# Group Award Specification for:

## National Progression Award in Digital Skills at SCQF level 3

## Group Award Code: GT5Y 43

**Validation date: February 2022**

**Date of original publication: May 2022**

**Version: 02 (August 2023)**

# Contents

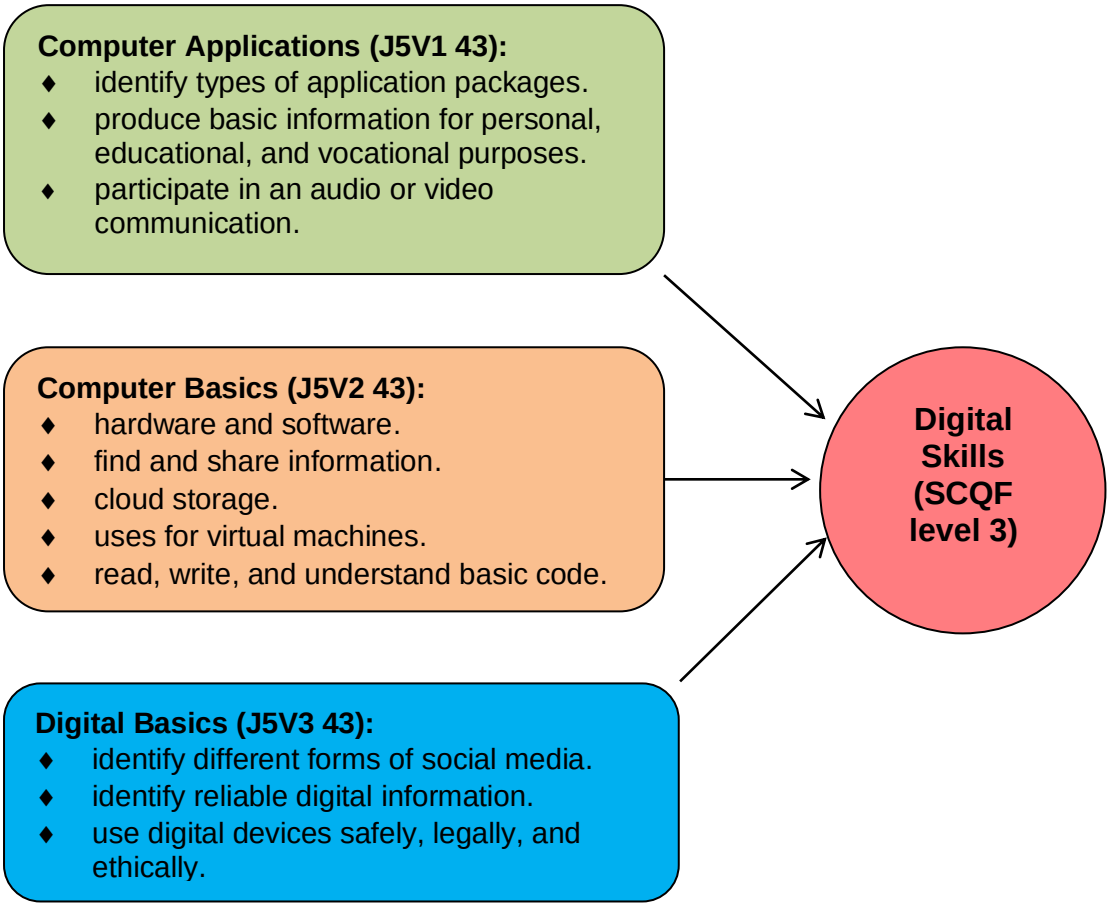
# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to:

