

Guidance on gathering key evidence for Higher National Graded Units in session 2020–21



Over the last few months SQA has reviewed its approaches to assessment for all qualification types, to help centres manage assessment under the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this review, we are removing the need to complete the assessment of Graded Units in HNC and HND Group Awards for the current academic session 2020–21.

What does this mean for centres?

- ◆ Grading will be determined by teaching staff directly involved in delivery and assessment using evidence generated during completion of the units in an award.
- ◆ More time will be available to focus on teaching, learning and assessment.
- ◆ Time spent on additional assessment required for Graded Units will be reduced.

What does this mean for learners?

Learners will receive a quality assured grade based on evidence generated during completion of the units in an award, which will:

- ◆ Allow learners more teaching and learning time.
- ◆ Reduce time spent on additional assessment required for Graded Units.
- ◆ Certify learners for the full award.
- ◆ There will be no change to the number of credit points achieved by learners.

You are at liberty to continue with arrangements which best suit the teaching, learning and assessment needs of deliverers and learners. The decision to remove the need for learners to be assessed for Graded Units for this year only was made as part of our support package to centres during this challenging time, to further increase flexibility with approaches to assessment and reduce time spent on assessment-related activities. We hope that delivering staff and candidates are able to benefit from this decision.

There are a small number of exceptions to this year's assessment arrangements for Graded Units. This includes qualifications that are linked with registration with a professional association or which have mandatory responsibilities under a Qualification Partnership Agreement. The list of these group awards can be found via the Graded Unit webpage [here](#).

You will still be required to grade your learners for the Graded Unit in the HNC/D framework, without the learners being required to carry out their Graded Unit assessment.

This document provides guidance to practitioners in SQA approved centres on gathering key evidence to support decisions around grading for the Graded Unit in session 2020–21. This guidance should be read alongside the Graded Related Criteria section of the Graded Unit Specification and the Unit Specifications for the units within the relevant Higher National Group Award.

Graded Units

All HNCs and HNDs are assessed by a combination of unit and graded unit assessment. This allows differentiation of the standard to which learners achieve the principal aims of the group award and greater consistency of national standards of assessment in and across HNCs and HNDs. The purposes of graded units are therefore to:

- ◆ assess whether learners have met the principal aims of the group award
- ◆ assess a learner's ability to retain and integrate the knowledge and/or skills gained in the units
- ◆ grade the learner's achievement

Grading

For 2020–21 only, learners do not need to complete the assessment of Graded Unit. Instead:

- ◆ Grading of HNC learners should be based on a holistic view of evidence throughout the academic session from the other contributing or mandatory units in the group award, in line with the principal aims of the qualification.
- ◆ Grading of HND learners should be based on a holistic view of evidence throughout their second year (ie this academic session) from the other contributing or mandatory units in the group award, in line with the principal aims of the qualification.

Grading decisions will be based on evidence that learners generate in achieving the units that contribute to the Graded Unit — these will either be units stated on the graded unit specification as **contributing units or mandatory units** of the HNC/D. **Mandatory** units in the Group Award should be referred to if the Graded Unit Specification does not specify contributing units. **Contributing Units** are listed under the 'recommended entry' or 'recommended prior knowledge and skills' section within the Graded Unit Specification. This decision should be based on a holistic review of a learner's performance across these units. This activity is likely to take place in the later stages of the course, when sufficient learning and teaching has taken place to allow a fair and evidence-based grade to be derived.

Using the identified units alongside the principal aims in the graded unit specification and Grade Related Criteria, you should create a matrix to show where there are opportunities for learners to develop skills and knowledge — and therefore points where evidence could be gathered from the units to meet the Grade Related Criteria.

There are examples in the appendices.

It is important that learners are aware of the process for grading this year to ensure they know that grading is likely to be continual rather than an end loaded process.

The following key points may provide a useful reminder of tools and activities that could be used to manage the grading process effectively:

- ◆ maintain effective records on each learner
- ◆ ask learners to use logbooks/diaries (to allow them to reflect on their achievement)
- ◆ put arrangements in place for progress interviews with learners
- ◆ at progress interviews, discuss tasks completed, identify any incomplete tasks, and agree next steps

Gathering learner evidence for the Graded Unit

Map the contributing or mandatory units to the GU principal aims within the Graded Unit Specification. This will allow you to make a holistic judgement based on the skills and knowledge that you would expect to see at each grade. It should help you to clearly distinguish the differentiation between the grades and therefore reach a decision around the grading of a learner. (See the appendices for examples.)

There should be opportunities within the contributing or mandatory units to identify the knowledge and skills points/outcomes that need to be achieved to meet the principal aims.

