SCQF HANDBOOK: USER GUIDE

scqf®

scottish credit and
qualifications framework

Preface

Welcome to the revised edition of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Handbook: User Guide (2009), which replaces all former editions and incorporates the SCQF Guidelines along with explanations of the key principles and application of the SCQF itself.

The SCQF promotes lifelong learning in Scotland. Its aims are to:

- Help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential;
- Enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how they relate to each other and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

Since its launch in 2001, the SCQF has become well established as the means to describe Scottish qualifications and learning programmes in terms of their level and credit (size). In addition to the experience that has grown from its use and application, developments such as drawing up the criteria for new credit rating bodies, the increased use within the workplace and the emergence of the European Qualifications Framework led the SCQF Partnership Board to request that a review of the SCQF Handbook and Guidelines be undertaken. The reasons were to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and capture fully the experiences of the many people within a wide range of organisations that use the SCQF to recognise learners' achievements.

The work to revise the SCQF Handbook was overseen by the SCQF Quality Committee and involved a national consultation with representatives from diverse organisations, including all higher education institutions and colleges, the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the voluntary and community sectors and employer organisations. We held Focus Groups, established a key Users Reference Group and carried out a number of face-to-face meetings to gain feedback from practitioners as the work progressed.

We have included two new sections in the revised SCQF Handbook that relate to recent developments; *Becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body* and *The Relationship of the SCQF to other Qualifications Frameworks.*

As the SCQF is central to all education and training provision in Scotland, the SCQF Partnership hopes that this SCQF Handbook: User Guide will be invaluable to all those with an interest in the recognition of lifelong learning.

**The SCQF Partnership
Executive Team**

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User Guide

Introduction: SCQF Handbook: User Guide

1   Introduction

The SCQF Handbook: User Guide provides an overview of the main features of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The SCQF Handbook: User Guide is a technical document that explains how the Framework can be used to support and develop Scotland's lifelong learning agenda.

This edition of the SCQF Handbook was developed in 2008/2009 following consultation with members of the SCQF Partnership, practitioners from SCQF Credit Rating Bodies and other stakeholders. This version supersedes all previous versions up to and including the 2007 version.

2   Content of the SCQF Handbook: User Guide

The SCQF Handbook: User Guide describes the key features and technicalities of the Framework along with approaches that should be followed in its implementation. It contains the SCQF Level Descriptors and SCQF Guidelines for:

- Credit Rating;
- Credit Transfer; and
- The Recognition of Prior Learning.

These are the common set of reference points that underpin the principles and practice of operating the Framework across all sectors of lifelong learning in Scotland. It is anticipated that the Guidelines will support organisations to implement and embed the Framework within their own processes and procedures.

As a technical guide, the main audience for the SCQF Handbook is staff within SCQF Credit Rating Bodies and those developing and delivering qualifications and learning programmes in the workplace and the community.

The SCQF Handbook is divided into nine sections and is accompanied by a series of Annexes. A summary of the content within each section is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Content

Section	Title	Content
1	The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)	Provides an overview and explains the aims, key features and requirements of the SCQF. Details the structure and aims of the SCQF Partnership and the SCQF Executive Team.
2	SCQF Levels	Explains the SCQF Levels and sets out the SCQF Level Descriptors.
3	SCQF Credit Points	Explains how SCQF Credit Points are allocated to qualifications and learning programmes within the Framework.
4	SCQF Credit Rating	Provides information on using SCQF Levels and Credit Points for the process of credit rating qualifications and learning programmes.
5	SCQF Credit Transfer	Explains the principles that underpin the transfer of credit in the SCQF.
6	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Explains the key features and core principles and identifies the benefits of RPL.
7	The process for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Provides guidance on managing the process to support consistent approaches to RPL across all sectors of lifelong learning.
8	Becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body	Sets out the criteria required to become a new SCQF Credit Rating Body and provides information on the associated quality assurance model.
9	Relationship of the SCQF to other Qualifications Frameworks	Illustrates the relationship of the SCQF to other frameworks within the UK and to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Annex	Title	Content
1	SCQF Guidelines	Summary of SCQF Guidelines 1-47
2	SCQF Level Descriptors	Each characteristic descibed across all SCQF Levels
3	Qualifications Awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority	Descriptors for SQA Awards
4	Qualifications Awarded by Higher Education Institutions	Descriptors for HEI Awards

3   Explanation of Terms

From this point on, for ease of reading, the SCQF Handbook: User Guide is referred to as the SCQF Handbook.

The SCQF includes a wide range of qualifications and learning programmes, and recognises that different learning providers use different terms to describe similar processes. In the SCQF Handbook 'qualifications and learning programmes' is used as a common phrase to describe the various terms for programmes, qualifications, courses, units and modules that are used in the different sectors involved in lifelong learning in Scotland.

3   Explanation of Terms (continued)

The terms 'formal learning', 'non-formal learning' and 'informal learning' are used to describe different types of learning. Formal learning takes place in the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers; it is assessed and leads to recognised qualifications. Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training; it may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification - for example learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector, trade unions or through community-based learning. Informal learning can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences.

While useful to recognise these different types of learning, for the purpose of the SCQF Handbook, the term 'informal learning' is used as the term to cover both non-formal and informal learning.

Table 2 provides an explanation of the abbreviations and terms that are used in the SCQF Handbook.

Table 2: Explanation of Abbreviations and Terms

Term	Explanation
Credit Rating	The process of allocating an SCQF Level and Credit Points to qualifications and learning programmes, whether formal or informal.
Credit Rating Body	An organisation that carries out credit rating for the SCQF. These are: Scotland's colleges; Scottish higher education institutions (HEIs); Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); and other organisations that have been approved by the SCQF Partnership.
Credit Transfer	The transfer of SCQF Credit Points from one qualification or learning programme into another to minimise the duplication learning.
European Qualifications Framework (EQF)	A common European reference framework which acts as a translation device to make qualifications and learning programmes more understandable across Europe. Its two main aims are to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate lifelong learning.
Higher National (HN) Group Awards	These are Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) available in a wide range of subjects. HNCs are at SCQF Level 7 and HNDs are at SCQF Level 8. They can be undertaken on a full or part-time basis and are designed to provide the practical skills and theoretical knowledge that will enable entry to employment and/or further study.
Learning: Formal	Formal learning takes place within the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers; it is assessed and leads to recognised qualifications.
Learning: Informal	Informal learning can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning. The learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to the development of their skills and knowledge. This recognition may only happen retrospectively through the RPL process, unless the experiences take place as part of a planned experiential or work-based learning programme.
Learning: Non-Formal	Non-Formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification: for example, learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and through community-based learning.

Table 2: Explanation of Abbreviations and Terms (continued)

Term	Explanation
Learning Outcomes	Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.
Learning Providers	Organisations across all education and training sectors that provide formal, non-formal and informal learning.
Notional Learning Hours	The time required for an 'average' learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes. Includes all the learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes as well as the assessment.
Professional Judgement	A decision reached by those qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of skill.
Receiving Organisation	The education, training provider or awarding body to which the learner is seeking entry to a particular qualification or learning programme.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	RPL is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.
SCQF General Credit Points	Quantified learning outcomes that are subject to valid, reliable methods of assessment. The number of SCQF Credit Points is worked out on the basis of the number of notional learning hours that an 'average' learner at a specified level might expect to take to achieve the learning outcomes, including the assessment.
SCQF Specific Credit Points	General Credit Points become specific when they are recognised as being relevant for entry or transfer to a particular qualification or learning programme.
SCQF Guidelines	The SCQF Guidelines underpin the principles of embedding and implementing the Framework across all sectors of lifelong learning in Scotland. There are Guidelines on SCQF Credit Rating, Credit Transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning.
SCQF Levels	The SCQF Framework has 12 levels. The complexity of learning and level of demand increases from Level 1 through to Level 12.
SCQF Level Descriptors	These define the generic outcomes for the characteristics for each of the SCQF Levels.
Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)	SVQs are based on national occupational standards of performance developed by representatives from industry, commerce and education. They are usually achieved in the workplace and combine work-based competences and the knowledge needed to acquire those skills.
Submitting Body	Organisation that submits a qualification or learning programme to an SCQF Credit Rating Body to be credit rated.
Third Party Credit Rating	A credit rating service provided by an SCQF Credit Rating Body for submitting bodies.
Third Party Provision	The qualification or learning programme of a submitting body that has been credit rated by, or has been submitted for credit rating to, an SCQF Credit Rating Body.

Additional support materials that provide further information, explanation, and examples of best practice are available on the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk

Section 1:
The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

Section 1: The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

1.1 Overview of this Section

This section gives an overview of the aims of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and explains its key features and requirements. It provides details of the structure and aims of the SCQF Partnership and the role of the SCQF Executive Team. Further information is available on the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk.

1.2 The Aims of the SCQF

Through working in partnership, the SCQF was developed in 2001 to meet the needs of Scotland's learners. It provides a shared context for learning in Scotland. It was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified Framework. Within the overall context of lifelong learning, the aims of the SCQF are to:

- Help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential;
- Enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how the qualifications relate to each other, and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

1.3 Key Features of the SCQF

Although its constituent parts include regulatory frameworks, the SCQF is a voluntary framework. It uses two measures, **SCQF Level** and **Credit Points**, to help in understanding and comparing qualifications and learning programmes.

There are 12 SCQF Levels which provide an indication of the complexity of qualifications and learning programmes. SCQF Level 1 is the least demanding and SCQF Level 12 is the most demanding. SCQF Levels are based on a single set of Level Descriptors, which are the common reference points and definitions that provide a way of recognising learning that is outcome-based and quality-assured.

SCQF Credit Points relate to the number of hours required to achieve a qualification or learning programme. Detailed information on SCQF Levels and SCQF Credit Points is given in sections 2 and 3 respectively.

Any qualification or learning programme, or components of a qualification or learning programme, has the potential to be included in the Framework provided that the following criteria are met:

- The learning must be based on learning outcomes;
- The learning outcomes must take a minimum of a notional 10 hours to achieve;
- Learning outcomes must be subject to reliable and valid methods of assessment that are recorded;
- The learning is included within an appropriate quality assurance system.

The SCQF should be used by all those with responsibility for the development and delivery of qualifications and learning programmes, in order to meet local and national education and training needs in Scotland. The SCQF provides a vocabulary for describing learning and helps to:

- Make the relationships between qualifications and learning programmes clear;
- Clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression;
- Maximise the opportunities for credit transfer;
- Assist learners to plan their progress and learning;
- Minimise the duplication of learning.

1.4   The SCQF Diagram

The SCQF Diagram illustrates how the main Scottish qualifications are positioned in relation to each other across the 12 Levels within the Framework.

SCQF Diagram

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12				DOCTORAL DEGREE	
11				INTEGRATED MASTERS DEGREE / MASTERS DEGREE POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ5
10				HONOURS DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	
9			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD	BACHELORS / ORDINARY DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ4
8		HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA		DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION	
7	ADVANCED HIGHER SCOTTISH BACCALAUREATE	HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE		CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION	SVQ3
6	HIGHER				
5	INTERMEDIATE 2 CREDIT STANDARD GRADE				SVQ2
4	INTERMEDIATE 1 GENERAL STANDARD GRADE	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE	NATIONAL PROGRESSION AWARD		SVQ1
3	ACCESS 3 FOUNDATION STANDARD GRADE				
2	ACCESS 2				
1	ACCESS 1				

The positioning of two or more qualifications or learning programmes at the same SCQF Level in the Framework indicates that they are broadly comparable in terms of the level of difficulty. It does not necessarily mean that these qualifications and learning programmes have the same purpose, content or learning outcomes, nor does it take account of any structural or operational features. **It is also important to note that the SCQF does not demonstrate equivalence or interchangeability of qualifications.** An example of this is that Advanced Highers, HNCs, SVQs and Certificates of Higher Education are all at SCQF Level 7. These qualifications have quite different forms of delivery and assessment rules but they have similar levels of complexity and demand.

1.5   SCQF Guidelines

SCQF Guidelines are statements of principles and procedures, applicable at any SCQF Level. Developed through consultation they represent 'best practice' and encourage a consistent approach to quality by all those operating within the Framework. The SCQF Guidelines set out the required processes and procedures for credit rating, credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning. They help to maintain the consistency and quality assurance of the Framework and support organisations in implementing the Framework within their processes and procedures.

The SCQF Quality Committee reviews the SCQF Guidelines on a regular basis and updates them as and when appropriate. Any changes are highlighted on the SCQF website.

1.6   SCQF Credit Rating

The process of allocating an SCQF Level and SCQF Credit Points to a qualification or learning programme is known as 'credit rating'. SCQF credit rating can only be carried out by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies. These are:

- Scotland's colleges;
- Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA);
- Other organisations approved by the SCQF Partnership.

Information on becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body is given in section 8, and a list of SCQF Credit Rating Bodies is available on the SCQF website.

1.7   SCQF Database

The SCQF Database holds details of the qualifications and learning programmes that have been credit rated, including the title, the SCQF Level, the number of SCQF Credit Points and the relevant SCQF Credit Rating Body.

The SCQF Partnership is reliant on SCQF Credit Rating Bodies maintaining the accuracy of the information on the SCQF Database. Credit Rating Bodies can obtain information on how to add or edit provision on the database from the SCQF Executive Team. The database is accessed via the SCQF website.

1.8   UK, European and International Frameworks

The SCQF provides a means to compare and relate qualifications and learning programmes that sit in other frameworks in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond. Further explanation is given in section 9.

1.9   The SCQF Partnership

In November 2006, the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework Partnership (SCQF Partnership) was established as a company limited by guarantee to manage the Framework, and the company became a charity registered in Scotland in March 2007. Its members are:

- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
- Scotland's Colleges;
- Ministers of the Scottish Government;
- Scottish Qualifications Authority;
- Universities Scotland.

The aims of the SCQF Partnership are to:

- Maintain the quality and integrity of the Framework;
- Promote and develop the Framework as a tool to support lifelong learning;
- Develop and maintain relationships with other frameworks in the UK, Europe and internationally.

1.10   The SCQF Partnership Structure

The SCQF is in the guardianship of, and managed by, the SCQF Partnership. The SCQF Partnership Board comprises senior representatives from the member organisations. The Board has an Independent Chair.

The SCQF Executive Team, headed by a Chief Executive Officer, supports the strategic development of the Framework and the implementation of the annual SCQF Operational Plan. In December 2006, following the incorporation of the company, the SCQF Partnership Board established the SCQF Quality Committee. Its remit is to maintain the quality of the Framework and to provide clear, accurate, technical information to learners, the public and others with an interest in learning, including training providers and employers.

The SCQF Forum was established to promote the use and development of the Framework. It is made up of senior representatives from the fields of education, training, business and other learning communities in Scotland. The SCQF Forum gives advice to the SCQF Partnership Board and the SCQF Executive Team to ensure that the Framework continues to meet the needs of all learners, employers and other users of Scottish learning provision.

The Board established a European and International Group to provide support to the SCQF Partnership in relation to the sharing of information, the co-ordination and decision making for its involvement, primarily in Europe, but with a watching brief on international activity.

1.11   Summary of Key Points

- The SCQF was developed in partnership and was established in 2001.
- The SCQF is a voluntary Framework which has a common set of reference points for learning that is outcome-based, assessed and quality-assured.
- SCQF Credit Rating Bodies carry out credit rating of qualifications and learning programmes that meet required criteria.
- SCQF Guidelines were developed through consultation to assist a consistent approach to using the Framework. They support organisations to embed the use of the Framework within their own processes and procedures.
- Details of credit rated qualifications and learning programmes are on the SCQF Database which is accessed via the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk.
- The SCQF diagram illustrates where Scottish qualifications and learning programmes are positioned in relation to each other.
- The SCQF Partnership was established in 2006 as a company limited by guarantee and it became a charity registered in Scotland in March 2007.

Section 2:
SCQF Levels

Section 2: SCQF Levels

2.1 Overview of this Section

This section provides information on the development and purpose of the SCQF Levels. It describes the five characteristics of the SCQF Level Descriptors which are detailed at the end of the section.

2.2 Introduction to SCQF Levels

The SCQF has 12 Levels, reflecting the current Scottish system of education and training. The levels of the Framework are described by a set of SCQF Level Descriptors, designed to provide a general understanding of each SCQF Level. Their development in 2001 drew extensively on:

- Related criteria developed by SQA;
- Levels for Courses and Core Skills developed for SQA's National Awards;
- Earlier work to develop Level Descriptors for the SCOTCAT Framework;
- Subject benchmarks developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) for Honours Degrees;
- Level Descriptors for Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)/National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) developed by the regulatory bodies Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) for SVQs and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) for NVQs.

Each SCQF Level, described in the SCQF Level Descriptors, increases in demand by changes to factors such as complexity, depth of knowledge and the learner's autonomy in demonstrating achievement. SCQF Level 1 is the least demanding and SCQF Level 12 is the most demanding.

The SCQF Level Descriptors, which have five characteristics, provide a reference point for determining the level of a qualification, learning programme, module or unit of learning or for the recognition of prior learning. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning for individual qualifications. The SCQF Level Descriptors allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning programmes achieved in different contexts. They apply to learning based on learning outcomes that is subject to reliable and valid methods of quality-assured assessment.

The appropriate SCQF Level of a qualification or learning programme is based on the learning outcomes rather than directly related to the size of the qualification or learning programme, or length of study time (referred to as the 'volume' of the learning).

Over a lifetime, individuals can move between and across SCQF Levels as they undertake new learning and acquire new skills for particular contexts and circumstances. This might be from higher to lower SCQF Levels, from lower to higher SCQF Levels or across the same SCQF Level. It should not be assumed that all learners undertaking new studies would start at SCQF Level 1.

2.3 SCQF Guidelines

There are SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating that support the principles and practice of determining the SCQF Level for qualifications and learning programmes. Although there is an inter-relationship across the SCQF Guidelines, particular ones have direct relevance to specific aspects of the Framework. Guidelines 1 and 2 have direct relevance to SCQF Levels.

