

## Qualification Design Principles

### National Certificates (June 2025)

#### Rationale

Every National Certificate must have a clear rationale that:

- justifies the need for the qualification and its uniqueness
- provides evidence of demand for the qualification
- explains how it fits with other qualifications
- identifies the progression opportunities into and from the qualification
- outlines the aims, purposes and intended learning outcomes of the qualification, and explains how the award structure enables them
- gives information about who the course is for

#### Qualification design

All National Certificates have a mandatory section. The mandatory section can contain alternative units, but all alternatives must reflect the title of the National Certificate.

Alternative units must, in general, serve the same purpose and be at the same SCQF level as the units they are substituting.

For National Certificates at SCQF levels 2 and 3, the mandatory section is a minimum of 27 SCQF credit points. For National Certificates at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6, the mandatory section is a minimum of 36 SCQF credit points.

### *National Occupational Standards*

National Certificates must be aligned to National Occupational Standards (NOS), or other professional or trade body standards, as appropriate to the group award. Further information is available in [Using National Occupational Standards, industry and higher education standards in the development of Qualifications Scotland qualifications.](#)

### *National Courses*

National Certificates may include a maximum of three graded National Course assessments, as appropriate to the group award area. A National Course equates to one credit in the National Certificate framework.

### SCQF level and credit points

National Certificates can be set at SCQF levels 2–6.

National Certificates at levels 2 and 3 are made up of units with a credit value of 54 SCQF credit points.

National Certificates at levels 4, 5 and 6 are made up of units with a credit value of 72 SCQF credit points.

Component units of a National Certificate must be at a level appropriate to the qualification's position in the SCQF. The majority of the credit points must be at the level of the group award.

### Assessment

National Certificates may include a maximum of three graded course assessments, as appropriate to the group award area.

Units within a National Certificate are internally assessed.

## Award of qualification

Candidates must achieve all the units and a grade A-C in any graded courses in the National Certificate framework.

## Grading

National Courses contained within National Certificates are graded A–D. Grades awarded are based on the total marks achieved across all components of the course assessment.

National Certificates are ungraded.

## Skills

National Certificates should clearly include opportunities for candidates to develop Core Skills to the levels required by the occupations or progression pathways they support. This normally means incorporating all five Core Skills in every National Certificate.

National Certificates should facilitate credited attainment of specific Core Skills if they are critical to the aims of the group award. In this case, they should appear in the mandatory section either as a discrete unit or within another unit.

## Equality

National Certificates must take into consideration the needs of all candidates. These qualifications should be as accessible and inclusive as possible to candidates who will achieve in different ways and at a different pace.