



Guide to delivering National 1 and 2 qualifications

This guidance document is for schools, colleges and training providers delivering National 1 and 2 qualifications. This includes SQA co-ordinators, teachers and lecturers, and those managing qualification delivery.

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Introduction

SQA offers a range of qualifications for learners at all levels. National 1 and 2 qualifications are the initial levels SQA provides, typically for learners who need additional support.

This document follows the usual order that centres approach the delivery of these qualifications.

Throughout the document, we include frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to National 1 and 2, based on common enquiries we receive.

To help find materials and information for National 1 and 2, we have included links to specific pages and sections on SQA's website and Understanding Standards website. For materials on SQA's secure website, you have to access these through your SQA co-ordinator.

Approval

SQA refers to any organisation that delivers its qualifications as a 'centre' or 'SQA centre'. This can be a school, college, training provider or employer.

A centre must have approval to deliver SQA qualifications. Most secondary schools, if under direct local authority control, and all colleges, have automatic approval to deliver National 1 and 2 qualifications. If you need to check whether your centre has approval to offer a specific qualification, contact your SQA co-ordinator or SQA directly.

Organisations without existing approval must complete a two-stage application process. The first stage, systems approval, requires the organisation to demonstrate its management and systems for delivering, assessing, and internally verifying SQA qualifications. The second stage, qualification approval, requires the organisation to show it has the materials, staff, and resources to deliver, assess, and internally verify SQA qualifications it wants to offer.

The [‘Become a centre - offer your first SQA qualification’ web page](#) provides more information on SQA’s approval process.

FAQ

What qualifications do teachers and lecturers need to deliver and assess National 1 and 2?

National 1 and 2 are part of National Qualifications. To deliver and assess these qualifications, teachers and lecturers must be competent:

- in the assessment process
- in the subject area of the qualification they are assessing

In schools and colleges, qualified teachers and lecturers can deliver and assess National 1 and 2 qualifications. Teachers and lecturers do not need to be subject specialists to deliver these qualifications and can teach across various subject areas at these levels (except National 2 ESOL units, which must be delivered by ESOL specialists).

In schools, decisions about which teachers deliver and assess qualifications are typically made by the head teacher, or someone acting on their behalf.

In additional support needs (ASN) schools, some teachers may come from a primary teaching background. According to SQA’s requirements, there is no restriction preventing primary teachers from delivering National 1 and 2 qualifications.

Deciding which National 1 and 2 qualifications to offer

All SQA qualifications are aligned to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). National 1 and 2 qualifications are aligned to the first two levels of the SCQF framework (SCQF levels 1 and 2). This is shown in SQA's 'SCQF Ready Reckoner' diagram, under the 'Related information' heading on SQA's [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\) web page](#).

The [SCQF Framework web page](#) provides more information.

Units

You can deliver and assess each National 1 and 2 unit in approximately 40 hours; however, this can vary for each learner. Most units are worth 6 SCQF credit points, but some units are worth 3 SCQF credit points and take approximately 20 hours to deliver and assess.

Awards

A few awards are available at National 1 and 2 level. Awards are made up of a group of units, and learners must complete a specific combination of units to achieve the award. The relevant award specification explains the requirements and lists which combination of units that learners must complete to achieve each award.

You can download the awards and unit specifications from these web pages:

- [SCQF level 1 Scottish Studies Award](#)
- [SCQF level 1 Personal Achievement Award](#)
- [SCQF level 1 Cycling Award](#)
- [SCQF level 1 and SCQF level 2 Adult Learning and Transition Award](#)
- [SCQF level 2 Scottish Studies Award](#)
- [SCQF level 2 Personal Development Award](#)
- [SCQF level 2 Personal Achievement Award](#)
- [SCQF level 2 Steps to Work Award](#)
- [SCQF level 2 Cycling Award](#)

Courses

Courses are available at National 2 level but not at National 1 level. Similar to awards, courses are made up of small groups of units. Courses cover specific subject areas in the school curriculum and are designed to provide progression to higher-level courses. They are uniform in size for timetabling purposes. Each National 2 course is made up of three units (18 SCQF credit points) and typically includes no, or very few, optional units. This distinguishes courses from awards, which allow greater flexibility in the overall number of required units and optional units.

The [National 2 web page](#) provides more information and a full list of National 2 courses.

When planning to deliver courses or awards, you must decide at the start which units to use, including both mandatory and optional units. To help you plan the order of your assessment approach and delivery effectively, you should review the unit specifications and unit assessment support packs first.

Alternative context units

Alternative context units allow centres to deliver a unit for a second time, using a different theme, setting, or context. The learning outcomes and assessment standards in these units remain the same as in the original unit; the only difference is the term 'Alternative Context' in the unit title and a new unit code.