Table 3: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 1 and 2

Guideline	Description
1	Allocation of a level to learning is essentially a matter of professional judgement using appropriate reference points such as the SCQF Level Descriptors, relevant programme descriptors, higher education subject benchmark information, SQA specifications and other appropriate sources of information and guidance.
2	SCQF Levels are not related directly to years of study. They are defined by the extent of demands made of the learner in each of the five broad categories of competence.

2.4 Characteristics of the SCQF Level Descriptors

SCQF Level Descriptors are generic statements that describe the characteristics and expected performance at each level of the Framework and relate to learning outcomes. The five characteristics are:

- Knowledge and understanding;
- Practice (applied knowledge and understanding);
- Generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis;
- Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills;
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

As some characteristics may not be relevant for particular qualifications or learning programmes they should not be regarded as a required 'checklist'. There is no expectation that learning outcomes in qualifications and learning programmes will cover all of the characteristics of an SCQF Level as described in the Level Descriptors.

Table 4 describes the generic components for each of the five characteristics of SCQF Level Descriptors.

Table 4: SCQF Characteristics

Characteristic	Description
Knowledge and understanding (mainly subject-based)	The knowledge and understanding that underpins the achievement of skills and competence varies according to the complexity and breadth of the learning. SCQF Levels start with a basic knowledge of facts and progress to a point where learners are required to reflect on that body of knowledge and reason why it is correct or incorrect, and then adapt or develop new knowledge accordingly.
Practice (applied knowledge and understanding)	Competent practice and the development and use of skills come through the application of knowledge and understanding. This involves being able to contextualise knowledge to apply it in a variety of different situations and practices.

Characteristic	Description
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	SCQF Levels progress from relating knowledge of a few simple everyday contexts to using a range of complex skills, techniques and practices. Learners demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge and understanding.
Generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis	Cognitive skills involve the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, through thought, experience and the senses. It includes skills such as problem solving, creativity and innovation, ability to respond to change, and ability to monitor, evaluate and promote continuous improvement. Cognitive skills tend to be transferable, i.e. once they have been developed, they can be applied to different situations and job roles. Within any area of cognitive skill there are degrees of understanding and complexity. SCQF Levels progress from following prompts to deal with familiar situations or issues, to critically analysing and evaluating complex situations and issues and developing original and creative responses to these.
Communication, numeracy and ICT skills	Skills in communication, numeracy and ICT are essential for effective practice, and underpin many roles or tasks. Skills in all three areas are not always necessary for every job role, nor is it necessarily a requirement to have an equal level of skill in all three areas. Although some roles will have specific communication, numeracy and IT requirements, many of these skills are generic and can be transferred across different roles within organisations or fields of work.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	The nature of working relationships, levels of responsibility for self and others and managing change, the ways in which individuals work, and the impact of this on their job role and other individuals. SCQF Levels progress from working alone on simple and routine tasks under directive supervision to becoming increasingly autonomous and accountable within a work role, becoming either more independent or more focused on management and leadership, becoming more self-critical and being able to reflect on ethical and professional issues.

2.5   SCQF Level Descriptors

The SCQF Level Descriptors are useful reference points to:

- Support the design and development of qualifications and learning programmes at an appropriate SCQF Level;
- Allocate an SCQF Level to qualifications and learning programmes;
- Benchmark informal learning and other learning provision that has not been credit rated;
- Support recruitment and workforce development;
- Benchmark skills and competence of individuals;
- Provide guidance and information on opportunities for learner progression;
- Support the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The SCQF Level Descriptors for Levels 1 - 12 are given in this section and are also presented in an alternative format in Annex 2 and a further format is available on the SCQF website.

2.5   SCQF Level Descriptors (continued)

The SCQF Level Descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each SCQF Level. They are intended to provide a general, shared understanding of each level and to allow broad comparisons to be made between qualifications and learning programmes at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements for individual qualifications or learning programmes, and there is no expectation that these should have all of the characteristics.

SCQF Level 1 (Access 1 is an example of a qualification at this level)

Level Descriptor for SCQF Level 1
SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.

SCQF Level 2 (Access 2 is an example of a qualification at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject/discipline.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Relate knowledge to a few simple everyday contexts with prompting. Use a few very simple skills. Carry out, with guidance, a few familiar tasks. Use, under supervision, basic tools and materials.
Generic cognitive skills	Use rehearsed stages for solving problems. Operate in personal and/or everyday contexts. Take some account, with prompting, of identified consequences of action.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use very simple skills with assistance, for example: • Produce and respond to a limited range of very simple written and oral communication in familiar/routine contexts. • Carry out a limited range of very simple tasks to process data and access information. • Use a limited range of very simple and familiar numerical and graphical data in familiar and everyday contexts.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Work alone or with others on simple routine, familiar tasks under frequent and directive supervision. Identify, given simple criteria, some successes and/or failures of the work.

SCQF Level 3 (Access 3, Foundation Standard Grade are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline. • Simple facts and ideas associated with a subject/discipline.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Relate knowledge with some prompting to personal and/or everyday contexts. Use a few basic, routine skills to undertake familiar and routine tasks. Complete pre-planned tasks. Use, with guidance, basic tools and materials safely and effectively.
Generic cognitive skills	Identify with some prompting a process to deal with a situation or issue. Operate in familiar contexts using given criteria. Take account of some identified consequences of action.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use simple skills, for example: • Produce and respond to simple written and oral communication in familiar, routine contexts. • Carry out simple tasks to process data and access information. • Use simple numerical and graphical data in everyday contexts.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Work alone or with others on simple tasks under frequent supervision. Participate in the setting of goals, timelines, etc. Participate in the review of completed work and the identification of ways of improving practices and processes. Identify, given simple criteria, own strengths and weaknesses relative to the work.

SCQF Level 4 (Intermediate 1, General Standard Grade, SVQ1 are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual. • Some simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/discipline. • Knowledge of basic processes, materials and terminology.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Relate knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts. Use a few skills to complete straightforward tasks with some non-routine elements. Select and use, with guidance, appropriate tools and materials safely and effectively.
Generic cognitive skills	Use, with guidance, given stages of a problem-solving approach to deal with a situation or issue. Operate in straightforward contexts. Identify and/or take account of some of the consequences of action/inaction.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use straightforward skills, for example: • Produce and respond to simple but detailed written and oral communication in familiar contexts. • Use the most straightforward features of familiar applications to process and obtain information. • Use straightforward numerical and graphical data in straightforward and familiar contexts.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Work alone or with others on straightforward tasks. Contribute to the setting of goals, timelines, etc. Contribute to the review of completed work and offer suggestions for improving practices and processes. Identify own strengths and weaknesses relative to the work.

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SCQF Level 5 (Intermediate 2, Credit Standard Grade, SVQ2 are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual but has some theoretical component. • A range of simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/ discipline. • Knowledge and understanding of basic processes, materials and terminology.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Relate ideas and knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts. Complete some routine and non-routine tasks using knowledge associated with a subject/discipline. Plan and organise both familiar and new tasks. Select appropriate tools and materials and use safely and effectively (e.g. without waste). Adjust tools where necessary following safe practices.
Generic cognitive skills	Use a problem-solving approach to deal with a situation or issue that is straightforward in relation to a subject/discipline. Operate in a familiar context, but where there is a need to take account of or use additional information of different kinds, some of which will be theoretical or hypothetical. Use some abstract constructs - for example make generalisations and/or draw conclusions.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a range of routine skills, for example: • Produce and respond to detailed written and oral communication in familiar contexts. • Use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information. • Use a range of numerical and graphical data in straightforward contexts that have some complex features.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Work alone or with others on tasks with minimum supervision. Agree goals and responsibilities for self and/or work team with manager/ supervisor. Take leadership responsibility for some tasks. Show an awareness of others' roles, responsibilities and requirements in carrying out work and make a contribution to the evaluation and improvement of practices and processes.

SCQF Level 6 (Higher, SVQ3[1] are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered

Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with:
	   • Generalised knowledge of a subject/discipline;
	   • Factual and theoretical knowledge.
	   • A range of facts, ideas, properties, materials, terminology, practices, techniques about/associated with a subject/discipline.
	   • Relate the subject/discipline to a range of practical and/or everyday applications.

Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Apply knowledge and understanding in known, practical contexts. Use some of the basic, routine practices, techniques and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline in routine contexts which may have non-routine elements. Plan how skills will be used to address set situations and/or problems and adapt these as necessary.
Generic cognitive skills	Obtain, organise and use factual and theoretical information in problem solving. Make generalisations and predictions. Draw conclusions and suggest solutions.

Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a wide range of skills, for example:
	   • Produce and respond to detailed and relatively complex written and oral communication in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts.
	   • Select and use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information.
	   • Use a wide range of numerical and graphical data in routine contexts which may have non-routine elements.

Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Take responsibility for carrying out of a range of activities where the overall goal is clear, under non-directive supervision. Take some supervisory responsibility for the work of others and lead established teams in the implementation of routine work. Manage limited resources within defined and supervised areas of work. Take account of roles and responsibilities related to the tasks being carried out and take a significant role in the evaluation of work and the improvement of practices and processes.

[1]*SVQ3 spans SCQF Levels 6 and 7.*

SCQF Level 7 (Cert HE, HNC, Advanced Higher, SVQ3[2] are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A broad knowledge of the subject/discipline in general. • Knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles. • An awareness of the evolving/changing nature of knowledge and understanding. • An understanding of the difference between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other forms of explanation and of the importance of this difference.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Use some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline. Practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts.
Generic cognitive skills	Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas which are routine to the subject/discipline. Use a range of approaches to address defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with the subject/discipline, for example: • Convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form. • Use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and new contexts. • Use standard applications to process and obtain a variety of information and data. • Use a range of numerical and graphical skills in combination. • Use numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level. Take supervision in less familiar areas of work. Take some managerial responsibility for the work of others within a defined and supervised structure. Manage limited resources within defined areas of work. Take the lead in implementing agreed plans in familiar or defined contexts. Take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities in carrying out and evaluating tasks. Work with others in support of current professional practice under guidance.

[2]SVQ3 spans SCQF Levels 6 and 7.

SCQF Level 8 (Dip HE, HND, SVQ4[3] are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A broad knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of a subject/discipline. • Detailed knowledge in some areas. • Understanding of a limited range of core theories, principles and concepts. • Limited knowledge and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms. • An outline knowledge and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Use a range of routine skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline, a few of which are advanced or complex. Carry out routine lines of enquiry, development or investigation into professional level problems and issues. Adapt routine practices within accepted standards.
Generic cognitive skills	Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings of the subject/discipline. Use a range of approaches to formulate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues. Critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills associated with a subject/discipline, for example: • Convey complex information to a range of audiences and for a range of purposes. • Use a range of standard applications to process and obtain data. • Use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level. Take significant managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work. Manage resources within defined areas of work. Take the lead on planning in familiar or defined contexts. Take continuing account of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions in carrying out and evaluating tasks. Work in support of current professional practice, under guidance. Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices, under guidance.

[3]*SVQ4 spans SCQF Levels 8 and 9.*

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SCQF Level 9 (Bachelors Degree, SVQ4[4] are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope, main areas and boundaries of a subject/ discipline. • A critical understanding of a selection of the principal theories, principles, concepts and terminology. • Knowledge that is detailed in some areas and/or knowledge of one or more specialisms that are informed by forefront developments.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Use a selection of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline. Use a few skills, techniques, practices and/or materials that are specialised or advanced. Practise routine methods of enquiry and/or research. Practise in a range of professional level contexts that include a degree of unpredictability.
Generic cognitive skills	Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues. Identify and analyse routine professional problems and issues. Draw on a range of sources in making judgements.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example: • Make formal and informal presentations on standard/mainstream topics in the subject/discipline to a range of audiences. • Use a range of IT applications to support and enhance work. • Interpret, use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to achieve goals/targets.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level. Take some responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources. Practise in ways that take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities. Work, under guidance, with qualified practitioners. Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices, seeking guidance where appropriate.

[4]*SVQ4 spans SCQF Levels 8 and 9.*

SCQF Level 10 (Honours Degree is an example of a qualification at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Knowledge that covers and integrates most of the principal areas, features, boundaries, terminology and conventions of a subject discipline. • A critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles. • Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms some of which is informed by or at the forefront of a subject/discipline. • Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the subject/discipline is developed, including a range of established techniques of enquiry or research methodologies.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Use a range of the principal skills, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline. Use a few skills, practices and/or materials which are specialised, advanced, or at the forefront of a subject/discipline. Execute a defined project of research, development or investigation and identify and implement relevant outcomes. Practise in a range of professional level contexts which include a degree of unpredictability and/or specialism.
Generic cognitive skills	Critically identify, define, conceptualise, and analyse complex/professional level problems and issues. Offer professional level insights, interpretations and solutions to problems and issues. Critically review and consolidate knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline. Demonstrate some originality and creativity in dealing with professional level issues. Make judgements where data/information is limited or comes from a range of sources.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example: • Make formal presentations about specialised topics to informed audiences. • Communicate with professional level peers, senior colleagues and specialists. • Use a range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify refinements/improvements to software to increase effectiveness. • Interpret, use and evaluate a wide range of numerical and graphical data to set and achieve goals/targets.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Exercise autonomy and initiative in professional/equivalent activities. Take significant responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources. Practise in ways which show a clear awareness of own and others' roles and responsibilities. Work effectively, under guidance, in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners. Work with others to bring about change, development and/or new thinking. Deal with complex ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices. Recognise the limits of these codes and seek guidance where appropriate.

SCQF Level 11 (PG Cert, PG Dip, MA, MSc, SVQ5 are examples of qualifications at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Knowledge that covers and integrates most, if not all, of the main areas of a subject/discipline - including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions. • A critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts. • A critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, principles and concepts. • Extensive, detailed and critical knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, much of which is at, or informed by, developments at the forefront. • A critical awareness of current issues in a subject/discipline and one or more specialisms.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are associated with a subject/discipline. Use a range of specialised skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are at the forefront of, or informed by, forefront developments. Apply a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry. Plan and execute a significant project of research, investigation or development. Demonstrate originality or creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and/or practices. Practise in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.
Generic cognitive skills	Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to issues which are at the forefront of, or informed by, developments at the forefront of a subject/discipline. Identify, conceptualise and define new and abstract problems and issues. Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues. Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills practices and thinking in a subject/discipline. Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/ discipline, for example: • Communicate, using appropriate methods, to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge/expertise. • Communicate with peers, more senior colleagues and specialists. • Use a wide range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify new software or refinements/improvements to existing software to increase effectiveness. • Undertake critical evaluations of a wide range of numerical and graphical data.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities. Take responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others. Take responsibility for a significant range of resources. Demonstrate leadership and/or initiative and make an identifiable contribution to change and development. Practise in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and others' roles and responsibilities. Deal with complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.

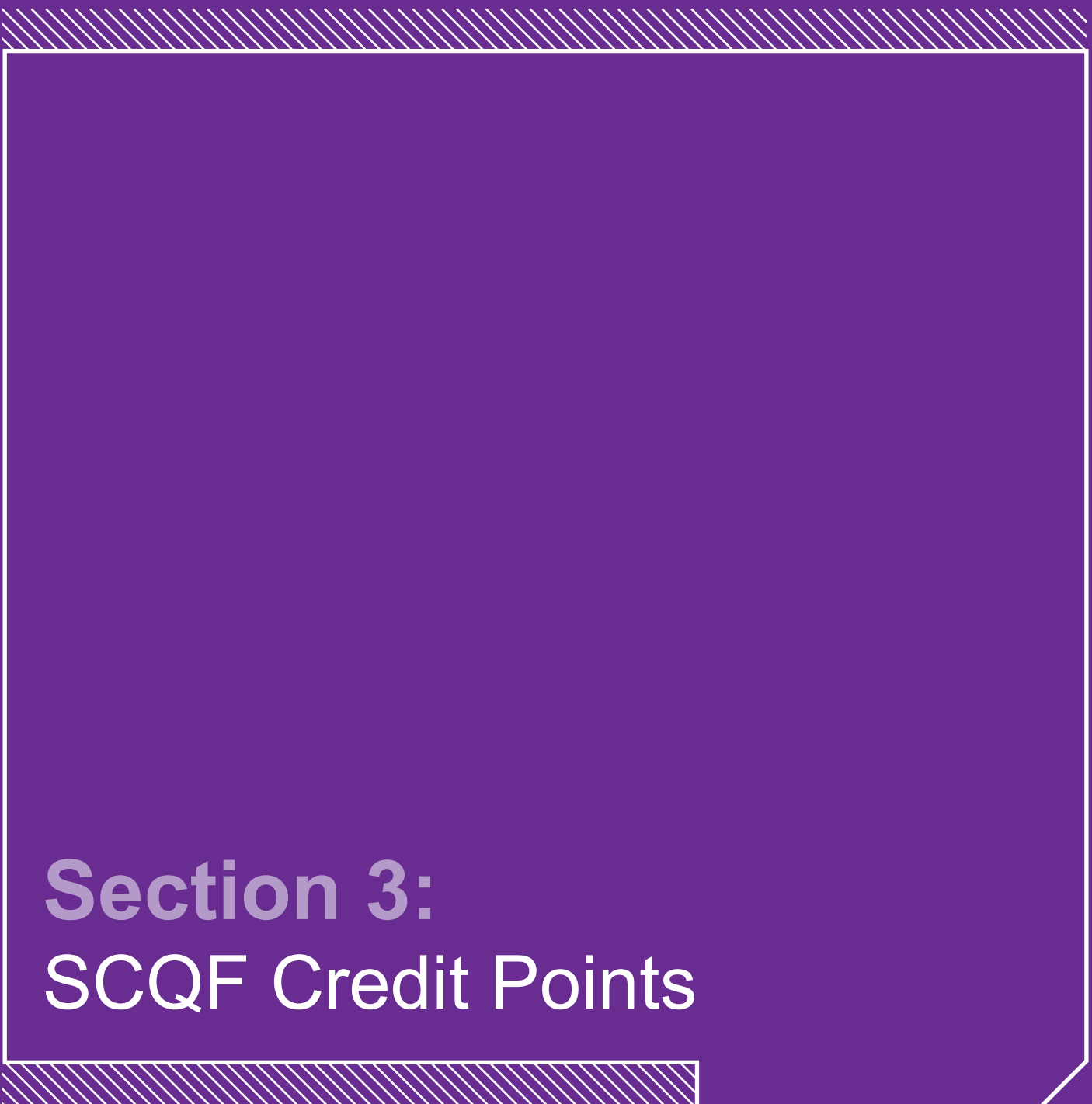## SCQF Level 12 (Doctoral Degree is an example of a qualification at this level)

Characteristics	The following descriptions are for guidance only — it is not expected that every point will be covered
Knowledge and understanding	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A critical overview of a subject/discipline, including critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts. • A critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of one or more specialisms. • Knowledge and understanding that is generated through personal research or equivalent work that makes a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline.
Practice: applied knowledge and understanding	Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and materials associated with a subject/discipline. Use and enhance a range of complex skills, techniques, practices and materials at the forefront of one or more specialisms. Apply a range of standard and specialised research/equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry. Design and execute research, investigative or development projects to deal with new problems and issues. Demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge, understanding and practices. Practise in the context of new problems and circumstances.
Generic cognitive skills	Apply a constant and integrated approach to critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas, information and issues. Identify, conceptualise and offer original and creative insights into new, complex and abstract ideas, information and issues. Develop creative and original responses to problems and issues. Deal with very complex and/or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Use a significant range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/discipline, for example: • Communicate at an appropriate level to a range of audiences and adapt communication to the context and purpose. • Communicate at the standard of published academic work and/or critical dialogue and review with peers and experts in other specialisms. • Use a range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify software requirements to enhance work. • Critically evaluate numerical and graphical data.
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities. Take full responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others. Demonstrate leadership and/or originality in tackling and solving problems and issues. Work in ways which are reflective, self-critical and based on research/evidence. Deal with complex ethical and professional issues. Make informed judgements on new and emerging issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.

