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	SFHOH2, SFHOH3, SFHOH4, SFHOH3, SFHOH5, SFHOH6, SFHOH7, SFHOH8
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	SFHOH1, SFHOH3, SFHOH4,
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	SFHOH2, SFHOH3, SFHOH4, SFHOH3, SFHOH5, SFHOH6, SFHOH7, SFHOH8

5.3 Mapping of Core Skills development opportunities across the qualifications

This is a work-based qualification and opportunities for the naturally-occurring development of Core Skills has been indicated for each unit wherever possible.

Core Skill Communication components: Written (Reading), Written (Writing), Oral

Unit code	Unit title	Communication components
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	Written (Reading) Written (Writing) Oral
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	Written (Reading) Written (Writing) Oral
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	Written (Reading) Written (Writing) Oral
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	Written (Reading) Written (Writing) Oral

Core Skill Numeracy components: Using Number, Using Graphical Information

Unit code	Unit title	Numeracy components
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	Not applicable
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	Using Graphical Information
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	Using Number Using Graphical Information
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	Using Number Using Graphical Information

Core Skill Information and Communication Technology (ICT) components:

Accessing Information, Providing / Creating Information

Unit code	Unit title	Information and Communication Technology (ICT) components
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	Accessing Information Providing / Creating Information
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	Accessing Information Providing / Creating Information
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	Accessing Information Providing / Creating Information
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	Accessing Information Providing / Creating Information

Core Skill Problem Solving components: Critical Thinking, Planning and Organising, Reviewing and Evaluating

Unit code	Unit title	Problem Solving components
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	Critical Thinking Reviewing and Evaluating
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	Critical Thinking Planning and Organising Reviewing and Evaluating
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	Critical Thinking Reviewing and Evaluating
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	Critical Thinking Reviewing and Evaluating

Core Skill Working with Others components: Working Co-operatively with Others, Reviewing Co-operative Contribution

Unit code	Unit title	Working with Others components
J8TE 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	Working Co-operatively with Others Reviewing Co-operative Contribution
J8TF 34	Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	Working Co-operatively with Others Reviewing Co-operative Contribution
J8TG 34	Dental Radiography	Working Co-operatively with Others Reviewing Co-operative Contribution
J8TH 34	Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	Working Co-operatively with Others Reviewing Co-operative Contribution

5.4 Assessment strategy for the qualifications

There are prior-verified summative assessments for each unit, available to approved centres from [SQA SOLAR](#).

Assessment must be carried out under closed-book, invigilated conditions.

The assessments must be treated as confidential material and only accessed for the purposes of final assessment of knowledge.

Information and guidance on the use of SOLAR can be found here. [SOLAR: Centre Guidance](#).

Unit title	Assessment: All outcomes
J8TE 34 Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	Summative assessment by a range of short answer, multiple-choice or graphical questions.
J8TF 34 Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	Summative assessment by a range of short answer, multiple-choice or graphical questions
J8TG 34 Dental Radiography	Summative assessment by a range of short answer, multiple-choice or graphical questions.
J8TH 34 Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases	Summative assessment by a range of short answer, multiple-choice or graphical questions.

6. Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment

The PDA in Dental Nursing is made up of four knowledge-based HN Units designed to holistically assess across knowledge points from the ten NOS-based SVQ units.

6.1 Sequencing / integration of units

There is no prescribed order in which the units must be delivered, and centres may design their delivery plans to meet the needs of learners.

The qualification may be delivered through a blended learning format which could include distance, open or e-learning.

As the PDA is aimed at trainee dental nurses, learners should be working in the dental environment or have access to an appropriate placement which will allow them to meet the competencies detailed in the units.

The assessment guidelines within each unit specification have been designed to meet the Evidence Requirements for each unit.

Each unit should be assessed holistically using the summative question papers provided on SOLAR.

Specific guidance on content, context, and delivery and assessment is given in each of the component units.