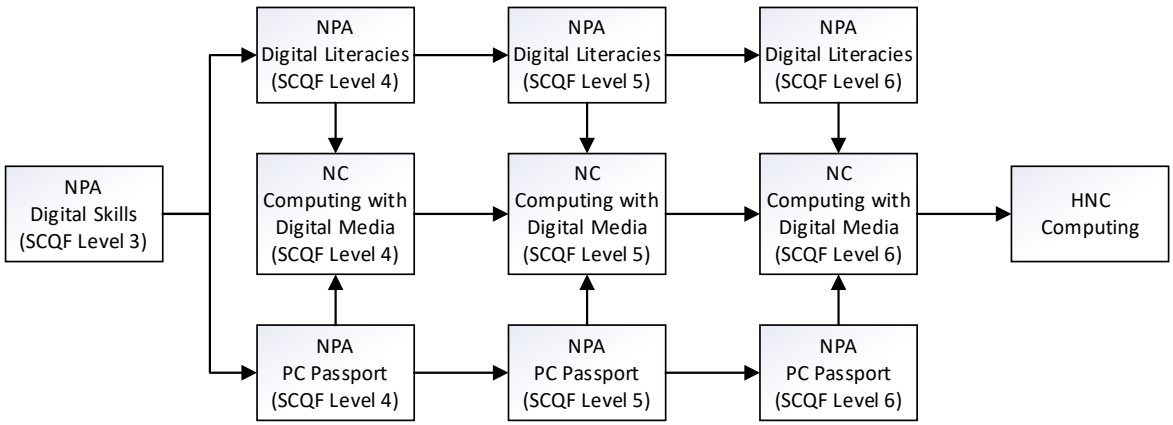
- assist centres to implement, deliver and manage the qualification.
- provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the qualification.
- inform course managers, teaching staff, assessors, learners, employers and higher education institutions (HEI) of the aims and purpose of the qualification.
- provide details of the range of learners the qualification is suitable for, and progression opportunities.

The National Progression Award Digital Literacy SCQF level 3 (G8HE 43) was first developed in 2007. Its revision in 2015 (GL06 43) included new and replacement units from SQA's vocational portfolio. This group award Specification provides a further update of the award including a new title NPA Digital Skills to reflect the contents more accurately, and remote learning approaches for delivery and assessment. The 2022 refresh retains the structure of the previous (2015) version but, as considerable changes have been made to all the unit specifications, new unit codes are required and one of the unit titles has been changed.

The revised qualification includes contemporary trends in computer hardware and software, social media, the internet, mobile technologies like cloud storage, computer applications, and how these technologies should be used safely and effectively for everyday purposes. The following diagram provides an overview of each of the units and how they contribute to the overall award.



This qualification is designed as an introductory award, where learners with little or no experience of digital technologies and computing can achieve a basic understanding of technology in everyday contexts. The range of basic skills offered through this award provide an ideal grounding for learners to progress to other awards, such as NPA Digital Literacies and NPA PC Passport, both at SCQF level 4 or to choose a pathway through Computing qualifications. The diagram below provides some of the progression routes from NPA Digital Skills at SCQF level 3.




To achieve the NPA Digital Skills (SCQF level 3), all the units must be taken. The qualification is suitable for a wide range of learners, for example, young people in secondary school contexts through to adult returners and mature learners in the community.

Work opportunities may be possible for learners on completion of the qualification, as they will have gained some basic and rounded skills in using digital technologies that are relevant to the world of business and employment including those needed for jobs that require basic IT competency. This qualification will also be useful for those already working in a range of sectors, where basic digital skills are required. There are also opportunities for learners to develop Core Skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Communication, Numeracy, and Problem Solving throughout the units in this award.

The revised 2022 qualification encourages delivery using a remote learning environment and cloud storage reflecting more up to date teaching and assessment methods commonly used in education via platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Learner evidence can be stored and shared with assessor(s) via cloud storage to remove the necessity for paper-based evidence.

# 2 Qualification structure

This group award is made up of 3 SQA credits. It comprises 18 SCQF credit points of which 18 are at SCQF level 3 in the mandatory section.

SCQF level Descriptors were used to develop the component units. SCQF level 3 is exemplified by Access 3 (previously Standard Grade at Foundation level) qualifications. Qualifications at SCQF level 3 should exhibit the following characteristics:

- basic knowledge of the subject area.
- simple facts and ideas.
- basic, routine skills.
- carry out simple tasks.
- use basic tools safely and effectively.
- work in familiar contexts.

The component units exhibit these characteristics.