2.6   Summary of Key Points

- Fundamental to the SCQF are the 12 Levels, which reflect the current Scottish system of education and training.
- SCQF Level 1 is the least demanding and Level 12 the most demanding.
- The SCQF Level Descriptors allow broad comparisons to be made between learning and qualifications achieved in different contexts.
- SCQF Level Descriptors are generic statements that describe the characteristics, context and expected level of demand at each level of the Framework.
- SCQF Levels 2 to 12 are sub-divided into five characteristics.
- The SCQF Level Descriptors are the reference points that support the design and development of qualifications and learning programmes, support the recognition of prior learning, and provide guidance and information on opportunities for learner progression.

Notes

Section 3:
SCQF Credit Points

Section 3: SCQF Credit Points

3.1 Overview of this Section

This section provides information on SCQF Credit Points and how they are allocated to qualifications and learning programmes within the Framework.

3.2 Introduction to SCQF Credit Points

SCQF Credit Points give learners, employers and learning providers a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that has been achieved, or is required to complete a qualification or learning programme, at a given level of the Framework. SCQF Credit Points quantify learning outcomes that are subject to valid, reliable methods of assessment. The number of SCQF Credit Points is worked out on the basis of the number of notional learning hours that an 'average' learner at a specified SCQF Level might expect to take to achieve the learning outcomes, including the assessment.

By using credit as a measure, the SCQF is able to recognise any size of qualification or learning programme, provided that it meets the required criteria and that it takes a minimum of a notional 10 hours or more to achieve the learning outcomes. For qualifications and learning programmes of a significant size, it is advisable to allocate SCQF Credit Points to the individual units, modules or components as well as to the qualification or learning programme as a whole. However, this will depend on how the learning outcomes are contained within the structure of the qualification or learning programme.

There is no limit to the number of SCQF Credit Points that can be allocated. The determining factor in allocating the volume of SCQF Credit Points is the amount of time required to achieve the specified outcomes.

SCQF Credit Points can only be awarded to a learner when the learning outcomes have been achieved. There is no limit to the number of SCQF Credit Points that a learner can achieve.

The minimum number of SCQF Credit Points is one and full SCQF Credit Points are always allocated. Fractions of SCQF Credit Points cannot be allocated.

The criteria that distinguish grades of attainment are not included in the SCQF Level Descriptors. Judgement on how well a learner has performed, and the grading and classification systems used to report the learner's performance, are the responsibility of the relevant awarding body. The number of SCQF Credit Points awarded to the learner is not influenced by and is independent of the grade that is achieved.

3.3   Notional Learning Hours

One SCQF Credit Point represents a notional 10 hours of learning. This is notional because it is based on the time judged to be required for an 'average' learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes and does not measure the time actually taken by any individual learner. The amount of time actually taken by individuals will vary, but this does not affect the number of SCQF Credit Points that are awarded.

Notional learning hours should include all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes. It is made up of formal activities that involve teaching and tutor contact time; self-directed activities that involve study, research, applied learning, developing practice, reflection and review; and assessment activities that involve planning and completing assessment tasks. The mix of learning activities may vary according to the requirements of the qualification or learning programme. The following examples describe some appropriate learning activities that might be included in estimating the notional learning hours:

- Attending formal teaching sessions, such as lectures, classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars and tutorials;
- Involvement in informal learning such as community groups, community based workshops, youth groups, outdoor activities, trade unions, church activities, playgroups, political parties;
- Practical work in laboratories and other locations;
- Relevant ICT activities;
- Using libraries or learning resource centres for reading and research;
- Expected private study, revision and remedial work;
- Practice through gaining, using and refining skills in the workplace;
- Personal programme planning;
- Being counselled or mentored;
- Work-based learning;
- Self-directed study using online or text-based open learning materials;
- Reflection;
- Being assessed.

The need to undertake any or all of these learning activities will be considered when credit is allocated to a qualification or learning programme. The mix of learning activities will vary from qualification to qualification and programme to programme. For example, in school, the learning might be mostly classroom based; in further and higher education much of the learning time is spent outside of formal lectures and tutorials; in vocational learning, much of the learning will be work-based; and informal learning can take place in a wide variety of settings, for example in community and voluntary sector contexts.

3.4   General and Specific SCQF Credit Points

SCQF Credit Points, used to quantify learning outcomes to give them a value or currency, are described as **general** credit. They can assist learners by minimising the duplication of learning, as it may be possible to transfer SCQF Credit Points to a new qualification or learning programme that the learner wishes to undertake. The receiving body determines how many of the general SCQF Credit Points already achieved by the learner can be transferred. General credit that is incorporated into a new programme is known as **specific** credit. It is the responsibility of the receiving organisation or awarding body to decide how much specific credit can contribute to the new qualification or learning programme and the final decision rests with them. Further details on SCQF Credit Transfer are given in section 5.

3.5 SCQF Credit Points Allocated to Mainstream Qualifications

Most mainstream qualifications in Scotland have been credit rated. Within higher education, it is generally accepted that one year of full-time undergraduate study equates to 120 SCQF Credit Points. For example:

- The achievement of an Honours Degree requires the accumulation of 480 SCQF Credit Points, at SCQF Levels 7 to 10, at least 90 of which must be at SCQF Level 10;
- An SQA Higher National Diploma requires the accumulation of 240 SCQF Credit Points of which at least 64 must be at SCQF Level 8.

Qualification Descriptors setting out the design principles of Scotland's mainstream qualifications are given in Annex 3 and Annex 4.

3.6 SCQF Guidelines

There are SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating that support the principles and practice of determining the SCQF Credit Points for qualifications and learning programmes. Although there is an inter-relationship across the SCQF Guidelines, particular SCQF Guidelines have direct relevance to specific aspects of the Framework. Guidelines 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 have direct relevance to SCQF Credit Points.

Table 5: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 3 to 11

SCQF Guideline	Details
3	SCQF Credit Points are a measure of appropriate and defined learning outcomes at a specified SCQF Level.
4	One SCQF Credit Point equates to the learning outcomes achieved through a notional 10 hours of learning.
5	Notional learning hours refers to the time judged to be required by an 'average' learner at a particular SCQF Level to achieve defined learning outcomes. It includes all the learning activities relevant to the achievement of the outcomes, including undertaking and completion of assessment tasks.
6	The minimum number of SCQF Credit Points is **one**. Only full SCQF Credit Points are awarded. Fractions of SCQF Credit Points are not permissible.
7	SCQF Credit Points are always allocated at a specified SCQF Level, normally determined by the original design content of a unit of learning.
8	The number of SCQF Credit Points allocated to a unit of learning, or module, is independent of the perceived centrality or importance of the unit within any wider programme.
9	The number of SCQF Credit Points awarded is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved.
10	SCQF Credit Points are general in that they define a volume at a level of outcome within the SCQF. They become specific when related to transfer to a particular programme or to an individual's claim for credit towards a particular programme.
11	SCQF Credit Points can be transferred.

The SCQF Guidelines are intended to be used as a support to organisations and it is anticipated that they will apply them across all of their qualifications and learning programmes.

3.7 Summary of Key Points

- SCQF Credit Points give learners, employers and learning providers a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that has been achieved or is required to complete a qualification or learning programme at a given level of the Framework.
- The number of SCQF Credit Points is based on the notional learning hours that an 'average' learner might take to successfully complete a qualification or learning programme.
- The minimum number of SCQF Credit Points that can be allocated to a qualification or learning programme is **one**, representing a notional 10 hours of learning.
- Full SCQF Credit Points are always allocated. Fractions of SCQF Credit Points cannot be allocated.
- Notional learning hours take account of all the learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes.
- General SCQF Credit Points define the volume of learning.
- Specific SCQF Credit Points are General SCQF Credit Points that are recognised as being relevant for entry or transfer to a particular qualification or learning programme.

Section 4:
SCQF Credit Rating

Section 4: SCQF Credit Rating

4.1 Overview of this Section

This section provides information on using SCQF Levels and Credit Points for the process of credit rating. It provides a definition of credit rating and information on SCQF Credit Rating Bodies. Also included in the section are the:

- Design Principles and Common Core Set of Headings;
- SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating;
  - Guidelines 1 to 12, which refer to credit rating provision that has been developed internally within an SCQF Credit Rating Body's own organisation;
  - Guidelines 13 to 27, which refer to learning that has been submitted to an SCQF Credit Rating Body by a third party i.e. an organisation that is not an SCQF Credit Rating Body;
- Information on the SCQF credit rating process.

4.2 Definition of SCQF Credit Rating

Credit rating qualifications and learning programmes enables them to be placed in the SCQF.

- **Credit rating** is a process of professional judgement leading to a statement on the **SCQF Level** and **volume of SCQF Credit Points** for a qualification or learning programme.

Professional judgement is exercised by those qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of skill.

4.3 SCQF Credit Rating Bodies

SCQF credit rating can only be carried out by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies. These are:

- Scotland's colleges;
- Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA);
- Other organisations approved by the SCQF Partnership.

SCQF Credit Rating Bodies should establish credit rating processes in accordance with the SCQF Guidelines and with the Credit Rating Body's own quality assurance arrangements. These processes should be explicit, reliable, valid and available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance, for example by an external auditing body.

Scotland's colleges, SQA and HEIs are all subject to external quality assurance; the colleges through HM Inspectorate of Education, SQA through the Scottish Government and external auditors, and HEIs through QAA Scotland. All are required to have exacting procedures and standards of quality assurance for the process of credit rating.

Other SCQF Credit Rating Bodies are also required to operate appropriate quality assurance systems that offer a similar level of external quality assurance as part of the process of being approved to become an SCQF Credit Rating Body. Details of the criteria and the processes to become an SCQF Credit Rating Body are given in section 8 of the SCQF Handbook.

All SCQF Credit Rating Bodies can credit rate their own provision, and some are also approved to provide a credit rating service for others, referred to in the SCQF Guidelines as third party credit rating.

Details of all SCQF Credit Rating Bodies are available on the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk.

4.4 Design Principles

It is easier to credit rate at the design stage of a qualification or learning programme, when writers are considering matters such as learning outcomes, course content, qualification descriptors, design principles and the nature of the assessment required. The SCQF Level Descriptors can help qualification and learning programme designers consider the range of knowledge and skills required and match the required learning outcomes to the appropriate characteristics at a particular SCQF Level.

The SCQF is able to recognise larger programmes of learning run over significant periods of time and it is advisable to allocate SCQF Credit Points to the individual units, modules or components, provided that they are subject to assessment and quality assurance.
The number of SCQF Credit Points for the overall qualification or learning programme will be derived from the total number of SCQF Credit Points allocated to each component.

All SCQF Credit Rating Bodies will have quality assurance processes for qualification and learning programme approval, validation, accreditation or other related activities.

4.4.1 Common Core Set of Headings

Following consultation with education and training providers, a Common Core Set of Headings was produced to present details of qualifications and learning programmes. These should be used by organisations to describe to the public their qualifications or learning programmes in relation to the SCQF.

The Common Core Set of Headings is set out in Table 6 and can be added to as organisations see fit.

Table 6: Common Core set of Headings

A	Name of Qualification
B	SCQF Level
C	SCQF Credit Points
D	The Awarding Body
E	Aims and Outcomes of the Qualification or Learning Programme
F	Content, Design and Structure of the Qualification or Learning Programme (including any mandatory requirements or conditions of award)
G	Entry and Credit Transfer Routes
H	Progression

4.5 Criteria for Credit Rating

It is possible to credit rate a wide range of diverse learning provision such as that offered in colleges, universities, training providers, work-place learning, continuing professional development, and within the community, provided that the qualifications and learning programmes meet the required criteria, which are:

- The learning must be based on learning outcomes;
- The learning outcomes must take a minimum of a notional 10 hours to achieve;
- Learning outcomes must be subject to reliable and valid methods of assessment that are recorded;
- The learning is included within an appropriate quality assurance system.

4.6   Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do on successful completion of learning. The learning outcomes can be expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies. Learning outcomes can be assessed in a number of ways, e.g. via practical demonstrations, essays or external examinations.

4.7   SCQF Measures for Credit Rating

The two measures that are used to place qualifications or learning programmes in the Framework have been described in detail in sections 2 and 3. These are:

- The level of learning outcomes – described in terms of SCQF Levels;
- The volume of learning – described in terms of SCQF Credit Points.

4.8   Process of Credit Rating

4.8.1 Allocating an SCQF Level

When allocating an SCQF Level, it is important to consider the overall aims and focus of the qualification or learning programme. It is important to get a sense of the distinctions between the SCQF Levels and this will involve moving between levels as a whole and looking at the differences in the SCQF Levels of each of the five characteristics:

- Knowledge and understanding;
- Practice (applied knowledge and understanding);
- Generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis;
- Communication, ICT and numeracy;
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

The characteristic 'Communication, ICT and Numeracy' is included in the SCQF Level Descriptors under a separate heading. However, where one (or more) of these characteristics is the main component of a qualification or learning programme, e.g. a Diploma in Computing, then the learning outcomes should be considered under the other headings.

It is beneficial and easier to consider the level of learning when designing and developing qualifications and learning programmes rather than to allocate an SCQF Level and Credit Points retrospectively. However, whilst the process of allocating an SCQF Level and Credit Points is easier at the design stage, other models are possible and equally acceptable. The SCQF Level Descriptors can be used at any stage in the design, development and validation of qualifications and learning programmes.

Allocating an SCQF Level is a matter of professional judgement. The SCQF Credit Rating Body will be responsible for ensuring that the credit rating process and outcomes are consistent with relevant reference points. Therefore, the SCQF Level Descriptors should be used along with other reference sources that support benchmarking such as relevant qualification or programme descriptors, higher education subject benchmark information, SQA specifications and other appropriate sources of information and guidance. Wherever possible, the SCQF Level Descriptors should not be used as the sole reference source.

It is envisaged that a 'best fit' approach will be used when allocating an SCQF Level to a qualification or learning programme. This involves:

- Considering the overall aims of the qualification or learning programme, learning outcomes and assessment criteria;
- Identifying benchmark qualifications from national awards and other credit rated provision for comparison;
- Becoming familiar with the distinctions between the SCQF Levels;
- Referring to appropriate sources of information, advice and guidance.

4.8.1 Allocating an SCQF Level (continued)

The process to reach a decision on the appropriate SCQF Level will include individuals with knowledge of the subject and SCQF Levels to:

- Match the overall aims, learning outcomes and assessment requirements against the SCQF Level Descriptors;
- Refer to other appropriate reference points, such as subject benchmark information;
- Document the evidence making reference to the characteristics of the proposed SCQF Level.

It is recommended that after establishing a provisional level for a qualification or learning programme there should be a close comparison with the SCQF Level Descriptors for the levels above and below the proposed level to establish the 'best fit'.

If after this process the learning is not at the desired SCQF Level there would need to be a review and revision of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

4.8.2 Allocating the Overall SCQF Level of Qualifications and Learning Programmes

Qualifications and learning programmes may consist of separate components, units or modules at the same or at different SCQF Levels. The SCQF Levels allocated to each component of a qualification or learning programme should be reviewed together to establish an overall SCQF Level for for the qualification or learning programme. There are different models that can be applied to make a judgement on the appropriate overall SCQF Level:

- **Equal components:** all components, units or modules of a qualification or learning programme are at the same SCQF Level; then the qualification or learning programme would be allocated at this SCQF Level;

- **Exit level:** larger qualifications or learning programmes that have components, units or modules at different SCQF Levels are allocated to a final exit level for the overall qualification or learning programme. For example, Higher National Diplomas (SCQF Level 8) will normally have units at two or more SCQF Levels, and Honours Degrees (SCQF Level 10) have modules at four SCQF Levels. The final level of learning determines the SCQF Level for the qualification or learning programme;

- **Proportional design:** for qualifications or learning programmes that consist of components, units or modules at different SCQF Levels, there must be transparency within the qualification descriptors and design principles regarding the minimum number of SCQF Credit Points that determine the overall SCQF Level of the qualifications or learning programmes.