Although the units in this PDA are designed and intended to be delivered as part of the group award, they can be delivered as stand-alone units.

6.2 Recognition of prior learning

SQA recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

In some instances, a full group award may be achieved through the recognition of prior learning. However, it is unlikely that a learner would have the appropriate prior learning and experience to meet all the requirements of a full group award.

The recognition of prior learning may **not** be used as a method of assessing in the following types of units and assessments:

- HN Graded Units.
- Course and / or external assessments.
- Other integrative assessment units (which may or not be graded).
- Certain types of assessment instruments where the standard may be compromised by not using the same assessment method outlined in the unit.
- Where there is an existing requirement for a licence to practice.
- Where there are specific health and safety requirements.
- Where there are regulatory, professional or other statutory requirements.
- Where otherwise specified in an assessment strategy.

More information and guidance on the *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) may be found on our website: [SQA Home Page](http://www.sqa.org.uk) (www.sqa.org.uk).

The following sub-sections outline how existing SQA units may contribute to this group award. Additionally, they also outline how this group award may be recognised for professional and articulation purposes.

6.2.1 Articulation and / or progression

Successful achievement of the PDA and SVQ in Dental Nursing may allow progression onto the HND in Dental Nursing or other advanced PDAs relevant to the sector.

Entry to other qualifications is always at the discretion of the individual centre.

6.2.2 Professional recognition

Successful achievement of both the PDA and SVQ in Dental Nursing at SCQF level 7 allows the learner to apply for registration with the General Dental Council.

Registration is mandatory for all dental care professionals who wish to work in the sector in the United Kingdom.

6.2.3 Credit transfer

Learners may approach their approved centre for advice on credit transfer between the following units. For external verification purposes, centres must retain evidence of mapping and how any 'gaps' in learning have been addressed, and any other documentation relating to credit transfer.

Previous version of unit	Current unit required
H9RA 34: Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment	J8TE 34: Dental Nursing: Principles of Infection Prevention and Control in the Dental Environment
H9R9 34: Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning	J8TF 34: Dental Nursing: Principles of Oral Health Assessment and Treatment Planning
H9R8 34: Dental Radiography	J8TG 34: Dental Radiography
H9R7 34: Dental Nursing: Principles in the Management of Plaque Related Diseases	J8TH 34: Dental Nursing: Prevention and Management of Common Oral Diseases

6.3 Opportunities for e-assessment

SQA SOLAR has developed online summative assessments for each of the units in this qualification.

6.4 Support materials

A list of existing Assessment Support Packs (ASPs) is available to view on SQA's website: [Internal Assessment Support Materials](http://www.sqa.org.uk/internal-assessment-support-materials) (www.sqa.org.uk/internal-assessment-support-materials).

No Dental Nursing ASPs are currently available.

6.5 Resource requirements

All centre staff involved in the delivery and / or assessment of learners must be registered as dental care professionals with the General Dental Council.

As is SQA standard practice, independent invigilators should be appointed by the centre, that is, they should have no connection with the learners and no involvement in the delivery or assessment of their course. Invigilators must be given full instructions relating to their duties and responsibilities.

As the summative assessments are delivered via SOLAR, it is recommended that centres provide their learners with appropriate devices.

This will ensure that the minimum SOLAR system requirements are met.

Where other devices are used this may affect access to assistive technology features.

System requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that all devices, software, and the internet connection being used to sit SOLAR assessments meet the minimum system requirements for delivering assessments on SOLAR. Where candidates are using their own devices, software, and internet connection to sit SOLAR assessments, it is your responsibility to ensure learners are aware of the minimum system requirements for delivering assessments on SOLAR and that they meet these requirements. The software on which SOLAR runs is periodically updated, and where any software updates result in a change to system requirements, you will be notified as soon as is practicable. To administer assessments on SOLAR your devices, software and internet connection must meet the minimum system requirements for administering assessments on SOLAR.