A mapping of Core Skills development opportunities is available in section 5.3.

## 2.1 Structure

| 4 code | 2 code | Unit title | SCQF level | SCQF credit points | SQA credit |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J5V1 | 43 | Computer Applications | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| J5V2 | 43 | Computer Basics | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| J5V3 | 43 | Digital Basics | 3 | 6 | 1 |

# 3 Aims of the qualification

NPA in Digital Skills (SCQF level 3) is an introductory award that will help learners to develop basic knowledge, understanding and awareness of modern digital technologies and the organisation of information. This includes computer and handheld/mobile device technology, tools and techniques using the internet and computer applications, and the opportunity to develop Core Skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Communication, Numeracy, and Problem Solving.

## 3.1 General aims of the qualification

The general aims of the NPA in Digital Skills are:

1 To develop a range of digital skills to permit learners to use a range of contemporary digital devices.
2 To provide underpinning knowledge to permit learners to adapt and update their skills as technologies evolve.
3 To enable learners to become confident and effective users of digital technologies.
4 To permit learners to participate in contemporary society and become good digital citizens.
5 To develop a range of digital skills to improve employability.
6 To develop Core Skills in different contexts as they progress through the award.
7 To provide an opportunity for learners to progress to further qualifications in Computing and Digital sectors.

## 3.2 Specific aims of the qualification

The three distinct units: Computer Applications; Computer Basics and Digital Basics, provide the opportunity for learners to:

8 Learn and understand why virtual machines are important to computing specialists when it comes to testing solutions.
9 Learn how to write basic code. This is important due to the growth of technology companies and the career opportunities open to learners with this skill.
10 Learn about the hardware and software components of computers and handheld/smart digital devices.
11 Find, organise, manipulate, and share digital information for personal, educational, and vocational purposes using computers and/or handheld/smart digital devices.
12 Use computers and handheld/smart digital devices safely, legally and ethically for personal, educational and vocational purposes.
13 Create a safe and responsible online presence using communication tools and social media.
14 Describe and use different types of computer application packages for personal, educational, and vocational purposes.
15 Develop Core Skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Communication, Numeracy, and Problem Solving.
16 Provide opportunities for learners to progress to NPAs Digital Literacies or PC Passport at SCQF level 4, other Computing qualifications or potential employment.

# 4 Recommended entry to the qualification

This is an entry-level/introductory award and learners need not possess any prior SQA qualifications before undertaking the NPA Digital Skills (SCQF level 3). Entry to the qualification is at the discretion of the centre.

## 4.1 Core Skills entry profile

Learners are required to have a certain level of general education to have a realistic prospect of succeeding in the award. While entry to the award is at the discretion of the centre, the following Core Skills entry profile is provided for guidance.

| **Core Skill** | **Recommended SCQF entry profile** | **Associated assessment activities** |
|---|---|---|
| Communication | SCQF level 2 | Use online audio/video communications. |
| Numeracy | SCQF level 2 | Produce numerical information using application packages. |
| Information and Communication Technology (ICT) | SCQF level 2 | Access online packages and create digital information. |
| Problem Solving | SCQF level 2 | Plan and organise production of digital information. |
| Working with Others | SCQF level 2 | Participate in online communications. |

# 5 Additional benefits of the qualification in meeting employer needs

This qualification is designed to meet a specific purpose and what follows are details on how that purpose has been met through mapping 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. In addition, significant opportunities exist for learners to develop the more generic skills, known as Core Skills, through doing this qualification.