4.8.3 Allocating SCQF Credit

Allocating the number of SCQF Credit Points is the same for all levels of the Framework. It is not one of simple arithmetic, but the result of a process involving expert subject practitioners agreeing an allocation. This judgement will be based on experience, the use of appropriate reference points and of comparable sets of learning outcomes, and quality-assured assessment arrangements.

One SCQF Credit Point represents a notional 10 hours of learning. This is notional because it is based on the time required by an 'average' learner at a specified level to achieve the learning outcomes and does not measure the time actually taken by any individual learner. The amount of time actually taken by individuals will vary, but this does not affect the number of SCQF Credit Points that are awarded.

4.8.3 Allocating SCQF Credit (continued)

SCQF Credit Points are allocated exclusively on the volume of learning, determined by the amount of notional learning hours that are required to achieve the learning outcomes. Their allocation is independent of the perceived centrality or importance of a unit of learning within any wider qualification or learning programme.

Notional learning hours should include all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes. It is made up of formal activities which involve teaching and tutor contact time; self-directed activities that involve study, research, applied learning, developing practice, reflection and review; and assessment activities which involve planning and completing assessment tasks. The following examples describe some appropriate learning activities that might be included in estimating the notional learning hours:

- Attending formal teaching sessions, such as lectures, classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars and tutorials;
- Involvement in informal learning such as community groups, community-based workshops, youth groups, outdoor activities, trade unions, church activities, playgroups, political parties;
- Practical work in laboratories and other locations;
- Relevant ICT activities;
- Using libraries or learning resource centres for reading and research;
- Expected private study, revision and remedial work;
- Practice through gaining, using and refining skills in the workplace;
- Personal programme planning;
- Being counselled or mentored;
- Work-based learning;
- Self-directed study using online or text-based open learning materials;
- Reflection;
- Being assessed.

The need to undertake any or all of these learning activities will be considered when credit is allocated to a qualification or learning programme. The mix of learning activities will vary from qualification to qualification and programme to programme. For example, in school, the learning might be mostly classroom based; in higher and further education much of the learning time is spent outside of formal lectures and tutorials; in vocational learning, much of the learning will be work-based; and informal learning can take place in a wide variety of settings for example in community and voluntary sector contexts.

4.9 SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating Organisations' own Qualifications and Learning Programmes

Guidelines 1 to 12 support the principles and practice of allocating an SCQF Level and SCQF Credit Points for qualifications and learning programmes **for which the organisation has full responsibility**. SCQF Credit Rating Bodies may wish to enhance these processes to support credit rating in their organisation. The quality assurance arrangements for credit rating should be integrated within SCQF Credit Rating Bodies general arrangements for assuring quality and standards.

Table 7: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 1 to 12 (Own Provision)

Guideline	Details
1	Allocation of a level to learning is essentially a matter of professional judgement using appropriate reference points such as the SCQF Level Descriptors, relevant programme descriptors, higher education subject benchmark information, SQA specifications and other appropriate sources of information and guidance.
2	SCQF Levels are not related directly to years of study. They are defined by the extent of demands made of the learner in each of the five broad categories of competence.
3	SCQF Credit Points are a measure of appropriate and defined learning outcomes at a specified SCQF Level.
4	One SCQF Credit Point equates to the learning outcomes achieved through a notional 10 hours of learning.
5	Notional learning hours refers to the time judged to be required by an 'average' learner at a particular SCQF Level to achieve defined learning outcomes. It includes all the learning activities relevant to the achievement of the outcomes, including undertaking and completion of assessment tasks.
6	The minimum number of SCQF Credit Points is **one**. Only full SCQF Credit Points are awarded. Fractions of SCQF Credit Points are not permissible.
7	SCQF Credit Points are always allocated at a specified SCQF Level, normally determined by the original design content of a unit of learning.
8	The number of SCQF Credit Points allocated to a unit of learning, or module, is independent of the perceived centrality or importance of the unit within any wider programme.
9	The number of SCQF Credit Points awarded is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved.
10	SCQF Credit Points are general in that they define a volume at a level of outcome within the SCQF. They become specific when related to transfer to a particular programme or to an individual's claim for credit towards a particular programme.
11	SCQF Credit Points can be transferred.
12	The SCQF Credit Rating Body will be responsible for ensuring that the credit rating process and outcomes are consistent with relevant reference points.

4.10 SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating Learning that has been Submitted to an SCQF Credit Rating Body by a Third Party

SCQF Credit Rating Bodies may offer a credit rating service for others which is often called 'third party credit rating'. SCQF Guidelines 13 to 27 support the principles for third party credit rating.

A third party submitting provision to an SCQF Credit Rating Body is referred to as the **'submitting body'** and the qualifications or learning programmes that are credit rated for a third party are known as **'third party provision'**.

All Scotland's colleges, universities and the Scottish Qualifications Authority can credit rate third party provision. However, new SCQF Credit Rating Bodies approved by the SCQF Partnership are required to have further approval from the SCQF Partnership to do so[5].

[5]*See section 8: Becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body*

4.11 Requirements for Credit Rating Third Party Provision

When credit rating qualifications and learning programmes from submitting bodies, SCQF Credit Rating Bodies should show as much care and diligence as they do when they credit rate their own awards, and credit rating should be aligned to the organisation's own arrangements for quality assurance and standards. It is assumed that SCQF Credit Rating Bodies, credit rating qualifications and learning programmes of others, will draw on the existing information and procedures that they use to credit rate their own provision.

4.11.1 Documented Evidence

SCQF Credit Rating Bodies are required to have documented evidence from submitting bodies which includes evidence on assessment processes at the point of application[6]:

- The principles, procedures and processes of the assessment of outcomes. These should be explicit, valid and reliable and involve appropriate elements of external quality assurance procedures beyond the submitting body's delivering staff but could still be within the organisation;
- Evidence that the assessment criteria and processes are appropriate to the defined learning outcomes;
- Evidence that the assessment arrangements are as secure as they can practically be against plagiarism, cheating and other forms of fraud;
- Effective procedures for approving, supervising and reviewing assessment strategies and assessment decisions, including taking into account views and recommendations from external persons used in the quality assurance procedures;
- Clear criteria for marking assessments, particularly for distinguishing a pass/fail;
- The arrangements for re-examination/assessment;
- Details showing the appropriateness, effectiveness and rigour of any system of RPL in order to ensure that learners have demonstrated achievement of the outcomes;
- Methods of proper and secure recording of learner achievement, including the issuing of formal records;
- Evidence that due regard is paid to the role of external judgements and monitoring of the submitting body's assessment procedures, transcripts or certificates.

4.11.2 Externality

The extent of externality must be clear and the submitting body must have an explicit policy on and arrangements for the appointment of external persons (Guideline 20 of the SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating). This policy should ensure that external roles are clear and that the external persons are fully informed of and fully competent to carry out their roles. It is a matter for the discretion of the SCQF Credit Rating Body whether it requires to give prior approval for any such appointments.

Periodic reports from external assessors/verifiers, auditors, examiners or evaluators should include:

- Whether or not the assessment processes and criteria have been applied consistently and remain appropriate to the achievement of the defined outcomes;
- When a programme is delivered, whether learners have achieved the outcomes, e.g. through the endorsement of pass lists or other records of achievement.

External person(s) may have other roles to fulfill within the quality assurance arrangements of the submitting body, but they must include the above for SCQF credit rating purposes.

[6]*See Guideline 19*

4.11.3 Personnel

The SCQF Credit Rating Body should appoint an appropriate person to be the principal link between it and the submitting body. This person should not be responsible for the credit rating decision but could be a member of the credit rating group which offers advice to the submitting body.

An appropriate panel or group should be formed to consider applications for credit rating. Its constitution is a matter for the SCQF Credit Rating Body. It might take the form of a standing committee with external members as specialist advisors or an ad hoc group of specialists. Whatever its constitution, its membership should have among them:

- Knowledge and understanding of the SCQF, the SCQF Level Descriptors and the agreed processes for credit rating as set out in the SCQF Handbook and SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating;
- Experience of credit rating;
- Experience of quality assurance, including programme approval or review;
- Experience of programme delivery and learner assessment in the relevant subject area and at the level of the programme being submitted for credit rating.

The group requires to be satisfied that the submitting body has a clear and robust understanding of the learning outcomes and the relationship between these and the assessment.

The SCQF Credit Rating Body should as far as possible assure itself of the good standing of the submitting body and should provide written guidance on the SCQF Credit Rating processes and criteria to the submitting body (Guideline 15 of the SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating).

4.11.4 Outcomes of SCQF Credit Rating Decisions and Monitoring for Third Party Provision

There are four possible outcomes of the credit rating process for provision that has been submitted to an SCQF Credit Rating Body by a third party. These are to:

- Credit rate unconditionally;
- Credit rate conditionally;
- Defer a decision on credit rating, subject to amendments being made to the proposal;
- Decline to credit rate.

The duration of credit rating before review is normally three to five years, but it is open to the SCQF Credit Rating Body to specify a lesser amount of time, if that is more appropriate.

Where provision is credit rated conditionally, the requirements to lift the conditions should be clearly set out.

Submitting bodies may be given the opportunity to submit revised proposals if credit rating is not granted. Some SCQF Credit Rating Bodies may not wish to credit rate programmes without some form of additional quality assurance relationship with the submitting body.

SCQF Credit Rating may also be undertaken alongside other processes, such as validation, approvals or accreditation, and the SCQF Credit Rating Body may wish some additional role in the quality assurance arrangements of the third party.

4.11.5 Costs

The process of credit rating third party provision has cost implications for both sides. This will include document preparation, scrutiny, annual reporting, meetings and travel. Each SCQF Credit Rating Body will decide how it meets or recovers these costs.

4.11.6 SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating Third Party Qualifications and Learning Programmes

The SCQF Guidelines for credit rating third party qualifications and learning programmes set out:

- The general processes to be undertaken by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies;
- The information which should be submitted by submitting bodies;
- The outcomes of the credit rating decision and the monitoring; and
- The actions required by both the credit rating body and submitting bodies. These are set out in the following Tables, 8a to 8d.

General Processes to be Undertaken by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies

Table 8a: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 13 to 17

Guideline	Details
13	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should offer an appropriate person to act as the principal link between the credit rating body and the submitting body.
14	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should establish systematic arrangements for credit rating.
15	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should give written guidance on its SCQF credit rating processes and criteria to the submitting body.
16	Opportunities for initial informal discussions about the processes and potential outcomes of the proposed credit rating should be offered.
17	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should assure itself, as far as is practically possible, of the general good standing of the submitting body.

Information to be Provided by Submitting Bodies to Credit Rating Bodies

Table 8b: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 18 to 21

Guideline	Details
18	Submitting bodies should provide the SCQF Credit Rating Body with a formal written proposal.
19	Documented evidence on assessment processes must be submitted to the SCQF Credit Rating Body at the point of application.
20	The assessment system of a submitting body that results in the award of credit points to a programme of learning should be subject to external assessment from outside the organisation on a regular basis to confirm that the processes and judgements made, linked to Guideline 19, are being adhered to.
21	Certificates issued to learners, indicating the SCQF Level and Credit Points should specify the SCQF Credit Rating Body.

Outcomes of Credit Rating Decisions and Monitoring

Table 8c: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 22 to 24

Guideline	Details
22	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should specify the maximum duration of the credit rating before review.
23	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should clarify the distinction between general and specific credit and explicitly identify the nature of the credit being considered.
24	Any conditions should be defined by the SCQF Credit Rating Body

Actions Required of the Credit Rating Body and Submitting Bodies

Table 8d: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating 25 to 27

Guideline	Details
25	The credit rating process and its results should be reported to the SCQF Credit Rating Body's system of governance and copied to the submitting body.
26	Regular reports should be submitted to the SCQF Credit Rating Body.
27	Submitting bodies should explain their credit ratings to their learners.

The SCQF Quality Committee reviews the SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating on a regular basis and updates them as and when appropriate. Future changes to the Guidelines will be highlighted on the SCQF website.

4.12 SCQF Database

Whether credit rating their own qualifications and learning programme or providing a credit rating service for others, SCQF Credit Rating Bodies should update the SCQF Database with details of the qualifications and learning programmes that they have credit rated. The database provides an essential reference and key information on credit rated provision to all SCQF Credit Rating Bodies, learners and prospective learners, guidance advisors and employers. The SCQF Database can be accessed via the SCQF website.

4.13 Summary of Key Points

- Credit rating is a process of professional judgement leading to a statement on the SCQF Level and number of SCQF Credit Points for a qualification or learning programme.
- SCQF credit rating can only be carried out by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies.
- Credit rating processes should be established by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies in accordance with the SCQF Guidelines and with the Credit Rating Body's own quality assurance arrangements.
- SCQF Credit Rating Bodies can credit rate their own provision and most can also provide a credit rating service for others.
- Guidelines 1 to 12 are for the SCQF Credit Rating Bodies' own learning provision.
- Guidelines 13 to 27 are for learning that has been submitted to SCQF Credit Rating Bodies by third parties.
- Evidence of the externality of the quality assurance processes of the submitting body is essential.
- The SCQF Credit Rating Body should appoint an appropriate person to be the principal link between them and the submitting body.
- An appropriate panel or group should be formed to consider applications for credit rating.
- The submitting body should provide the SCQF Credit Rating Body with a written formal proposal and documented evidence of the assessment processes.
- SCQF Credit Rating Bodies must update the SCQF Database of credit rated qualifications and learning programmes at www.scqf.org.uk.

Section 5:
SCQF Credit Transfer

Section 5: SCQF Credit Transfer

5.1 Overview of this Section

This section provides an overview of SCQF Credit Transfer, which is the process of recognising prior learning that has been credit rated. The principles that underpin SCQF Credit Transfer and how it is used are given along with the SCQF Guidelines that support consistent approaches across all sectors of lifelong learning.

5.2 The Recognition of Prior Learning: Previously Assessed and Credit Rated

The recognition of both formal and informal learning enables learners to make clearer connections between the learning they have already achieved and future learning opportunities, helping to promote self-direction and building confidence.

Learners may have already achieved SCQF Credit Points for learning that they have previously undertaken and it may be possible for all or some of these SCQF Credit Points to be transferred to another qualification or learning programme. The key focus of credit transfer decisions should be on the benefit to the learner and on support for effective learning pathways. Transparency in decision-making for credit recognition and transfer is a critical factor in supporting and encouraging the on-going involvement of learners in education and training. The principles that underpin how SCQF Credit Transfer is used are set out in the SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer given in this section.

5.3 Introduction to SCQF Credit Transfer

The SCQF helps to promote transparency and consistency in the processes involved in making decisions about SCQF Credit Transfer. In principle, SCQF Credit Transfer can only take place where SCQF Credit Points have been allocated as a result of a credit rating judgement by an SCQF Credit Rating Body. SCQF Credit can be transferred for learning from a wide range of activities that has previously been assessed and awarded SCQF Credit Points, although not necessarily by the organisation from which recognition is being sought.

SCQF Credit Transfer can minimise the duplication of learning for learners who can evidence their learning at a particular level and subject area. It also facilitates articulation and progression routes for learners, such as that from HND to Degree.

SCQF Credit Transfer should facilitate access and promote new learning opportunities without compromising the quality or standards of qualifications and learning programmes. Those responsible for designing qualifications and learning programmes are encouraged to make clear where there are opportunities for credit transfer.

SCQF Credit Transfer arrangements can assist advanced entry into other programmes and help learners who want to:

- Move between faculties in a university or departments in a college, or to move between universities or colleges;
- Move from an HNC or HND course at a college to a degree course at a university, or vice versa;
- Count credit rated learning from other formal education, training and vocational contexts towards another qualification or learning programme.

However, this does not imply that SCQF Credit Points can be automatically accepted for entry or transfer to another qualification or learning programme. The final decision regarding the number of SCQF Credit Points that can be transferred rests with the organisation providing the programme for which credit transfer is sought – the receiving organisation or awarding body.

5.4   General and Specific Credit Transfer

SCQF Credit Points can be used to assist learners in transferring between qualifications and learning programmes. Where the receiving organisation uses all or some of the general credit from previous learning towards a new programme of study, credit transfer has taken place. SCQF General Credit Points become SCQF Specific Credit Points when transferred to a particular programme either as an agreed articulation route or allocated to an individual's claim for credit towards a particular programme.

Many organisations will establish specific articulation arrangements that enable credit to be transferred within previous agreements. The SCQF Guidelines for SCQF Credit Transfer, detailed in paragraph 5.6, assist in the development of such arrangements.

How much specific credit can be incorporated into a new programme is a matter for the receiving organisation's judgement, based on comparing the outcomes of the achieved learning with the requirements of the new qualification or learning programme.

The following lists some scenarios that illustrate where learners have achieved learning that has been credit rated and uses the credit to undertake further study:

- Achieved a Professional Development Award (PDA) in Engineering Practice: Electrical Engineering at SCQF Level 7 with 48 SCQF Credit Points and wants to do an HNC in Engineering Practice. The 48 Credit Points for the PDA Units count towards the HNC and the learner has only to achieve another 48 Credit Points from the Units and Graded Units of the Group Award structure to achieve the HNC;
- Completed the HNC in Social Care with SVQ3 in Health and Social Care (Adults) and wants to do a BA in Social Work. One university transfers 120 General SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 7 as specific credit (the whole of year one) towards the BA;
- Completed the first year of a Medical Degree at one university and wants to transfer to a Science Degree at another university. The previously achieved learning has 120 General SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 7. The receiving university transfers 100 of these as Specific Credit at SCQF Level 7 towards their degree;
- Completed part of a Degree in Engineering at a university and wants to transfer to an HND in Information Technology at one of Scotland's colleges. The learning achieved at the university has 80 General SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 7, and part of that is on computer-aided design. The college transfers 20 as Specific Credit at SCQF Level 7 towards the HND.

5.5   Arrangements for SCQF Credit Transfer

Arrangements within organisations for SCQF Credit Transfer should include policies and procedures that are explicit and fair, are applied consistently and are regularly monitored and reviewed. Information to both staff and learners should be clear and accessible.