[SOLAR system requirements](#)

7. General information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The unit specifications making up this group award have been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners will be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website:

[SQA Assessment Arrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements) (www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

Internal and external verification

All assessments used within these qualifications should be internally verified, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in SQA's Guide to Assessment [Guide to Assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guide_To_Assessment.pdf) (www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guide_To_Assessment.pdf)

8. Glossary of terms

Embedded Core Skills is where the assessment evidence for the unit also includes full evidence for complete Core Skill or Core Skill components. A learner and / or candidate successfully completing the unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skill. (This depends on the unit having been successfully audited and validated for Core Skills certification.)

Finish date: The end of a group award's lapsing period is known as the finish date. After the finish date, the group award will no longer be live and the following applies:

- Learners and / or candidates may not be entered for the group award.
- the group award will continue to exist only as an archive record on the Awards Processing System (APS).

Lapsing date: When a group award is entered into its lapsing period, the following will apply:

- the group award will be deleted from the relevant catalogue.
- the group award specification will remain until the qualification reaches its finish date at which point it will be removed from SQA's website and archived.
- no new centres may be approved to offer the group award.
- centres should only enter learners and / or candidates whom they expect to complete the group award during the defined lapsing period.

SQA credit value: The credit value allocated to a unit gives an indication of the contribution the unit makes to an SQA group award. An SQA credit value of 1 given to an SQA unit represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment.

SCQF: The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) provides the national common framework for describing all relevant programmes of learning and qualifications in Scotland. SCQF terminology is used throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk.

SCQF credit points: SCQF credit points provide a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that is required to complete a qualification at a given level of the Framework. One National Unit credit is equivalent to 6 SCQF credit points. One National Unit credit at Advanced Higher and one Higher National Unit credit (irrespective of level) is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels: The level a qualification is assigned within the framework is an indication of how hard it is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HNCs and HNDs are available at SCQF levels 7 and 8, respectively. Higher National Units will normally be at levels 6 to 9 and graded units will be at levels 7 and 8. National Qualification Group Awards are available at SCQF levels 2 to 6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2 to 7.

Subject unit: Subject units contain vocational / subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

Signposted Core Skills: Refers to opportunities to develop Core Skills arise in learning and teaching but are not automatically certificated.

History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualification and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below. Centres are advised to check SQA's APS Navigator to confirm they are using the up-to-date qualification structure.

Please note: Where a unit is revised by another unit:

- No new centres may be approved to offer the unit which has been revised.
- Centres should only enter learners and /or candidates for the unit which has been revised where they are expected to complete the unit before its finish date.

Version number	Description	Date

Acknowledgement

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that the Dental Education Sector in Scotland has made to the development of this qualification.

Template version: February 2025

9. General information for learners

This information will help you decide whether this is the qualification for you by explaining what the qualification is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the qualification and opportunities for further learning and employment.

If you achieve the PDA in Dental Nursing and the SVQ in Dental Nursing you can apply to the General Dental Council to become registered with them. Registration is a statutory requirement to work as a dental nurse in the United Kingdom.

There are no pre-entry qualifications for this award although it is likely that you will be also undertaking the SVQ in Dental Nursing and should have completed a thorough induction and/or introductory level dental nursing units.

Entry will be at the discretion of the centre. However, due to the nature of the award, you must either be in employment within an oral health care environment or have access to a suitable placement or, where appropriate, a realistic workplace environment.

This PDA provides you with the opportunity to evidence your knowledge and understanding of dental nursing.

There are four knowledge units in this PDA. You'll develop your understanding of:

- infection prevention and control in the dental environment
- oral health assessment and treatment planning
- dental radiography
- prevention and management of common oral diseases

At the end of each unit, there is an online test called the SOLAR assessment. You must pass each of them to achieve the PDA. Your centre will support you with accessing and completing the online assessments.

There will also be opportunities to develop your Core Skills in Communication, Numeracy, Working with Others, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Problem Solving.