The process for grading learners is as follows:

- 1 Identify the units contributing to the Graded Unit identified in the Graded Unit specification. If these are not specified, identify the mandatory units within the HNC/HND framework, as appropriate.
- 2 Map these unit to the Group Award Aims. This information will be available in the Group Award Specification.
- 3 Refer to the A–C grade related criteria in the Graded Unit Specification.
- 4 Create a Candidate Outcome Record form noting the units identified (we have included a pro forma in the appendices).
- 5 If a learner passes all evidence criteria for the contributing/mandatory units, the expectation is that they will receive a **minimum** of a Grade C. To differentiate learner achievement, use the grade related criteria in the Graded Unit Specification.
6. The combined assessment approach, previously communicated to centres for [2020-21](#), could allow for units to be assessed within a project, if appropriate.

Assessment of evidence

Assessors will engage in professional discussion with their course teams in reviewing outcomes of learning across the qualification to identify, and assess, for each learner,

whether the outcomes in the graded unit have been met. This should be done in line with the requirements detailed in this guidance (under **Gathering learner evidence for Graded Unit** above). Individual colleges will oversee robust arrangements for agreeing the learner's grade relative to the assessment evidence available.

Resulting and certification

Once holistic assessment decisions have been finalised for the graded unit, learner results for the units within the group award will be submitted to SQA through normal resulting channels. Certification will be undertaken by SQA in line with normal arrangements.

External verification

External verification activity will be undertaken with selections for Higher National and PDA qualifications being released to centres in January 2021.

Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions, all QA activity will take place in a virtual platform with group award verification taking place for Higher National qualifications, where logistically possible. Unit verification will take place if group award is not possible.

It is essential that you retain evidence of your assessments judgements — you may be asked for this during external verification activity.

Academic appeals

Your centre's established academic appeals process should be followed for any learner who feels that the assessment outcome reached does not accurately reflect their achievement. Given the revised arrangements, an increase in appeals may be expected, and you must have robust plans in place to deal with appeals timeously.

References

You are required to maintain robust records in support of all assessment decisions. This may be asked for during External Verification activity. We have developed proformas to support this (these, or your own documentation may be used):

- ◆ Candidate Outcome Record Form
- ◆ Evidence Gathering Form

Appendices

The following appendices are 'Candidate Outcome Records' that exemplify the approach you should take to generate the evidence you will require for reaching an appropriate grade for the learner. There is also a template that can be used for your own subject.

Some key points to remember:

- ◆ Under usual circumstances the following approach is taken for Graded Units:
 - Project-based Graded Unit: the standard grading criteria for projects involve a planning, developing and evaluation stage, and the learner must pass each at a minimum of 50% to progress to the next stage.
 - Exam-based Graded Units involve either a closed or open-booked assessment. These are designed to test underpinning knowledge and theoretical understanding of a subject or occupational area.
- ◆ The approach suggested in this guidance means that, for this session, that method is not possible. Instead, work will be gathered over a longer period from the identified contributing or mandatory units (and potentially not in sequence).
- ◆ Adapt the grade related criteria to remove the stages and reference to the project or exam. Using the examples below you can compare the original grade related criteria from the graded unit specification to the adapted version below. This should help you to do the same for your subject.
- ◆ You should aim to gather evidence of the underpinning skills and knowledge identified in each stage as these will form the basis for holistic decision making and grading.
- ◆ This does not necessarily mean that every topic in every outcome in the Graded Unit Specification needs to be assessed exhaustively.

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

APPENDIX 1: HNC CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PROJECT EXAMPLE

Student Name:						
Date:						
Course Code:		Course Leader:				
Group Award code:	GG8V 15	Graded Unit code:	H49S 34			
Group Award Title(s):	HNC Creative Industries: Television					
Graded Unit Title:	Creative Industries: Television Graded Unit 1					
	Principal aims of the Graded Unit					
Opportunities within mandatory units <i>(mandatory units are selected: this Graded Unit does not specify units/recommended knowledge and skills)</i>	To prepare learners for employment in related television occupations at an appropriate level	To develop knowledge and understanding of the roles and responsibilities involved in television production	To develop a range of contemporary vocational skills relating to the production of television content	To develop knowledge of the context, working practices and organisation of the Creative Industries	To develop a range of core and transferable skills essential for the Creative Industries	To prepare learners for progression to further study
Creative Industries: An Introduction (H4A1 34)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Creative Content Generation (H4A2 34)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Camera: An Introduction (H4A3 34)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lighting: An Introduction (H4A4 34)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sound Recording: An Introduction (H4A5 34)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Editing: An Introduction (H4A6 34)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Production Skills: An Introduction (H4A7 34)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