Staff with responsibility for making decisions about the transfer of credit should have sound knowledge of the SCQF as well as knowledge and experience of the subject area and level of learning being considered including, where appropriate, the requirements of professional and regulatory bodies.

Staff at receiving organisations or awarding bodies make judgements on how much general credit will be accepted as specific credit by comparing the outcomes of the previous learning with the requirements of their qualification or learning programme. They must be satisfied that the content and level of previous credit rated learning is compatible with the new qualification or learning programme. This decision will depend upon the nature and content of the learning for which the credit has been given and the requirements of the qualification or learning programme into which transfer is being sought.

5.5 Arrangements for SCQF Credit Transfer (continued)

Learners should also be supported and provided with information and advice. Applicants seeking the transfer of credit to join another learning programme should be supported primarily by the receiving organisation. However, support may also be required from the previous learning provider; for example, where a specific articulation agreement exists. Forms of support could include:

- Pre-entry preparation courses or advice;
- Post-entry targeted support courses or advice;
- Personal development plans for learners;
- 'Buddy' systems.

In establishing arrangements for support, factors to consider include:

- The size of the cohort progressing;
- The risk of stigmatising learners as 'needing' support;
- The subject discipline;
- Whether additional programmes are required to bridge gaps in organisational culture - where, for instance, there may be significant changes in expectations.

Students will require information on the:

- Costs involved;
- Minimum and maximum amount of credit that can be transferred;
- Implications for any potential qualifications or learning programmes; and
- Requirements of relevant professional and regulatory bodies, where appropriate.

SCQF Credit Transfer decisions should be timely so that a learner's ability to access learning opportunities is not unnecessarily hindered.

The SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer are not intended to be onerous and any organisation with quality assurance procedures in place should be able to readily identify how its procedures integrate with these Guidelines.

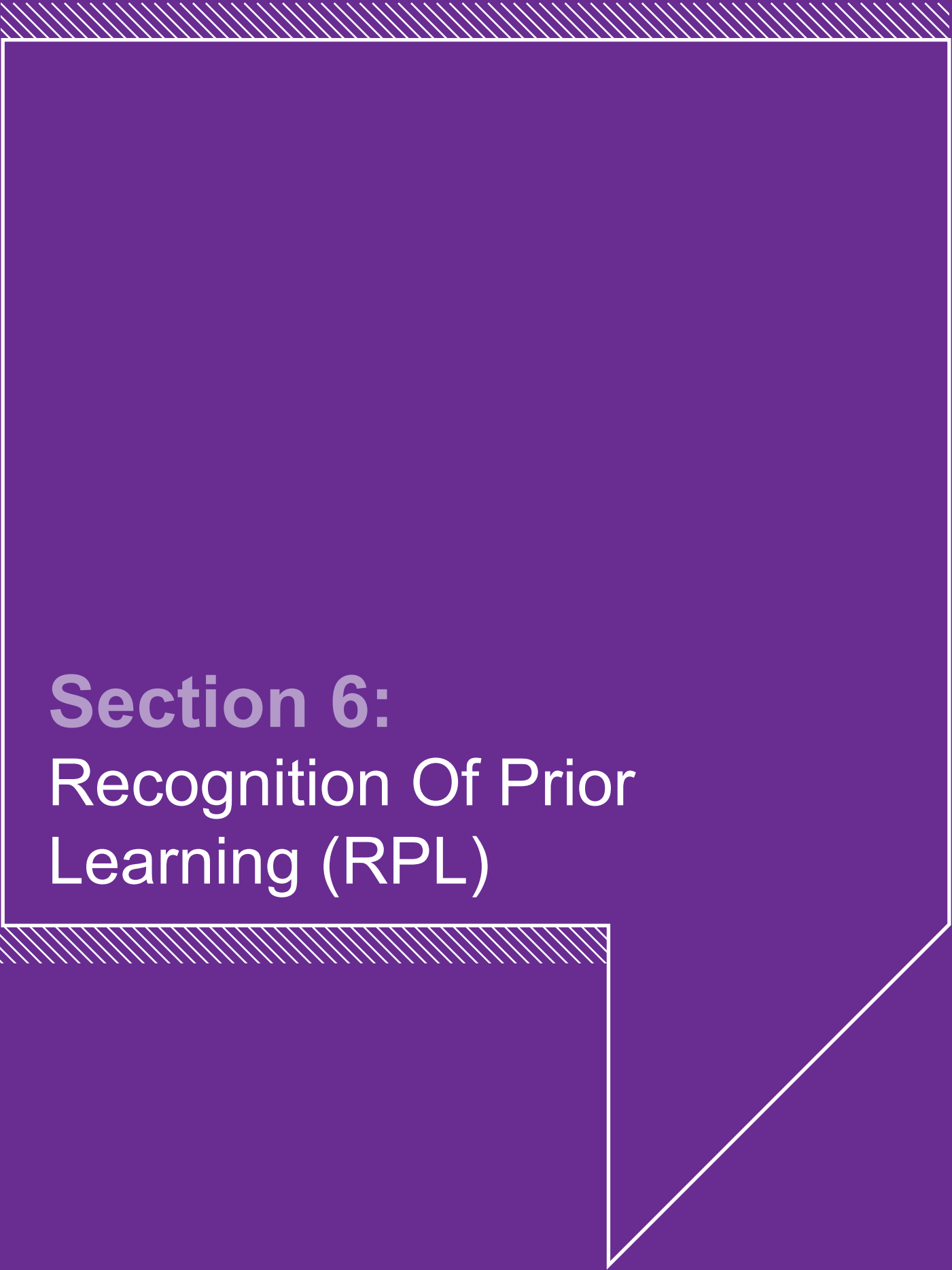## 5.6 SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer

The SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer have been written as general statements of principles and procedures, applicable at any level of the SCQF. They are not prescriptive and are intended to be used as a support to organisations, rather than to be restrictive. The way in which they are applied in practice will depend on professional judgement. The SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer are given in Table 9 and are also given in Annex 1.

Table 9: SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer 28 to 37

Guideline	Details
28	Procedures for the transfer of credit should be embedded in general good practice in assuring quality and standards.
29	Policies, procedures and information available to potential applicants, existing learners and staff should be clear, explicit and accessible.
30	Receiving organisations should establish when it is appropriate for them to deal with applications for the transfer of credit.
31	Staff should be competent to undertake their responsibilities.
32	Appropriate support should be offered to applicants for credit transfer and to those who have made successful claims.
33	Policies and procedures should be monitored and reviewed.
34	Qualification and learning programme development and design should promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer.
35	Articulation arrangements should be managed flexibly and actively.
36	Credit transferred is of equal standing to the credit awarded to the learning programme entered.
37	Applications for the transfer of credit from qualifications and learning programmes awarded by non-SCQF credit rating organisations should be considered in the context of the specific procedures set out in the SCQF Handbook.

5.7   Summary of Key Points

- The SCQF helps promote transparency and consistency in the processes involved in making decisions about SCQF Credit Transfer.
- SCQF Credit Transfer minimises the duplication of learning for learners who can demonstrate learning at a particular level and subject area.
- Staff with responsibility for making decisions about the transfer of credit should have the support of their organisation in terms of the required resources.
- Information to both staff and learners should be clear and accessible.
- Learners should also be supported and provided with information and advice.
- Receiving organisations or awarding bodies make judgements on how much specific credit will be accepted by comparing the outcomes of the previous learning with the requirements of their qualification or learning programme.
- Organisations should establish formal articulation arrangements that enable credit to be transferred within previous agreements as appropriate.

Section 6:
Recognition Of Prior Learning (RPL)

Section 6: Recognition of Prior Learning

6.1 Overview of this Section

This section sets out the key features and principles of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for learning that has not been credit rated. It provides an explanation of formative and summative recognition and identifies the benefits of RPL for learners and other stakeholders.

6.2 Recognition of Prior Learning: Not Previously Assessed or Credit Rated

Where individuals have gained learning informally, such as through life, work and voluntary activities, it may be possible to use RPL to have this learning recognised. This includes knowledge and skills gained:

- Outside of formal learning situations;
- Through informal learning and training in the workplace, the community and/or the voluntary sector;
- From continuing professional development activities;
- From independent learning.

RPL can be for personal or career development or to gain credit towards other qualifications or learning programmes. It helps learners make clearer connections between the learning they have already achieved and future learning and/or career opportunities.

Benchmarking an individual's learning against the SCQF Level Descriptors can help them to identify the appropriate level of options for progression. This can be carried out by a learning or guidance provider or by the individual themselves.   This type of recognition is known as '*formative recognition*' and does not result in the award of SCQF Credit Points.

It is possible for an individual's learning to be formally recognised resulting in the award of SCQF Credit Points by an SCQF Credit Rating Body. This form of recognition is known as *'summative recognition'* which involves a formal assessment of the learner's prior informal or experiential learning. This may also be referred to as the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Through the RPL process, the knowledge and skills identified from informal learning can be combined with formal learning that has already been assessed and credit rated to produce a personal profile for the purposes of credit transfer, progression to further formal and informal learning or for personal and career development planning.

6.3 Key Premise of RPL

The key premise of RPL is that:

- Recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone;
- The learning that is recognised should be transferable;
- SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL are valued the same as those gained through credit rated learning.

Collaboration between sectors is needed to meet the RPL needs of learners more effectively. Links between learning providers and other organisations in supporting individuals to recognise their learning within the context of the SCQF would be beneficial to developing robust and consistent processes.

6.4   Core Principles of RPL

Although learning providers can use a variety of different approaches to RPL to meet the needs and goals of individual learners, the core principles of RPL, set out in Table 10, should be followed.

Table 10: SCQF Core Principles for RPL

Core Principles	Details
Learner-focused	RPL should be a voluntary activity on the part of the learner. The learner's needs and reasons for recognition should be paramount. RPL should be a gateway to learning, not a barrier. RPL should promote the positive aspects of an individual's learning experience, not its deficiency.
Accessible	RPL should be an accessible and inclusive process, applicable to all learners at all levels. Accessibility can be facilitated through: • Awareness raising; • Initial information, advice and guidance; • Manageable systems in terms of time and money from the perspective of both the learner and the receiving organisation; • Processes that are easy to understand and easy to implement; • Embedding RPL in the design stage of qualifications or learning programmes so that it becomes an integral part of the delivery of learning.
Flexible	To address the diversity of learner needs, goals and experiences, a range of different approaches that support RPL for learners and for assessment should be available in the different lifelong learning sectors.
Reliable, Transparent & Consistent	In managing RPL processes, reliability, transparency and consistency are necessary to ensure confidence in the outcomes.
Quality Assured	RPL for credit should be integrated within existing quality assurance processes and should be available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance arrangements.

6.5   Types of Recognition

6.5.1 Formative Recognition

Formative recognition does not result in the award of SCQF Credit Points. It involves using the SCQF to benchmark learning achievement without using a formal process of assessment and credit rating.

Formative recognition can be achieved by comparing the outcomes of an individual's learning with the SCQF Level Descriptors. This can also be the first step towards formal recognition for credit through summative recognition processes.

Formative recognition supports personal learning and career development through producing an individual learning plan or personal development plan. It can help to:

- Build learner confidence;
- Recognise skills and knowledge gained through experience;
- Identify ways in which these skills and knowledge can be developed through further learning opportunities;
- Support career and/or professional development.

6.5.2 Summative Recognition

Summative recognition results in the award of SCQF Credit Points. It involves formal assessment and then the award of SCQF Credit Points for prior learning that has not already been assessed or credit rated.

An individual's prior learning is compared against the aims and/or outcomes of the qualification or learning programme or part(s) of the qualification or learning programme, for which summative recognition is being sought. The process of summative recognition will determine the SCQF Level and the number of SCQF Credit Points that can be awarded to the prior learning and may result in the award of specific credit within a qualification or learning programme or entry to a qualification or learning programme as an alternative to normal entry requirements.

The formal award of SCQF Levels and Credit Points for the recognition of prior learning can only be undertaken by SCQF Credit Rating Bodies within the context of clearly defined quality assurance mechanisms.

Summative recognition can support the process of transition to gain entry to or credit within a formal qualification or learning programme.

6.5.3 Benefits of RPL for Learners

The RPL process of reflection can increase self-confidence by recognising skills, knowledge and achievement thereby increasing the individual's motivation to continue learning. RPL can be undertaken by learners for personal and career development; to support the transition between informal and formal learning; and for gaining credit for entry to and/or credit within formal programmes of study.

Benchmarking an individual's learning against the SCQF Level Descriptors enables the learner to identify possible learning opportunities and/or progression routes to build on that learning. Progression routes might include a formal learning programme at an appropriate level or an informal learning programme within a workplace or community based setting.

RPL can minimise the duplication of learning for individuals. The award of SCQF Credit Points may contribute to other qualifications or learning programme that the learner wishes to undertake, thereby reducing the amount of time it takes to achieve them and the amount of time away from the workplace.

RPL can be undertaken by a wide range of learners and can support individuals with personal learning and career development planning. It can help learners to:

- Think about what they have achieved through their life experiences in terms of their strengths and skills;
- Benchmark their knowledge and skills against the SCQF Level Descriptors to identify the level of their learning in particular areas;
- Think about their goals and what they need to do to achieve them; for example join a vocational or academic qualification or learning programme at a college or at an HEI, do a training course, apply for or change jobs;
- Consider their options and make decisions about the direction they wish to take in terms of further learning opportunities or career development;
- Ease the transition from informal to formal learning by enabling both them and others to value their achievements and to recognise the importance of their learning through experience;
- Develop their analytical and learning skills through the process of undertaking RPL itself;
- Prepare an RPL claim for credit to gain entry to or credit within a qualification or learning programme at a college, an HEI or a training provider;
- RPL may allow entry at an advanced level thus shortening the period of study.

6.5.3 Benefits of RPL for Learners (continued)

Learners who might gain particular benefit from RPL include:

- Adults returning to learning;
- Jobseekers seeking recognition of their skills gained through both informal and formal learning;
- People wanting to improve existing qualifications;
- Those wanting to re-train or change careers;
- People who have undertaken learning within a community context or training in the workplace or through community-based learning;
- People who have gained a range of skills and knowledge through volunteering or through activities or projects within their community;
- School-aged students who have undertaken significant extra-curricular activities.

6.5.4 Benefits for Learning and Training Providers

RPL also has benefits for learning and training providers as it can support organisational strategies of retention, guidance and learner support by identifying the needs of learners before entry. By using a consistent and recorded approach to RPL, decisions are transparent. This can assist admissions staff in reaching decisions about an applicant's ability to successfully undertake the qualification or learning programme.

The development of RPL processes can support developments in learning and teaching as it can contribute to curriculum development in relation to the nature of learning, knowledge and assessment.

RPL is integral to the development and operation of work-based learning programmes. RPL claims for credit are often based on recent or current workplace practice, which can provide a useful source of discussion material for learners within the context of a formal qualification or learning programme and can enhance their understanding of the connection between theory and practice.

6.6 Support Development of Learning Partnerships

RPL processes linked to formative and summative recognition may require collaboration between learning providers across the different sectors in order to ensure the needs of the learner are most effectively met.

The provision of RPL to learners across the different sectors may require the development of learning partnerships between colleges, HEIs, employers, professional and statutory bodies, community learning and voluntary sector learning providers, as well as organisations such as Skills Development Scotland.

The community planning agenda will further increase this form of partnership, for example through local strategic partnerships.

6.7 Benefits for Community Learning and Development Sector, Voluntary Sector, Education and Guidance Providers

Activities related to RPL for personal/career development, or formative recognition, already take place within learning and training provision across the different sectors. By adopting the use of the SCQF Level Descriptors, learning and training providers can be assisted in these activities. Benchmarking an individual's learning to the SCQF Level Descriptors assists in providing guidance to the individual on ways in which they can use and build on their existing skills and knowledge in terms of further learning and career opportunities.

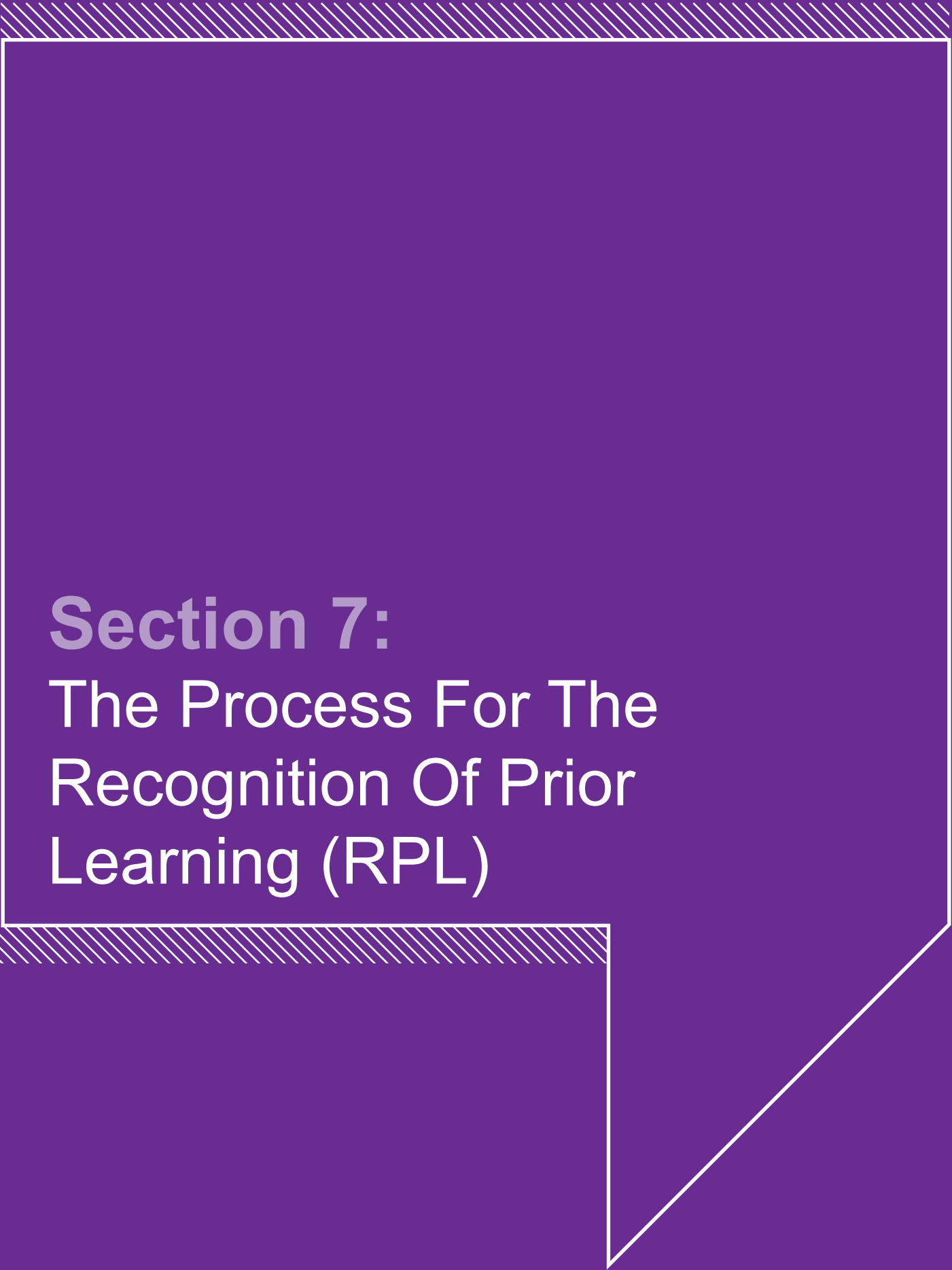## 6.8 Benefits for Employers and Employees

RPL can support the training and staff development strategies of employers and voluntary organisations in diverse workplace settings. Matching employees' transferable skills and knowledge to appropriate roles can result in increased job satisfaction, thus improving employee retention.