## 5.1 Mapping of qualification aims to units

| Code | Unit title | Aims | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| J5V1 43 | Computer Applications | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | | x | | | x | x | x |
| J5V2 43 | Computer Basics | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | x |
| J5V3 43 | Digital Basics | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | | | x | x | x | | | x |

## 5.2 Mapping of National Occupational Standards (NOS) and/or trade body standards

This is an entry-level/introductory award and therefore does not meet the full Performance Criteria of any Digital User National Occupational Standards (NOS). However, there are individual performance criteria achieved by completing NPA Digital Skills SCQF level 3. These are listed in the table below.

| Code | Unit title | National Occupational Standard | Performance criteria |
|---|---|---|---|
| J5V1 43 | Computer Applications | Carry out remote online working and collaboration (TECHDUCW1) | 7. Use online communication and collaboration platforms to engage in virtual meetings and review digital documents, presentations, and other digital media. |
| | | Maintain data security when using digital technology (TECHDUDS1) | 1. Take appropriate security precautions when working online in line with organisational standards.<br>3. Maintain secure access privileges to digital systems by using unique and secure passwords to protect privacy and security, in line with organisational procedures. |
| | | Apply enhanced security procedures to protect data (TECHDUDS3) | 6. Use encryption to send confidential data safely by email and other digital communication methods. |
| | | Create and edit digital documents (TECHDUWP1) | 1. Access and configure digital document production software to produce documents with the required page setup, format, style and language<br>2. Create new digital documents in line with organisational requirements<br>3. Use keyboard input to enter text accurately into digital documents 4. Format characters and paragraphs using formatting functions to produce required layout<br>5. Use editing tools to modify and improve document content<br>8. Check the spelling and grammar of document text |
| J5V2 43 | Computer Basics | Setup and use digital devices (TECHDUDD1) | 4. Create directory and file structures to meet data storage and retrieval needs<br>5. Connect to an Internet Service Provider (ISP) through a router using Wi-Fi or cable connection to provide online services |
| J5V3 43 | Digital Basics | Evaluate digital information (TECHDUDI3) | 1 Evaluate information from online searches to determine the accuracy, validity, and currency |

## 5.3 Mapping of Core Skills development opportunities across the qualification

The following table shows where each of the units can contribute to Core Skills.

Core Skills can be delivered within an award by **embedding** ('E') them (in which case the award will lead to additional certification for learners' Core Skills) or **signposting** ('S') them (which does not lead to certification).

| Unit code | Unit title | Communication | | | Numeracy | | ICT | | Problem Solving | | | Working with Others | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | W (R) | W (W) | O | UN | UGI | AI | PCI | CT | PO | RE | WCO | RCC |
| J5V1 43 | Computer Applications | S3 | S3 | S3 | S3 | S3 | E3 | E3 | | | | | |
| J5V2 43 | Computer Basics | | | | | | E3 | E3 | | | | | |
| J5V3 43 | Digital Basics | | | | | | E3 | | | S3 | | | |

### Key:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication:** | W (R) = Written (Reading) | W (W) = Written (Writing) | O = Oral |
| **Numeracy:** | UN = Using Number | UGI = Using Graphical Information | |
| **ICT:** | AI = Accessing Information | PCI = Providing/Creating Information | |
| **Problem Solving:** | CT = Critical Thinking | PO = Planning and Organising | RE = Reviewing and Evaluating |
| **Working with Others** | WCO = Working Co-operatively with Others | RCC = Reviewing Co-operative Contribution | |

## 5.4 Assessment strategy for the qualification

In most units, the evidence requirements take a holistic approach to the generation of evidence to show competence by requiring two items of evidence. These are:

1 evidence of cognitive competence (knowledge and understanding).
2 evidence of practical competence (practical abilities).

The support notes provide guidance on the instruments of assessment that could be used to generate the evidence (in the section entitled 'Guidance on Approaches to Assessment').

The following table summarises this guidance (and is not mandatory). Alternative forms of assessment are acceptable if they satisfy the evidence requirements for each unit. In most cases, the suggested approach to assessment combines all the knowledge into one assessment and all the practical skills into one assessment.

| **Unit** | | **Assessment** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Outcome 1** | **Outcome 2** | **Outcome 3** | **Outcome 4** |
| J5V1 43 | Computer Applications | Written and/or oral evidence. | Practical task.<br>Open-book. | Practical task and/or assessor observations.<br>Open-book. | |
| J5V2 43 | Computer Basics | Written and/or oral evidence. | Practical task.<br>Open-book. | Written and/or oral evidence | Written and/or oral evidence. |
| J5V3 43 | Digital Basics | Written and/or oral evidence. | Written and/or oral evidence. | Assessor observations and/or discussions.<br><br>or<br><br>Written and/or oral evidence. | |

# 6 Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment

The delivery and assessment of this qualification aims to be as open and flexible as possible, given the different contexts in which it is likely to be delivered. The revised group award is fully compatible with delivery via a remote learning environment.