Grading Criteria		Grading Feedback/ Justification
<p style="text-align: center;">Grade A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces seamless, coherent work which: consistently meets deadlines set without the need for prompting. • Has an abundance of relevant planning evidence • Has evidence that is produced to a consistently high standard. • Has evidence that is clearly inter-related • Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of two roles involved in television production by undertaking these roles • Reflects on and analyses major strengths and weakness • Reflections and conclusions are directly related to the roles involved in television production • Analyses strengths and weaknesses that can be backed up with evidence • Has shown a highly consistent use and understanding of industry terminology 	<p style="text-align: center;">Grade C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces co-ordinated work which does not consistently meet the deadlines set • Has some relevant planning evidence • Has evidence that is produced to an adequate standard. • Has evidence that is not clearly interrelated • Demonstrates an adequate understanding of two roles involved in television production by undertaking these roles • Reflects on the and analyses strengths and weaknesses • Reflections and conclusions are not clearly related to the roles involved in television production. • Analyses strengths and weaknesses that cannot clearly be backed up with evidence • Has shown some use and understanding of industry terminology 	

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

Record of the discussions	
Discussion point/area covered (agenda)	Outcome of discussion

Agreed outcome – Graded Unit	
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Assessor: _____ Date: _____

Assessor/IV: _____ Date: _____

Outcome notified to student: _____ Date: _____

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

APPENDIX 2: HNC BUSINESS EXAM EXAMPLE

Student Name:						
Date:						
Course Code:		Course Leader:				
Group Award code:	G9ML 15	Graded Unit code:	F8LD 34			
Group Award Title(s):	HNC Business					
Graded Unit Title:	Business: Graded Unit 1					
	Principal aims of the Graded Unit					
Opportunities within contributing units in HNC Business <i>(mandatory units are selected: this Graded Unit does not specify units/recommended knowledge and skills)</i>	Provide the competencies required by employers of those engaged in entry level administrative, managerial or commercial positions in organisations	Develop and apply a range of vocational knowledge and skills in an integrated manner to the analysis of business situations	Build on previously acquired transferable skills	Adopt an innovative and creative approach to their work and be able to respond quickly to the challenges posed by changes in the business environment		
Business Accounting (F84M 34)	X	X	X	X		
Economic Issues: An Introduction (F7J8 34)	X	X	X	X		
Managing People and Organisations (F84T 34)	X	X	X	X		
Marketing: An Introduction (F7BX 34)	X	X	X	X		
Although the main focus of the unit is based on the four units listed above, candidates may draw on content from other units						

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

Grading Criteria		Grading Feedback/Justification
<p style="text-align: center;">Grade A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge and understanding shown is consistently relevant • strong analysis will be consistently demonstrated • language and terminology used throughout will be appropriate and precise to the topics and situations • consistently recognises and responds to the main elements of a question • responses are logically structured and coherently developed • a range of business topics drawn from relevant disciplines are used to identify, explain or analyse situations • concepts are accurately and precisely applied • clear justification of conclusions • predictions and suggestions are supported by relevant reasons and are realistic and practical • answers give both advantages and disadvantages which are valid • comprehensive evaluation skills will be demonstrated 	<p style="text-align: center;">Grade C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge and understanding shown may not be consistently relevant • answers may not always show consistency of strong analysis • terminology may be relevant but on occasion inconsistent • recognises and responds to the main elements of a question • responses contain essential information but may lack development • identification, explanation and analysis of situations are related to a limited range of business topics • limited concepts are recognised and related in general terms only • some conclusions are drawn but with limited justification • predictions and suggestions are made but are not always backed with reasoned justification and credibility • answers give limited advantages and disadvantages although not all may be valid • limited but acceptable evidence of evaluation skills 	

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

Record of the discussions	
Discussion point/area covered (agenda)	Outcome of discussion

Agreed outcome – Graded Unit	
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Assessor: _____ Date: _____

Assessor/IV: _____ Date: _____

Outcome notified to student: _____ Date: _____

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

APPENDIX 3: BLANK EXAMPLE (You should adapt this template to best meet your requirements)

Student Name:						
Date:						
Course Code:		Course Leader:				
Group Award code:		Graded Unit code:				
Group Award Title(s):						
Graded Unit Title:						
	Principal aims of the Graded Unit					
Opportunities within contributing/ mandatory units in HNC/HND						

Grading Criteria		Grading Feedback/ Justification
Grade A	Grade C	

Record of the discussions	
Discussion point/area covered (agenda)	Outcome of discussion

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)

Agreed outcome – Graded Unit	
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Assessor: _____ Date: _____

Assessor/IV: _____ Date: _____

Outcome notified to student: _____ Date: _____

Candidate Outcome Record:(COVID-19: Session 2020–21)