Using the SCQF Level Descriptors can help reduce employers' recruitment and training costs by assisting the identification of an individual's existing skills, knowledge and experience that can be transferred to match the requirements of job profiles. As part of the RPL process the individual's reflection on their learning can generate new ideas and developments in the workplace.

6.9 Summary of Key Points

- RPL can be applied to all prior learning that has not previously been assessed or credit rated.
- Recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone.
- RPL enables learners to make clearer connections between the learning they have already achieved and future learning opportunities.
- RPL can help individuals gain recognition of informal and experiential learning to support further learning and training.
- Formative recognition involves using the SCQF to benchmark learning achievement without using a formal process of assessment.
- Summative recognition involves formal assessment and then the award of SCQF Credit Points for the prior learning that has not already been credit rated.
- Credit awarded as a result of RPL is valued the same as credit gained though credit rated learning.
- RPL has clear benefits for learners, learning and training providers, community learning and development sector, voluntary sector, guidance providers, employers and employees.

Notes

Section 7:

The Process For The Recognition Of Prior Learning (RPL)

Section 7: The Process for the Recognition of Prior Learning

7.1 Overview of this Section

This section provides guidance on developing processes and managing procedures that support the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to ensure a consistent approach across all sectors of lifelong learning. It also provides information on the process for RPL and the SCQF Guidelines for RPL, which are also available in Annex 1.

7.2 Key Features of the RPL Process

When developing and operating processes for RPL, learning providers should ensure the following key features are in place:

- Initial information and guidance for learners on the RPL procedures that are in place in the organisation;
- The provision of clear details of the costs for RPL;
- Support for learners in the reflective process to:
    - identify learning through experience (skills, knowledge and understanding);
    - reflect on previous experience;
    - select and present evidence of that learning;
    - identify areas for further learning.
- Benchmarking learning within the context of the SCQF;
- Identification of learning pathways;
- Support for learners in the transition between informal learning contexts and formal learning;
- Support for staff engaged in supporting learners and assessment of RPL;
- Application of a monitoring process for RPL procedures;
- Integration of the RPL process within the overall quality assurance systems.

7.2.1 Collaboration

Collaboration between sectors should be encouraged to meet the needs of the learner. Links should be encouraged between learning providers and other organisations that support learners and potential learners to gain recognition for their prior learning within the context of the SCQF. Collaboration should extend to the sharing of case studies, examples of good practice, and approaches to staff and learner support and assessment.

7.3 Procedures for RPL

It is important to ensure that learners clearly understand the RPL procedures adopted by organisations and the possible outcomes of RPL before they make the decision to proceed.

7.3.1 Clarity of Role Definition

The roles and responsibilities of the learner and organisation should be clearly defined. Staff involved in managing and supporting the RPL process should be provided with appropriate training and support.

7.3.2 Initial Information and Guidance

For some learners, the process of formative recognition[7] may be a preparatory stage to that of summative recognition[8]. The process of identifying learning through reflection and providing evidence of this is common to both forms of recognition. Learners may require some information and guidance on ways in which their prior learning can be related to and compared against other standards and requirements. For example, those who want:

- **Recognition for personal/career development** will require information on the set of core or subject-specific skills or national occupational standards;
- **Bridging to support the transition between informal and formal learning** will require information on the core learning skills required to successfully undertake a formal qualification or learning programme;
- **Entry to a qualification or learning programme** will require details of the entry requirements;
- **Credit within a qualification or learning programme** will require guidance to compare their learning achievements against the aims and/or outcomes of the qualification or learning programme for which they want SCQF Credit Points.

7.3.3 Select Appropriate Mechanisms for Gathering and Presenting Evidence of Learning

Clear mechanisms for making RPL claims must be in place. Where possible, these should be streamlined with an appropriate level of resource. It is not expected that a resource intensive approach should be adopted. The process should be manageable for both the learner and the learning provider.

Evidence of learning can be gathered in a number of different ways and learners should be provided with guidance on the method to be used. Learners should be supported in the gathering or production of this evidence. Although not an exhaustive list, the following examples are a range of approaches that could be adopted:

- Reflective account;
- Project work;
- Structured interview or oral assessment;
- Assessment on demand;
- Observation of practice or simulation;
- Benchmarking;
- Existing work-based learning practices in evaluation and assessment;
- Profiling;
- Record of volunteer learning and experience;
- Europass Curriculum Vitae (ECV);
- Portfolio.

Further information on each of these is available on the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk.

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[7]*See section 6.5.1*
[8]*See section 6.5.2*

7.4   Supporting Learners in Identifying Evidence of Learning
Appropriately trained, supported and resourced staff should assist learners to provide evidence of their learning. Decisions on operational management will be determined by the most efficient deployment of resources and the provision of an effective quality-assured process. Organisations should determine whether the support and recognition process is a:

- Centralised or devolved function; or
- A combined approach of central co-ordination with devolved support and recognition.

The RPL procedures should be clearly defined and appropriate support provided to the learner for each stage. Learners who make an RPL claim for credit[9] will require support for the RPL process itself as well as support in the subject, vocational or professional area in which they are making the RPL claim.

In addition to providing feedback on the presentation of any RPL claims, learners may require support to:

- Identify learning experiences;
- Develop the skills necessary for reflection on those experiences;
- Identify and express the learning achieved that relates to that within the units/modules or programmes;
- Identify the transferability of the skills, knowledge and understanding gained through prior informal learning;
- Identify and select evidence of learning;
- Present their evidence of learning;
- Identify areas for further learning and development.

7.4.1   Support in the Subject, Vocational or Professional Area
Support in the subject, vocational or professional area includes:

- Advising if the prior learning is likely to be at the appropriate level for the purposes of the claim;
- Clarifying outcomes of competences within units/modules or programmes and/or agreeing the learner's own outcomes or competences;
- Advising on the structure of the submission and criteria for assessment;
- Advising on which types of evidence are appropriate;
- Advising on the level of analysis or integration of relevant theory required in the submission;
- Advising on the way in which any further learning or development required to supplement the claim can be undertaken;
- Providing feedback on draft submissions where appropriate.

7.5   RPL for Personal/Career Development
The recognition process for RPL for Personal/Career Development may involve:

- Benchmarking the individual's learning to SCQF Levels, in order to identify possible progression routes. This may be undertaken by comparing learning outcomes from experience and informal learning to the SCQF Level Descriptors;
- Identifying and further developing skills gained through prior learning to ease the transition between informal and formal learning.

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[9]*Summative Recognition*

7.6   RPL for the Award of SCQF Credit Points

The process for RPL for SCQF Credit Points requires a formal assessment of learning which involves determining:

- The comparability of the learning to the:
    - Particular entry requirements for a qualification or learning programme in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding;
    - Existing or negotiated qualification or individual learning programme component;
    - The learning outcomes for part of an SCQF Level of a qualification or learning programme in a particular subject or vocational area;
    - The learning outcomes for an entire SCQF Level of a qualification or learning programme.
- The level of learning as detailed in section 2;
- The volume of credit as detailed in section 3.

7.7   Assessment Process for RPL Claims

As part of the support and guidance provided, the learner must be advised of the assessment process in the preparation of the RPL claim. An RPL claim must include:

- Clear statements about what was actually learned;
- Supportive evidence that the learning claimed has been achieved.

The following widely applied assessment criteria can be used by staff and should be accessible to learners to guide them in the preparation of claims; specifically to determine whether the evidence presented is satisfactory and appropriate.

Table 11: Assessment Criteria

Acceptability	There is an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning outcomes. The evidence is reliable and valid.
Sufficiency	There is sufficient breadth and depth of evidence, including evidence of reflection, to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes of competencies claimed.
Authenticity	It must be clear that the evidence is the outcome of the learner's own efforts.
Currency	The learning that is assessed should be current and not out-of-date. If the learning experience occurred some time ago, the learner is required to provide evidence that they have kept their learning up-to-date.

The RPL claim must be assessed by appropriate subject experts whose recommendation is considered and, where appropriate, approved by the relevant assessment board. The assessment procedures for RPL, including arrangements for external assessment should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation. This includes the provision of an appeals process in order to protect the rights of the learner.

The SCQF Level and number of SCQF Credit Points awarded for prior informal or experiential learning that has been awarded SCQF Credit Points should be shown on the learner's transcript.

In some cases, it is possible for an RPL claim to be made for SCQF Credit Points within a programme of study and simultaneously for vocational or professional recognition through a professional or statutory body or another awarding body. Any additional requirements in terms of evidence or assessment need to be clearly defined and understood by the learner.

7.8 Credit Limits for RPL within Formal Programmes of Study

Programme limits, if any, on the credit that can be awarded for RPL within a programme of study should be clearly stated, as should any implications for progression, grading or classification. Organisational policy on credit limits should be consistently applied.

Double-counting of credit should be avoided. RPL claims for credit are often based on learning that has already been credit rated through prior certificated learning; for example, learning resulting from work based experience whilst undertaking a formal programme of study such as an HND. The risk of double-counting of credit can also occur when RPL for a particular set of learning outcomes or competences is used to gain entry to a programme and where the same learning outcomes are then used as a basis for a claim within the new programme. Policies in relation to the avoidance of double-counting of credit will reflect the quality assurance procedures of the organisation.

7.9 RPL Provision within Overall Quality Assurance Systems

RPL processes relating to learner support, recognition, benchmarking, guidance on further learning and development and monitoring need to be fully integrated within organisational quality assurance systems to ensure transparency and reliability.

7.10 Monitoring Process for RPL Procedures

The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the learning provider. Monitoring and reviewing RPL procedures may take into account :

- The number of learners undertaking RPL;
- An evaluation of the learner experience, including the time taken by learners to undertake the RPL process;
- An evaluation of the staff experience, including the time spent by staff in supporting the RPL process and managing the process of recognition;
- A tracking of progression routes of learners who have undertaken RPL;
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of any collaborative arrangements with other education and training providers.

7.11 Costs of RPL

If organisations charge fees for the associated resources that the RPL process requires, it must be clearly stated and consistently applied. Any fees charged may reflect the amount of staff time spent supporting and assessing RPL claims.

7.12 Support for Staff Engaged in Support and Assessment of RPL

The roles and responsibilities of both staff and learners in the RPL process need to be clearly defined. RPL requires adequate resources and the staff involved in the planning, development and operation of RPL procedures need to be provided with training and continuing support for this role.

7.13   The Outcomes of RPL

7.13.1 Outcomes of RPL for Personal/Career Development

The process of RPL for personal and career development[10] can have several positive outcomes for the learner and some examples of these are given below:

- Recognition by self, and by others (peers, colleagues, employers, community) of the value of strengths and skills gained through prior learning to increase learner self-confidence and motivation;
- A more supported transition from an informal to a formal learning context as part of a 'bridging' process;
- A mapping or benchmarking against SCQF Levels of an individual's learning within the context of the SCQF in order to help identify possible progression routes;
- Planning of individual learning pathway, personal/career development plan, or individual learning plan which will build on this learning in order to achieve goals;
- Preparation of RPL claims for either general credit or for specific credit to gain entry to or credit within a formal qualification or learning programme.

7.13.2 Outcomes of RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points

The award of SCQF Credit Points for RPL, also known as summative recognition, can only be provided by an SCQF Credit Rating Body[11]. Learners may consider undertaking this process where they want to:

- Gain SCQF General Credit as an outcome in its own right for the learner;
- Gain entry to the first level of a programme at a college or HEI. Where the learner can demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills comparable to that of the admissions requirements it may be possible to use RPL as an alternative;
- Gain SCQF Specific Credit to allow advanced entry to a programme of study at a college, HEI, or other learning and training provider. Credit can either be for the SCQF Level of an entire qualification or learning programme or particular components of a qualification or learning programme.

[10]Formative recognition
[11]See section 1.6
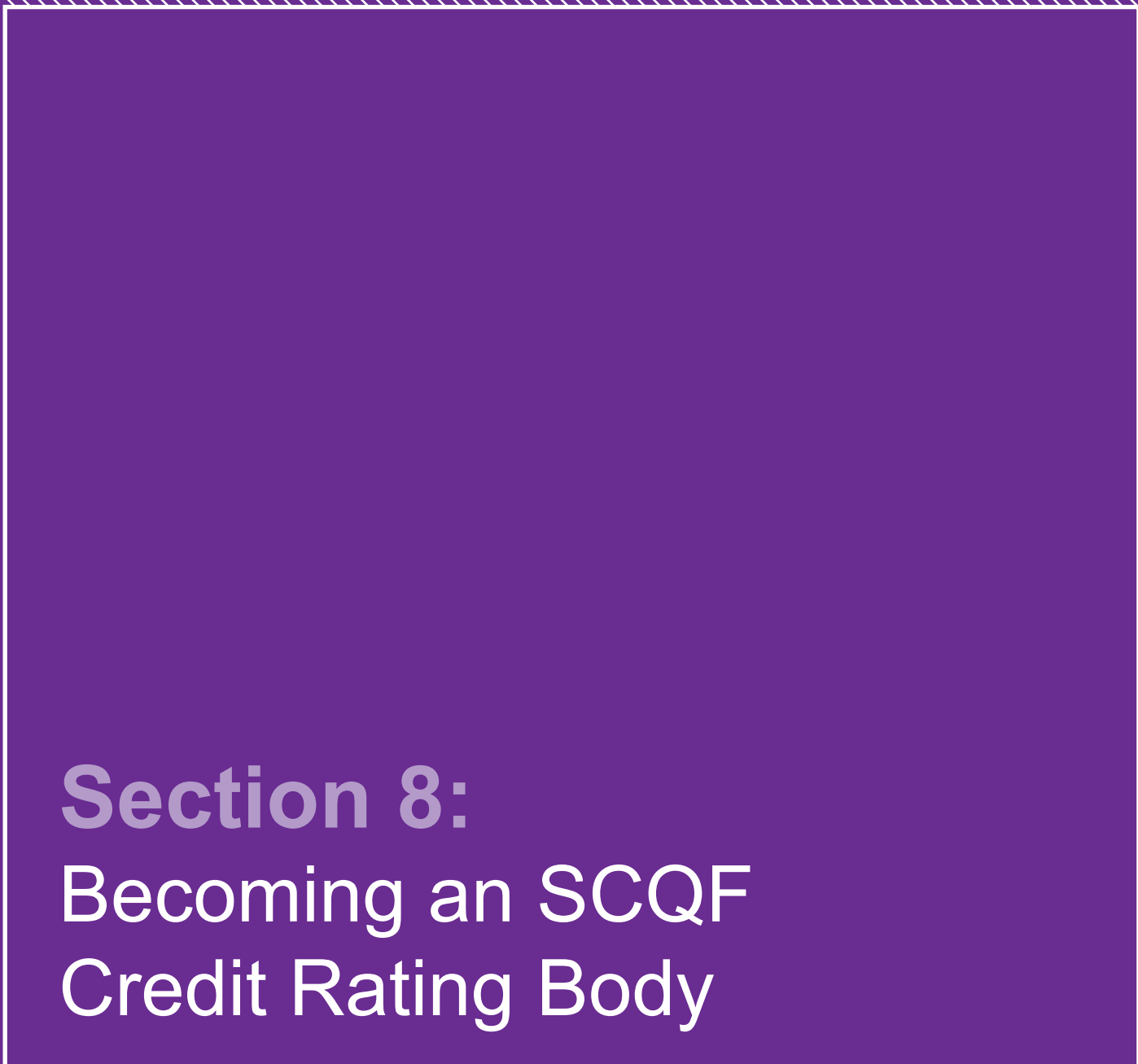
7.14   SCQF Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Table 12: SCQF Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning 38 to 47

SCQF Guideline	Details
38	RPL is about recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal learning contexts. The following principles apply to recognising learning: • Recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone; • The learning that is recognised should be transferable; • SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL are of the same value as credit gained through other formal learning.
39	A wide range of learners should be able to use RPL to assist them in re-entering learning or to gain recognition as a contribution towards a formal learning programme.
40	Credit limits for RPL within formal qualifications and learning programmes must be made explicit. Programme limits, if any, on the credit that can be awarded for RPL within a qualification or learning programme should be clearly stated, as should any implications for progression, grading or classification. Organisational policy on credit limits should be consistently applied.
41	Clear mechanisms for making RPL claims must be in place. Evidence of learning can be gathered through a variety of different mechanisms.
42	Effective links between learning providers, guidance services and Human Resource personnel, where appropriate, should be established to support individuals for RPL.
43	RPL should be: • Learner-focused; • Accessible; • Flexible; • Quality-assured.
44	Formative recognition of prior learning can be used for personal and career development.
45	RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points (also called summative recognition) involves a formal assessment or acceptance of evidence of learning.
46	The assessment procedures for RPL, including arrangements for external assessment should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.
47	The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the learning provider.