The qualification aims to introduce basic aspects of computing to learners: computer hardware and software, computer applications, handheld and mobile digital technology, social media (and its safe and proper use), virtual machines, and the basics of computer coding.

There are different ways in which the award can be delivered and assessed. It is recommended however that learners are assessed on their cognitive and practical abilities. For example, on entry to the award learners may already be comfortable with using handheld/mobile digital devices and social media. In this scenario, assessors may wish to complete checklists that demonstrate the practical abilities of the learners. Cognitive abilities — or knowledge and skills — may be recorded using short multiple-choice questions or quizzes.

Another method may be for assessors to use a more holistic approach, where learners work from a case study or scenario, and submit evidence to a remote learning environment as they progress through the award.

## 6.1 Sequencing/integration of units

It is recommended that the J5V2 43 Computer Basics unit is the first to be delivered within the award. This unit provides learners with the foundation knowledge in computer hardware and software as well as how to access and store files on cloud storage. Centres may decide which of the other two units should follow J5V2 43 Computer Basics.

The timetable of delivery and assessment is at the discretion of the centre. It is recommended that more time be given for the practical aspects of this award. For each of the units, practical tasks may be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the duration of each of the units. Knowledge and skills may be measured near the end of each of the 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, elements of a group award may be achieved through the recognition of prior learning. 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 **www.sqa.org.uk**.

The following sub-sections outline how existing SQA unit(s) 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

This is an entry level qualification designed for individuals with little or no computing/digital skills. The qualification is also designed as a pathway into higher level National Progression Awards at SCQF level 4, such as the NPA Digital Literacies or NPA PC Passport. Please refer to the diagram in Section 1 for some of the different routes that can be taken from this award to NPAs at SCQF level 4 (and beyond).

There is no articulation from this award to university degree programmes.

## 6.2.2 Professional recognition

There is no professional recognition that can be gained from this award.

## 6.2.3 Transitional arrangements

The revised units will replace the existing units from August 2022. The following transitional framework will be used for learners who possess units in NPA Digital Literacy (GL06 43).

| 4 code | 2 code | Unit title | SQA credit | SCQF credit points | SCQF level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J5V1<br><br>H9PV | 43<br><br>43 | Computer Applications<br>**or**<br>Computer Applications | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| J5V2<br><br>H3LJ | 43<br><br>09 | Computer Basics<br>**or**<br>Computer Basics | 1 | 6 | 3 |
| J5V3<br><br>H9PT | 43<br><br>43 | Digital Basics<br>**or**<br>Digital Skills | 1 | 6 | 3 |

This transitional framework is based on the credit transfer arrangements detailed in the following section.

### 6.2.4 Credit transfer

The following table defines the credit transfer arrangements between the 'old' and 'new' units.

| **Original units** | | **Revised by** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| H9PV 43 | Computer Applications | J5V1 43 | Computer Applications |
| H3LJ 09 | Computer Basics | J5V2 43 | Computer Basics |
| H9PT 43 | Digital Skills | J5V3 43 | Digital Basics |

The credit transfer is full and two-way. Learners who possess either existing or revised units can use them (in combination) to contribute to the group award.

## 6.3 Opportunities for e-assessment

Given the digital nature and aspects of this award, there may be opportunities for elements to be delivered by e-learning and e-assessment. Practitioners may choose to use the functions of traditional Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) for the delivery of class resources and for collaborative engagement. Similarly, there may be opportunities for practitioners to engage with learners using social media.

E-assessment opportunities may arise for this unit using, for example, multiple choice quizzes that can be used to capture knowledge and skills (or cognitive abilities) that are associated with each of the units. Assessors wishing to employ a more holistic assessment process may do so using e-Portfolios to capture evidence as learners progress through the units.