For alternative context units:

- learners must successfully complete the original unit before they are entered for the alternative context version
- there should be at least 1 year between the delivery of the original unit and the delivery of the alternative context version
- centres should use the unit assessment support packs for the original units, and adjust their assessment to reflect the alternative context
- these cannot contribute towards the completion of a course or award

The [Alternative Contexts web page](#) provides more information and a full list of alternative context units.

FAQ

Is a full calendar year required between delivering the original unit and the alternative context version?

SQA recommends a 1-year gap between delivering the original unit and the alternative context version to prevent centres from repeating units too quickly. While this is only guidance, and SQA's software won't block entries within the same year, we suggest not entering both versions in the same session.

The main reason for introducing alternative context units was to help colleges. Learners working at levels 1 and 2 often continue at these levels instead of progressing to higher SCQF levels. Colleges frequently report that National 1 and 2 learners have completed many of the units that they offer. The alternative context units allow colleges to offer a different context for the same unit, providing a mature setting for learners.

Registering, entering and resulting learners

Each centre's SQA co-ordinator is responsible for registering, entering, and resulting learners or managing these processes on behalf of the centre. Even if you are not an SQA co-ordinator, understanding the procedures for processing entries and results helps you explain to your SQA co-ordinator which qualifications you want to enter learners for and when results can be submitted.

Most centres use SEEMIS, SQA Connect or similar to electronically transmit registration, entry, and result information to SQA.

You must first register learners with SQA, by submitting their name, date of birth, and home address. Each learner is only registered once and is issued with a unique Scottish Candidate Number (SCN), which remains the same throughout their learning career, even if their details, such as name or address are updated. Most learners are registered

with SQA when they start school, usually in primary one. If a learner already has an SCN, they are already registered.

Entering learners for qualifications

You should enter learners for the units they will work toward before starting delivery.

Each unit has a title and code to ensure you enter the correct qualification for learners. It is essential to identify units, courses, and awards correctly by their codes and titles.

Key identifiers include:

- qualification product codes: six characters, with the last two digits indicating the level:
 - 71 – National 1 level
 - 72 – National 2 level
 - 41 – SCQF level 1 (applies only to some awards)
 - 42 – SCQF level 2 (applies only to some awards)
- unit codes: usually start with H or J
- award codes: start with G
- course codes: start with C

When entering a learner for a unit, you must provide a completion date, which is the estimated date the learner will finish the qualification.

For courses or awards, you must enter both the course or award code and the required units. A common error is assuming that entering learners for the correct combination of units automatically results in the course or award being certificated. SQA software only certificates courses or awards that the learner is entered for.

Results

Results apply to individual units, not to the course or award to which they contribute. SQA's software evaluates whether learners have passed the necessary units for the course or award.

You can submit one of three results for a unit:

- P – pass
- F – fail
- W – withdrawn

The [Candidate registration and results web page](#) gives more information on registrations, entries, and results.

FAQ

Can units from the Bronze Award count towards the Silver or Gold Award?

This question often arises with the Personal Achievement Award or Adult Learning and Development Award. These awards have three different stages of achievement: Bronze, Silver, or Gold Award, requiring two, four, or six units, respectively. The combination of units for each award is outlined in the Group Award specifications on SQA's website:

- [SCQF level 1 Personal Achievement Award](#)
- [SCQF level 2 Personal Achievement Award](#)
- [SCQF level 1 and SCQF level 2 Adult Learning and Transition Award](#)

The units that learner's complete can count toward multiple awards. For example, if a learner completes the Bronze Award, they only need two more units for the Silver Award and then two more for the Gold Award. Learners can achieve the awards over several years, and the units they complete in previous years still count toward the awards.

Note: you must ensure to enter the learner for the code of each Group Award that they are eligible for. SQA's results processing software will not automatically certificate Group Awards based on unit results alone; it also requires the correct Group Award code. For example, if a learner completes six units for the Personal Achievement Award in the correct combination, they could potentially be certificated for Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards, but you must enter all three Group Award codes to receive certification.

Assessment process

To achieve a unit, learners must meet the requirements outlined in the outcomes and assessment standards, which are detailed in the unit specification. The assessor's role is to evaluate whether learners meet the assessment standards and to gather evidence to support their judgements.

The assessor should:

- plan the assessment
- collect evidence
- judge the evidence against the assessment standards
- retain the evidence

Plan the assessment

The assessor must review the unit, and plan how to collect evidence that demonstrates where learners meet each assessment standard. In some cases, grouping assessment standards together and creating tasks that generate evidence for multiple assessment standards at once may be efficient. However, at National 1 and 2 levels, it is often more effective to take a gradual approach to assessment, allowing learners to meet each assessment standard individually in small steps.

Planning provides the assessor with an opportunity to determine the specific support learners may need during the assessment, ensuring that all learners' needs are met.