7.15 Summary of Key points

- Each stage of the RPL process should be clearly defined and appropriate support provided to learners for each stage.
- It is important to ensure that learners clearly understand the process and possible outcomes of RPL before making the decision to proceed.
- The learner must be advised of the assessment process in the preparation of an RPL claim.
- Support must be provided by staff that are appropriately trained, supported and resourced to carry out this role.
- The roles and responsibilities of both staff and learners in the RPL process need to be clearly defined.
- Clear mechanisms for making RPL claims must be in place.
- Formative recognition can be used for personal and/or career development and does not result in the award of SCQF Credit Points
- Summative recognition involves a formal assessment of prior learning, which may result in the award of SCQF Credit Points.
- If organisations decide to charge fees for the RPL process, the fee structure must be clearly stated and consistently applied.
- The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures should be clearly defined and integrated within existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the learning provider.

Section 8:
Becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body

Section 8: Becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body

8.1 Overview of this Section

This section gives an overview of the criteria required for organisations outside of the members of the SCQF Partnership to become an SCQF Credit Rating Body. It provides a summary of the Quality Assurance Model that the SCQF Partnership operates to approve and monitor organisations as new SCQF Credit Rating Bodies. Details of the membership of the SCQF Partnership are given in section 1.

The SCQF website has a dedicated section on becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body which includes further information and advice, www.scqf.org.uk.

8.2 Criteria for Becoming a Credit Rating Body

The criteria for becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body were developed in 2008 through consultation with SCQF Partners, SCQF Credit Rating Bodies and stakeholders. They comply with the SCQF Guidelines and SCQF Handbook and applicant organisations should ensure that they refer to these when developing their systems for credit rating, credit transfer and RPL.

The three criteria set out in this section apply to all organisations that seek approval as an SCQF Credit Rating Body to credit rate their own qualifications or learning programmes and all applicant organisations are required to provide evidence that they meet them. The criteria are robust and require organisations to have in place both internal and external reviews of their quality assurance systems. In addition, there is a fourth criterion for those wishing to credit rate third-party provision. Further information on this is given in section 8.6.2.

8.2.1 Criterion 1: A Body of Good Standing

The organisation is a body of good standing, demonstrating a successful track record in the design and delivery of learning provision in Scotland. The organisation must:

- Provide a formal constitution which describes its identity, functions, aims and structures;
- Demonstrate that it is a secure, stable and viable organisation;
- Demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of education and training in Scotland;
- Provide evidence of a successful track record of operating in Scotland;
- Provide evidence of a successful track record in devising quality-assured learning provision in Scotland in relation to specific subjects/industries/sectors and levels;
- Provide evidence confirming that its diversity and equality strategy meets the requirements of current legislation;
- Provide an effective staff development policy.

8.2.2 Criterion 2: Robust Quality Assurance System

The organisation already has in place a documented quality assurance system for programme design, approval, validation, accreditation, assessment or other related activities and has evidence, through internal and external reviews, that this quality assurance system is valid and reliable. The organisation must:

• Operate a robust quality assurance system for programme design, approval, validation, accreditation, assessment or other related activities and demonstrate that the separate processes which make up the quality assurance system are:
   - Operated by individuals who are experienced in the relevant process and have subject expertise where this is required;
   - Supported by appropriate management structures and have externality in decision making;
   - Benchmarked against other equivalent processes;
   - Subject to regular review to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of users.
• Demonstrate that it regularly reviews and strives to improve and enhance its quality assurance system by:
   - Carrying out internal reviews on all aspects of the quality assurance system;
   - Taking action on the outcome of such internal reviews.
• Ensure that its quality assurance system is subject to regular external reviews and provide evidence of:
   - The outcome of these external reviews;
   - Actions taken as a result of these external reviews.

8.2.3 Criterion 3: Capacity and Commitment

The organisation has the capacity and commitment to operate as an SCQF Credit Rating Body and ensures that its credit rating processes and procedures link to, and function within its existing quality assurance system as already defined under Criterion 2. The organisation must:

• Document a robust procedure for credit rating which sits within the existing quality assurance system and complies with the requirements of the SCQF Handbook and SCQF Guidelines;
• Define the scope of credit rating authority being applied for in terms of levels, sectors, subjects and types of programmes or qualifications;
• Document a robust procedure for the internal review of the proposed credit rating process showing how it sits within the existing quality assurance system;
• Demonstrate the ability to make valid and reliable decisions on credit rating, drawing on appropriate sector/subject/industry and level expertise and relating activities to the existing quality assurance system;
• Document a robust procedure to:
   - record the outcomes of the credit rating process;
   - communicate these outcomes to users and other stakeholders;
   - keep the SCQF database up-to-date by way of the SCQF portal;
   - describe the way in which the SCQF logo will be used.
• Document a procedure for developing an annual self-assessment report on credit rating activity for the SCQF Partnership;
• Show how the credit rating function and its associated quality assurance are supported by staff development, continuing professional development and/or professional development planning.

8.3 The Quality Assurance Model to Become an SCQF Credit Rating Body

The SCQF Partnership has designed rigorous quality assurance processes for extending credit rating authority to new bodies. This involves a pre-application visit and an approval visit prior to the approval decision. Following approval, the organisation must comply with the on-going quality assurance arrangements.

8.3.1 Pre-Application Visit and Application

Information seminars on Becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body are held each year. These free seminars provide detailed information on the application process and the SCQF Quality Assurance Model for organisations interested in SCQF Credit Rating Body status.

Representatives of the SCQF Executive Team will then meet with organisations that continue to express interest in applying for SCQF Credit Rating Body status for the pre-application visit. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss:

- The requirements and criteria;
- The costs involved;
- To give an initial consideration to the organisations status with regard to Criterion 1: A Body of Good Standing

No charge will be made for this initial visit but there is a charge for making a formal application. Organisations that are interested in becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body should contact the SCQF Executive Team who will provide advice and support about the application procedure. Information on current charges is available on the SCQF website.

8.3.2 Approval Visit

An Approval Visit will always be made to the applicant organisation. A Review Team is formed to carry out this process. The Review Team comprises a member of the SCQF Executive Team, an appointed External Reviewer and a Member of the SCQF Quality Committee. The Team considers the Application Form against all three criteria. The organisation must meet the requirements of Criterion 1: *Body of Good Standing*, Criterion 2: *Robust Quality Assurance* and Criterion 3: *Capacity and Commitment.*

8.3.3 Approval Decision

After the Approval Visit, the Review Team will prepare a report for the SCQF Quality Committee. The Quality Committee will consider this and then make a recommendation to the SCQF Partnership Board. In each case the organisation will be contacted and informed of the Board's decision by the SCQF Executive Team. The decisions that the SCQF Board may reach are:

- Approval;
- Conditional Approval;
- Not Approved.

Organisations that are not approved will be given one opportunity to resubmit their application. This may involve a further charge.

8.4 Scope of Credit Rating

The scope of credit rating for new SCQF Credit Rating Bodies is split in two in approval terms.

8.4.1 Own Qualifications and Learning Programmes

When approved as an SCQF Credit Rating Body, organisations can credit rate their own qualifications and learning programmes. It may also be possible for a new SCQF Credit Rating Body to credit rate the provision of partner organisations when at the time of application it provides information on the partnership arrangements that it wishes to be considered as within scope.

8.4.1 Own Qualifications and Learning Programmes (continued)
These partnerships would need to meet the following criteria:

• The partner's quality assurance systems are either those of the credit rating body or comply fully with those of the credit rating body and are operated by individuals who understand fully the credit rating body's quality assurance systems. These systems would normally cover arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery, validation, accreditation, assessment and certification. To provide evidence of this the credit rating body would need to:
- ensure that the qualifications and learning programmes comply with the SCQF design principles and common core set of headings and approve any changes to these;
- have arrangements in place for ensuring staff subject expertise for those delivering the qualification or learning programme;
- approve its delivery and assessment plan;
- provide the quality assurance of the assessment;
- demonstrate that they have confidence in the partner organisation's quality management structures;
- ensure that the partner organisation's externality in decision-making aligns with that of the credit rating body;
- ensure that the partner organisation's quality assurance system is subject to regular internal and external review and that action is taken as a result;
- endorse the provision by use of certification naming the credit rating body as the quality assurance body.

Any partnership arrangements which did not meet these criteria would be designated as 'third party', and separate approval would be required at a later stage.

8.4.2 To Credit Rate for Third Parties
'Third Party' qualifications and learning programmes, refered to as 'Third Party Provision', is that which does not fully meet these two conditions. New Credit Rating Bodies must apply for approval to the SCQF Partnership to credit rate the qualifications and learning programmes of others where they fall outside any of these conditions. The application process and the criterion for credit rating third-party provision are given in section 8.6.1 and 8.6.2 respectively.

8.5   On-going Quality Assurance
Following approval, the on-going SCQF Quality Assurance process involves:

Annual Monitoring, which will not be fee-bearing. This requires the completion of a:

- A Self Assessment Report which will be considered by the SCQF Quality Committee against agreed risk factors;
- An annual report on the Credit Rating Body's activity;
- An annual visit by members of the SCQF Executive Team to discuss progress.

Periodic Review which will be held at least every four years and will be fee bearing. However, the frequency (not longer than every four years) and the focus of the review will be determined by the SCQF Quality Committee, based on an agreed set of risk factors aimed at managing risk to the learner and the integrity and rigour of the Framework.

8.6   Third Party Credit Rating

8.6.1 Application: For Third Party Credit Rating

As stated in section 8.4.2, new SCQF Credit Rating Bodies are required to make an application if they wish to credit rate for third parties. They must have gained experience as an SCQF Credit Rating Body and demonstrate that they meet Criterion 4, which is detailed in section 8.6.2. As approved SCQF Credit Rating Bodies, they will already have demonstrated that they meet Criteria 1 to 3, and their application will only be reviewed against Criterion 4. There will not be an additional charge for this application.

8.6.2 Criterion 4: Third Party Credit Rating

The organisation will have to demonstrate that it has the capacity, commitment and experience to operate as an SCQF Credit Rating Body for Third Parties and has the structures and systems in place to carry out this function. It must ensure that its systems link to and operate within its existing quality assurance system, as already defined under Criterion 2, and that it complies with the requirements of the SCQF Handbook and SCQF Guidelines. The organisation must:

- Define the scope of third party credit rating authority being applied for in terms of levels, sectors, subjects and types of programme or qualification and provide information on how this extension of its credit rating authority will broaden, deepen and extend the Framework;
- Provide robust, direct evidence of its ability to make valid and reliable decisions on credit rating in its own right, drawing on appropriate sector/subject/industry and level expertise and relating activities to the existing quality assurance system;
- Document a robust system for providing a quality-assured third party credit rating service which sits within the existing quality assurance system and covers procedures for ensuring that the SCQF Guidelines for third party credit rating are complied with fully;
- Document a robust procedure for the internal review of the proposed third party credit rating service showing how this procedure sits within the existing quality assurance system;
- Document a procedure for making an annual self assessment of its third party credit rating activity;
- Show how the third party credit rating function and its associated quality assurance are supported by staff development, continuing professional development and/or professional development planning.

8.7   Summary of Key Points

- Applicant organisations should ensure that they refer to the SCQF Guidelines and SCQF Handbook when developing their systems for credit rating.
- The SCQF Partnership has designed rigorous quality assurance processes for extending credit rating authority to new bodies.
- There are three criteria that apply to all organisations seeking approval as a new SCQF Credit Rating Body.
- Organisations that are interested in becoming an SCQF Credit Rating Body should contact the SCQF Executive Team, who will provide advice and support about the application procedure.
- Organisations that are approved and have gained experience as SCQF Credit Rating Bodies may apply to the SCQF Partnership to offer a credit rating service for others.

Notes

Section 9:
Relationship Of The SCQF To Other Qualifications Frameworks

Section 9: Relationship of the SCQF to other Qualifications Frameworks

9.1 Overview of this Section

This section provides an overview of the relationships:

- Of the SCQF to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF);
- Between the frameworks across the across the UK and the Republic of Ireland; and
- On the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), also referred to as the Bologna Process in Higher Education.

It summarises the referencing and self-certification processes that were undertaken for the EQF and the EHEA and details the agreed outcomes of these processes.

9.2 The European Qualifications Framework

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of European Union at the beginning of 2008. The EQF aims to facilitate the recognition of the wide range of learning that takes place across European countries. By acting as a translation device, it aids in the understanding of qualifications across the different countries and education systems in Europe.

It is a framework of eight reference levels, described in terms of learning outcomes, and covers the levels of most qualifications acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training. The European Parliament and Council recommended that member states show how their national qualifications systems relate to the EQF by 2010.

Showing the relationship between the SCQF and the EQF helps to:

- Promote lifelong learning and equal opportunities;
- Benefit learners by making it easier for their qualifications to be understood no matter where in Europe they seek to learn or work;
- Benefit employers, social partners and education and training systems in Scotland and across Europe;
- Encourage the further integration of the European labour market.

Further information on the EQF is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

9.2.1 The Referencing Process: SCQF to EQF

The European Parliament and Council recommended that Member States each designate a National Co-ordination Point (NCP) to work with other relevant national authorities to support and guide the work to relate national qualifications systems to the EQF. The Scottish Government, in agreement with SCQF Partners, designated the SCQF Partnership as the NCP for Scotland with responsibility for co-ordinating the work on referencing the SCQF to the EQF. In 2008, the SCQF Partnership commissioned an independent referencing exercise to examine the SCQF and the EQF and to establish how the respective levels of the two frameworks compare.

At the same time, the SCQF Partnership also established the SCQF-EQF Steering Group to provide advice and guidance on all key activities relating to the referencing exercise. The membership of the group comprised representatives from Scotland, the rest of the UK and international experts on frameworks from Europe.

The SCQF-EQF Steering Group oversaw the development of the consultation on the outcome of the referencing exercise. This was sent to representatives of SCQF Partner and stakeholder organisations across a range of sectors. Responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with:
- The methodology and findings of the report, believing them to be robust and reliable;
- The recommendations of the report, accepting them as appropriate.

The referencing exercise confirmed that SCQF Levels can be referenced to EQF levels in terms of aims, descriptors and contents. As a result of the consultation responses, the SCQF Partnership agreed the referencing proposals that are set out in Table 13. It is recognised that the first two levels of the SCQF are based on outcomes appropriate to learning by individuals requiring varying degrees of support, which the EQF does not accommodate. The issue of inclusion presented the most difficulties for Scotland with the absence of EQF reference points at SCQF Levels 1 and 2. The non-inclusivity of the EQF has been brought to the attention of the European Commission.

Full reports on the referencing exercise and on the outcome of the consultation are available on the SCQF website at www.scqf.co.uk.

Table 13: Showing the referencing of SCQF to EQF

SCQF	EQF	Summary
12	8	SCQF Levels 11 and 12 can be confidently referenced to EQF Levels 7 and 8.
11	7	
10	6	SCQF Level 10 can be confidently referenced to EQF Level 6.
9	6	While SCQF Level 9 is intended to be more demanding than EQF Level 5, it may not reference fully to EQF Level 6 in terms of the language of the descriptors. It is agreed, however, that SCQF Level 9 should be referenced to EQF Level 6.
8	5	SCQF Level 8 can be confidently referenced to EQF Level 5.
7	5	For SCQF Level 7, it is difficult to employ 'best fit' on the basis of an analysis of the descriptors alone. However, it is agreed that SCQF Level 7 should be referenced to EQF Level 5.
6	4	SCQF Levels 3-6 can be confidently referenced to EQF Levels 1-4.
5	3	
4	2	
3	1	
2		SCQF Level 2 can be referenced to EQF Level 1 only in some domains. This partial matching was not typical of other levels. Considering the intention of the SCQF level and the extent to which referencing is not possible, it is agreed that SCQF Level 2 should not be referenced to the EQF.
1		There are no grounds for referencing SCQF Level 1 to the EQF.

9.3   Relationships Between Frameworks Across the UK and Ireland

In the United Kingdom there are three NCPs to recognise the fact that there are different National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) in different countries of the UK. In addition, there is an NCP for the Republic of Ireland – the National Qualifications Authority for Ireland (NQAI). The Republic of Ireland has close working relationships with the UK on NQF matters.

The Qualifications Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) and Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) are jointly designated as the NCP for England and Northern Ireland. The Welsh Assembly Government has responsibility for the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), which includes higher level learning, general, vocational education and training and quality-assured lifelong learning and is the NCP for Wales.

Whilst each NCP moved forward to put in place its own arrangements for referencing against the EQF, there was full agreement that they also needed to work together to co-ordinate activities, share best practice and provide clear communication. This would particularly be the case for those organisations such as Sector Skills Councils and Awarding Bodies that work across the UK. The UK EQF Co-ordinating Group was therefore established early in the process to help co-ordinate and track progress. In the latter stages the Group was also expanded to include the NCP for the Republic of Ireland, the NQAI.

Each of the NCPs adopted processes to ensure that the cross-referencing activity was robust and transparent. This involved:

- The establishment of a steering group of stakeholders and experts to advise on and oversee referencing activity;
- The use of multiple methods in the referencing methodology to ensure reliable findings;
- Consultation with stakeholders on the proposals;
- Verification of findings by using existing qualifications and supplementary evidence.

The outcomes of the referencing activity across the UK and Ireland is given in Table 14.