## 6.4 Support materials

As part of an assessment strategy, centres are encouraged to investigate the option of e-assessment to support the awards. E-assessment may take several forms, and while it may be feasible in the future to conduct all assessment in an online format, currently some formats are more amenable to e-assessment than others. Centres could adopt tests supported by SOLAR (www.sqasolar.org.uk) for both knowledge (online testing) and practical based (evidence upload) assessments where appropriate.

## 6.5 Resource requirements

Centres offering this award are advised to have assessors that are knowledgeable in the general areas of computing, including computer applications, computer hardware and software.

More specialist knowledge may be required for teaching in the areas of handheld/mobile digital technology, coding, wireless and wired network technology, social media, and cloud computing.

Assessors delivering the social media aspects of this award are advised to have good awareness of how social media can be used safely and responsibly, as well as the issues that can arise with using social media in the classroom.

There are technical resource implications for centres in that PCs, laptops, tablets, mobile/handheld digital technology and identified software will have to made available to learners to complete unit outcomes in the award.

When using local and cloud storage, there is recognition that not all centres will have access to cloud storage, for example, due to firewall restrictions. In this case, centres may wish to simulate cloud storage by using, for example, shared network drives. Local storage may refer to storage already attached to devices, for example, internal storage, memory cards, USB sticks and so on.

# 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 should be considered when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. Further advice can be found on our website **www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements**.

## Internal and external verification

All instruments of assessment used in this qualification 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* **(www.sqa.org.uk/GuideToAssessment)**.

# 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 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 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 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 6–9 and Graded Units will be at level 7 and 8. National Qualification Group Awards are available at SCQF levels 2–6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2–7.

**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.

**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 for the unit which has been revised where they are expected to complete the unit before its finish date.

| Version Number | Description | Date |
|---|---|---|
| 02 | Amendment to Mapping of Core Skills on Page 8: Accessing Information (AI) under ICT for Digital Basics has been amended to embedded ('E'). | August 2023 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

## Acknowledgement

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's centres have made to the development of this qualification.

# 9 General information for learners

This section 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.

The NPA Digital Skills SCQF level 3 is an award that aims to introduce you to the fundamentals of computers, cloud storage, computer applications, digital information, and the digital skills that are needed for you to understand how these technologies relate to each other. The award also aims to introduce you to more specific elements like virtual machines, understanding code, social media, and how they should be used safely and responsibly. The award is suitable for individuals with little or no computing skills. The award consists of the following units:

**Computer Applications**

This unit is to provide basic knowledge and skills to help you use a range of application packages. A key goal is to improve your confidence in using application packages to create information and remain safe when using them. You will develop the practical skills and key knowledge about which application package to use for social, educational, and vocational purposes. You also will learn about the different security and privacy settings available in each application package.

This unit has three outcomes:

1 Identify types of application packages and their common uses.
2 Produce basic information for personal, educational, and vocational purposes using application packages.
3 Participate in an audio or video communication using an online application.

**Computer Basics**

This unit will develop your basic knowledge of the hardware and software components of digital devices. You will learn the basic organisation of all digital devices and gain hands-on experience of using several devices. You will learn the correct names for the various parts of a digital device, and how to use them safely. You will also be introduced to basic computer coding.

This unit has four outcomes:

1 Identify the hardware and software components of digital devices.
2 Find, store, and share basic information using digital devices and cloud storage.
3 Identify the uses for virtual machines.
4 Read, write, and understand basic code.

**Digital Basics**

This unit will develop your basic knowledge about social media and digital information. A key goal is to improve your ability to find reliable and trustworthy information. You will learn about the different ways social media is used to distribute information. You will also learn how to properly use a range of digital devices.

This unit has three outcomes:

1 Identify different forms of social media.
2 Identify reliable digital information.
3 Use digital devices safely, legally, and ethically.

Successful completion of this award will allow progression to qualifications at SCQF level 4 such as NPA Digital Literacies and NPA PC Passport, or other areas of Computing. The qualification will also provide you with the necessary basic digital skills needed for jobs that require IT competences.