Unit assessment support packs for all National 1 and 2 units are available on SQA's secure website. These packs offer suggested approaches and examples of assessments that centres can use directly or adapt for specific learner needs. Alternatively, assessors can create their own assessments using the unit assessment support packs as a guide, to ensure they cover all unit requirements.

The planning process ties into the 'pre-delivery' stage of the internal verification process in centres. Further information is in the ['Internal verification'](#) section.

Collect the evidence

This is an example of two types of evidence commonly collected for National 1 and 2 units: observation evidence, and questioning.

Observation evidence

This is the unit outcome and assessment standards from the National 1 Food Preparation: Baking unit.

1 Make a baked product by:

- 1.1 Selecting a baked product
- 1.2 Identifying the main ingredients needed
- 1.3 Following the correct sequence to make the baked product
- 1.4 Using tools and equipment hygienically and safely

Observing a learner's actions is the simplest way to collect evidence. Using this unit as an example, the assessor can watch the learner select a baked product, identify ingredients, and follow the necessary steps. An observation checklist can record short comments explaining the learner's actions. For example, the comment for assessment standard 1.1 could read, 'Learner A had three options (cakes, scones, or biscuits) and chose scones by pointing to the picture.'

National 1 and 2 units often focus on the process rather than the finished product. Evidence should cover the learner's actions, for example identifying ingredients or following recipe steps rather than the finished baked product.

Photographs can supplement the observation evidence. While not required, this is good practice. If you include photos, they should relate directly to the assessment standard being assessed (for example showing the learner identifying ingredients or following the recipe) rather than the final product. Ensure the photos are clearly labelled to identify the assessment standards they represent.

Questioning

Sometimes, especially for units in mathematics or communication, you can use questioning to assess learners. The assessor can ask the learner to respond to written or verbal questions. The learner's response provides the evidence, which can be written by the learner or scribed, depending on their needs.

Judge the evidence against the assessment standards

Assessors must review the evidence collected for each learner and assess it against the unit assessment standards. The evidence must meet the assessment standards for the learner to pass.

Assessors should check and compare assessment judgements to ensure consistency. Further information is in the '[Internal verification](#)' section.

Retain the evidence

Evidence must be retained until the end of the academic year (December 31) of the year the unit result was submitted. If a centre is selected for external verification, they will be notified before the academic year ends.

FAQ

How much support can learners have during assessment for National 1 and 2 qualifications?

National 1 and 2 qualifications are designed to accommodate learners with a range of needs, and they can receive support to meet the requirements of these qualifications. The amount of support each learner receives depends on their individual needs, with some learners receiving full support for all activities.

Learners should receive the appropriate support, but you should encourage them to work as independently as possible. It is good practice to document the type and amount of support you provide during assessments, which helps verifiers understand how the evidence was gathered. This documentation serves as a valuable record for tracking learner progress, especially when a learner demonstrates the ability to complete similar tasks with less support in the future.

SQA's [Understanding Standards website](#) gives further guidance on providing support to learners during assessments.

Internal verification

National 1 and 2 qualifications undergo two layers of quality assurance:

- centres implement an internal verification system
- SQA conducts external verification annually on a sample basis

Each centre must have an internal verification system to ensure assessors carry out assessments fairly and consistently. This system not only guarantees fairness for learners but also supports assessors by validating their professional judgements.

Smaller centres may find it challenging to implement an internal verification system. In these cases, centres can collaborate with other centres through a networking approach to conduct verification.

SQA's [Internal Verification web page](#) gives more information about internal verification and available options.

External verification

SQA carries out external verification for National 1 and 2 qualifications through both central verification and on-site visits. SQA's external verifiers, are teachers and lecturers from centres with experience in the delivery and assessment of National 1 and 2 qualifications.

SQA will contact you if they select your centre for an on-site visit, and the external verifier sets a date for the visit. SQA provide details on the sample of evidence you have to prepare.

If SQA selects your centre for external verification, they will notify you with instructions on the information you need to submit. SQA provide packaging and stationery for this purpose.

SQA's [External verification web page](#) gives more information about external verification and what to expect if your centre is selected.

FAQ 5

Are there any examples of evidence centres submit for National 1 and 2 external verification?

SQA's Understanding Standards website offers examples of evidence submitted for external verification, along with commentary from external verifiers. You can access this by requesting a password on the [National 1 and 2 Understanding Standards web page](#).

Contacts

For queries about National 1 and 2 qualifications, please email:

- Sandy Riddell, Qualifications Manager – sandy.riddell@sqa.org.uk
- May Byrne, Qualifications Officer – may.byrne@sqa.org.uk

For general queries you can:

- call SQA's contact centre on 0345 279 1000
- visit SQA's [Contact us web page](#)