Table 14: UK and Irish Frameworks

EQF Levels	England/N.Ireland (QCF)	Wales (CQFW)	Scotland (SCQF)	Ireland (NFQ)
8	8	8	12	10
7	7	7	11	9
6	6	6	9/10	7/8
5	4/5	4/5	7/8	6
4	3	3	6	5
3	2	2	5	4
2	1	1	4	3
1	E3	E3	3	1/2

9.3   Relationships Between Frameworks Across the UK and Ireland (continued)

The referencing reports for each country are available on the respective websites of QCDA, CCEA, CQFW and NQAI as given in Table 15. Each of the country reports will contribute to a joint UK Report that will be submitted to the European Commission at the end of 2009. The UK Report will also be available on the SCQF Website in early 2010.

Table 15: NCPs and Country Frameworks

NCP	Country	Frameworks	Website
SCQF Partnership	Scotland	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework	www.scqf.org.uk
QCDA/CCEA	England and Northern Ireland	Qualifications and Credit Framework	http://www.qcda.gov.uk/25208.aspx http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/regulation/eqf/referencing_QCF_to_EQF.pdf
Welsh Assembly Government	Wales	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales	http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/creditqualificationsframework/publications/reports/?lang=en
National Qualifications Authority of Ireland	Republic of Ireland	National Framework of Qualifications	http://www.nqai.ie

9.3.1 Related activity across the UK and Republic of Ireland

The countries of the UK collaborated with the Republic of Ireland to produce a document in May 2005 called Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries – a Rough Guide to Comparing Qualifications in the UK and Ireland. As a result of some National Qualifications Framework (NQF) changes during 2008, this document was updated and republished online in April 2009.

This work was not about referencing the level descriptors of each NQF, but rather about comparing the stages of education and employment in each country to show where and when the average learner moves within the respective system. This has provided a very useful document for employers, education providers and learners and, as such, this document was also considered during the actual referencing work. The outcome of each National Co-ordination Point's referencing to the EQF is in close agreement with the Rough Guide, and we will give consideration to including the EQF in a future version of this document to assist with wider dissemination of the outcomes of referencing. Qualifications Can Cross Boundaries – a Rough Guide to Comparing Qualifications in the UK and Ireland is available to download at www.scqf.org.uk.

9.4 Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

The Bologna process proposed that the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was developed as a means of promoting the mutual recognition of qualifications, demonstrating transparency of systems and easing the mobility of staff and students across higher education in Europe. The target is that verification of compatibility with the EHEA will be completed by countries engaging in the Bologna process by 2010.

The framework for the EHEA consists of three main cycles. Each cycle has a generic descriptor of the typical abilities and achievements associated with completion of that cycle.

One of the key features of the Bologna process is the development of national qualifications frameworks in each country and the development of criteria and procedures to be used by each country to verify that its national framework is compatible with an overarching Qualifications Framework for the EHEA. Countries addressing the criteria and procedures for verification illustrate both the robustness of their respective quality assurance systems and the links between qualifications that comprise their national framework and the three EHEA qualifications cycles. The process is one of self-certification by each country.

9.4.1 The Scottish Verification Process

The self-certification of the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland was taken forward by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Scotland through the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA). The self-certification process concluded in January 2007 and results of this are given in Table 16.

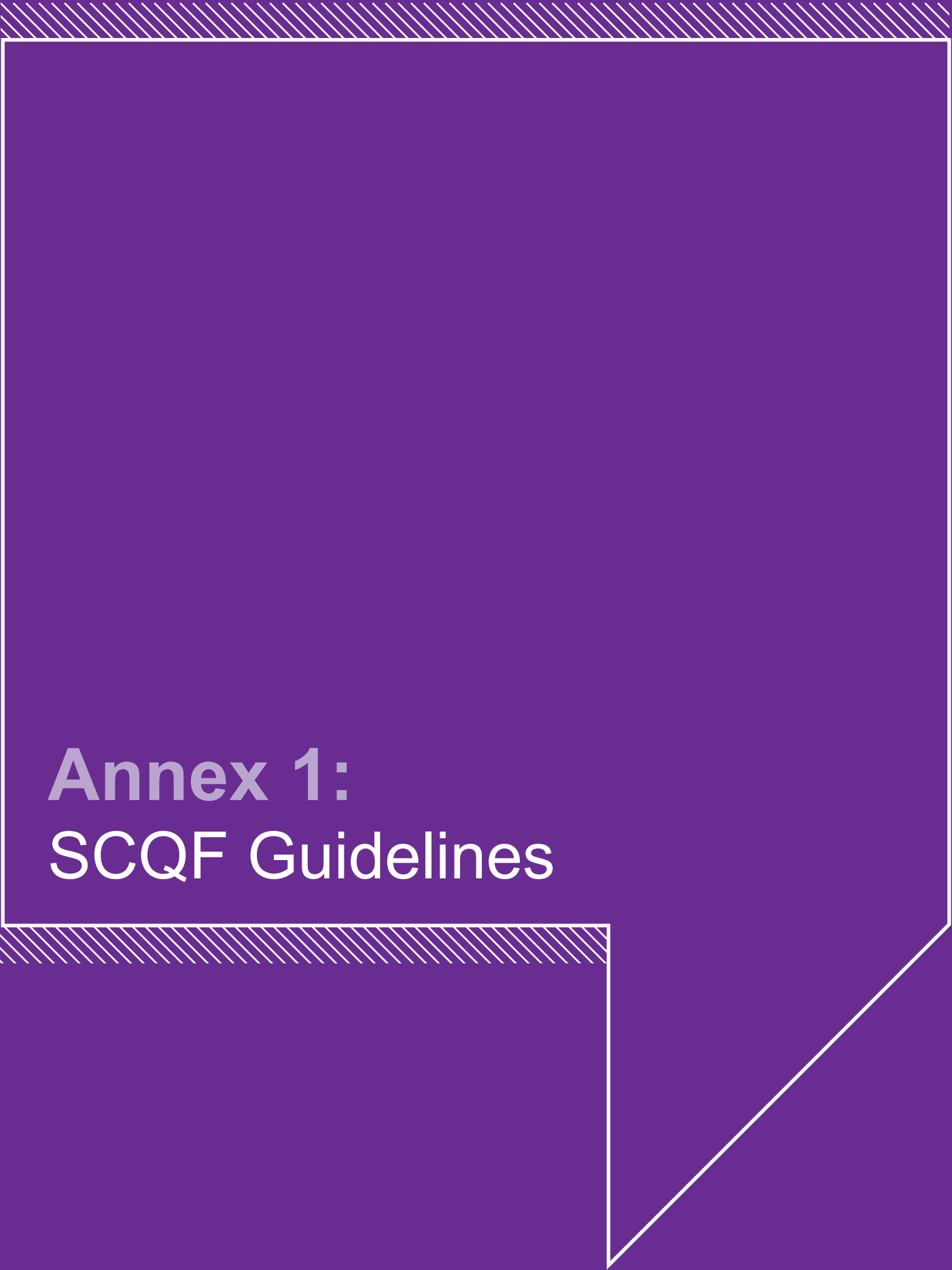**Table 16:** European Higher Education Area

EHEA qualifications cycles	Qualifications within the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland
First cycle qualifications	Scottish Bachelor's Degree with Honours Scottish Bachelor's Degree
Short cycle qualification within or linked to the first cycle	Diploma of Higher Education
Intermediate awards within the first cycle	Certificate of Higher Education Graduate Certificate Graduate Diploma
Second cycle qualifications	Master's Degree Integrated Master's Degree MPhil Degree
Intermediate awards within the second cycle	Postgraduate Diploma Postgraduate Certificate
Third cycle qualifications	Doctoral Degrees including doctorates by research

The full report on the Scottish verification process can be accessed on the ENIC-NARIC website at www.enric-naric.net/documents/QF-Scotland_en.pdf.

9.5   Summary of Key Points

- The EQF acts as a translation device to aid the understanding of qualifications across the different countries and education systems in Europe.
- The EQF is a framework of eight reference levels, described in terms of learning outcomes, and covers the levels of most qualifications acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training.
- The referencing process of the SCQF to the EQF was undertaken by the SCQF Partnership which is the NCP for Scotland.
- The referencing exercise confirmed that SCQF Levels can be referenced to EQF levels, which are given in Table 13.
- In the United Kingdom there are three NCPs to recognise the fact that there are different National Qualification Frameworks in different countries of the UK.
- The self-certification of the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland was taken forward by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Scotland. The process is one of self-certification by each country and the results are given in Table 16.

Notes

Annex 1:
SCQF Guidelines

Annex 1: SCQF Guidelines

The following list sets out the key details of the SCQF Guidelines in groupings according to their application. Further information on how they are used is included in the relevant sections of the SCQF Handbook.

1.   SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating

1.1   Organisations' own Qualifications and Learning Programmes

SCQF Guidelines	Details
1	Allocation of a level to learning is essentially a matter of professional judgement using appropriate reference points such as the SCQF Level Descriptors, relevant programme descriptors, higher education subject benchmark information, SQA specifications and other appropriate sources of information and guidance.
2	SCQF Levels are not related directly to years of study. They are defined by the extent of demands made of the learner in each of the five broad categories of competence.
3	SCQF Credit Points are a measure of appropriate and defined learning outcomes at a specified SCQF Level.
4	One SCQF Credit Point equates to the learning outcomes achieved through a notional 10 hours of learning.
5	Notional learning hours refers to the time judged to be required by an 'average' learner at a particular SCQF Level to achieve defined learning outcomes. It includes all the learning activities relevant to the achievement of the outcomes, including undertaking and completion of assessment tasks.
6	The minimum number of SCQF Credit Points is **one**. Only full SCQF Credit Points are awarded. Fractions of SCQF Credit Points are not permissible.
7	SCQF Credit Points are always allocated at a specified SCQF Level, normally determined by the original design content of a unit of learning.
8	The number of SCQF Credit Points allocated to a unit of learning, or module, is independent of the perceived centrality or importance of the unit within any wider programme.
9	The number of SCQF Credit Points awarded is independent of the standard at which the outcomes are achieved.
10	SCQF Credit Points are general in that they define a volume at a level of outcome within the SCQF. They become specific when related to transfer to a particular programme or to an individual's claim for credit towards a particular programme.
11	SCQF Credit Points can be transferred.
12	The SCQF Credit Rating Body will be responsible for ensuring that the credit rating process and outcomes are consistent with relevant reference points.

1.2 Learning that has been Submitted for Credit Rating by Non-SCQF Credit Rating Bodies

SCQF Guidelines	Details
13	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should offer an appropriate person to act as the principal link between the credit rating body and the submitting body.
14	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should establish systematic arrangements for credit rating.
15	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should give written guidance on its SCQF credit rating processes and criteria to the submitting body.
16	Opportunities for initial informal discussions about the processes and potential outcomes of the proposed credit rating should be offered.
17	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should assure itself, as far as is practically possible, of the general good standing of the submitting body.

1.3 Information to be Provided by Submitting Bodies to Credit Rating Bodies

SCQF Guidelines	Details
18	Submitting bodies should provide the SCQF Credit Rating Body with a formal written proposal.
19	Documented evidence on assessment processes must be submitted to the SCQF Credit Rating Body at the point of application.
20	The assessment system of a submitting body that results in the award of credit points to a programme of learning should be subject to external assessment from outside the organisation on a regular basis to confirm that the processes and judgements made, linked to Guideline 19, are being adhered to.
21	Certificates issued to learners, indicating the SCQF Level and Credit Points, should specify the SCQF Credit Rating Body.
22	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should specify the maximum duration of the credit rating before review.
23	The SCQF Credit Rating Body should clarify the distinction between general and specific credit and explicitly identify the nature of the credit being considered.
24	Any conditions should be defined by the SCQF Credit Rating Body.
25	The credit rating process and its results should be reported to the SCQF Credit Rating Body's system of governance and copied to the submitting body.
26	Regular reports should be submitted to the SCQF Credit Rating Body.
27	Submitting bodies should explain their credit ratings to their learners.

2. SCQF Guidelines for Credit Transfer

SCQF Guidelines	Details
28	Procedures for the transfer of credit should be embedded in general good practice in assuring quality and standards.
29	Policies, procedures and information available to potential applicants, existing learners and staff should be clear, explicit and accessible.
30	Receiving organisations should establish when it is appropriate for them to deal with applications for the transfer of credit.
31	Staff should be competent to undertake their responsibilities.
32	Appropriate support should be offered to applicants for credit transfer and to those who have made successful claims.
33	Policies and procedures should be monitored and reviewed.
34	Qualification and learning programme development and design should promote and facilitate credit recognition and transfer.
35	Articulation arrangements should be managed flexibly and actively.
36	Credit transferred is of equal standing to the credit awarded to the learning programme entered.
37	Applications for the transfer of credit from qualifications and learning programmes awarded by non-SCQF credit rating organisations should be considered in the context of the specific procedures set out in the SCQF Handbook.

3. SCQF Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

SCQF Guidelines	Details
38	RPL is about recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal learning contexts. The following principles apply to recognising learning: • Recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone; • The learning that is recognised should be transferable; • SCQF Credit Points awarded as a result of RPL are of the same value as credit gained through other formal learning.
39	A wide range of learners should be able to use RPL to assist them in re-entering learning or to gain recognition as a contribution towards a formal learning programme.
40	Credit limits for RPL within formal qualifications and learning programmes must be made explicit. Programme limits, if any, on the credit that can be awarded for RPL within a qualification or learning programme should be clearly stated, as should any implications for progression, grading or classification. Organisational policy on credit limits should be consistently applied.
41	Clear mechanisms for making RPL claims must be in place. Evidence of learning can be gathered through a variety of different mechanisms.
42	Effective links between learning providers, guidance services and Human Resource personnel, where appropriate, should be established to support individuals for RPL.
43	RPL should be: • Learner-focused; • Accessible; • Flexible; • Quality-assured.
44	Formative recognition of prior learning can be used for personal and career development.
45	RPL for the award of SCQF Credit Points (also called summative recognition) involves a formal assessment or acceptance of evidence of learning.
46	The assessment procedures for RPL, including arrangements for external assessment, should be consistent with the normal assessment and general quality assurance of the organisation.
47	The process of monitoring and reviewing the operation of RPL procedures should be clearly defined and integrated within the existing quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms of the learning provider.

The SCQF Quality Committee reviews the SCQF Guidelines for Credit Rating on a regular basis and updates them as and when appropriate. Future changes to the Guidelines will be highlighted on the SCQF website, www.scqf.org.uk.

Annex 2:
SCQF Level Descriptors

Annex 2: SCQF Level Descriptors

In Annex 2, the SCQF Level Descriptors are set out in an alternative format to those given in Section 2 of the SCQF Handbook. A further version is also available on the SCQF website. Although the formats differ to accommodate users' preferences, the content of the SCQF Level Descriptors remain the same.

Each Characteristic Described Across all SCQF Levels

SCQF Level	Knowledge and Understanding
1	SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.
2	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject/discipline.
3	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline. • Simple facts and ideas associated with a subject/discipline.
4	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual. • Some simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/discipline. • Knowledge of basic processes, materials and terminology.
5	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Basic knowledge in a subject/discipline, which is mainly factual but has some theoretical component. • A range of simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/discipline. • Knowledge and understanding of basic processes, materials and terminology.
6	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Generalised knowledge of a subject/discipline. • Factual and theoretical knowledge. • A range of facts, ideas, properties, materials, terminology, practices, techniques about/associated with a subject/discipline. • Relate the subject/discipline to a range of practical and/or everyday applications.
7	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A broad knowledge of the subject/discipline in general. • Knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles. • An awareness of the evolving/changing nature of knowledge and understanding. • An understanding of the difference between explanations based on evidence and/or research and other forms of explanation and of the importance of this difference.
8	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A broad knowledge of the scope, defining features and main areas of a subject/discipline. • Detailed knowledge in some areas. • Understanding of a limited range of core theories, principles and concepts. • Limited knowledge and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms. • An outline knowledge and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes.
9	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope, main areas and boundaries of a subject/discipline. • A critical understanding of a selection of the principal theories, principles, concepts and terminology. • Knowledge that is detailed in some areas and/or knowledge of one or more specialisms that are informed by forefront developments.

SCQF Level	Knowledge and Understanding
10	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Knowledge that covers and integrates most of the principal areas, features, boundaries, terminology and conventions of a subject/discipline. • A critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles. • Detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, some of which is informed by or at the forefront of a subject/discipline. • Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the subject/discipline is developed, including a range of established techniques of enquiry or research methodologies.
11	Demonstrate and/or work with: • Knowledge that covers and integrates most, if not all, of the main areas of a subject/discipline – including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions. • A critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts • A critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, principles and concepts. • Extensive, detailed and critical knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, much of which is at, or informed by, developments at the forefront. • A critical awareness of current issues in a subject/discipline and one or more specialisms.
12	Demonstrate and/or work with: • A critical overview of a subject/discipline, including critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts. • A critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of one or more specialisms. • Knowledge and understanding that is generated through personal research or equivalent work that makes a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline.

SCQF Level	Practice: Applied Knowledge and Understanding
1	SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.
2	• Relate knowledge to a few simple everyday contexts with prompting. • Use a few very simple skills. • Carry out, with guidance, a few familiar tasks. • Use, under supervision, basic tools and materials.
3	• Relate knowledge with some prompting to personal and/or everyday contexts. • Use a few basic, routine skills to undertake familiar and routine tasks. • Complete pre-planned tasks. • Use, with guidance, basic tools and materials safely and effectively.
4	• Relate knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts. • Use a few skills to complete straightforward tasks with some non-routine elements. • Select and use, with guidance, appropriate tools and materials safely and effectively.
5	• Relate ideas and knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts. • Complete some routine and non-routine tasks using knowledge associated with a subject/discipline. • Plan and organise both familiar and new tasks. • Select appropriate tools and materials and use safely and effectively (e.g. without waste). • Adjust tools where necessary following safe practices.
6	• Apply knowledge and understanding in known, practical contexts. • Use some of the basic, routine practices, techniques and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline in routine contexts which may have non-routine elements. • Plan how skills will be used to address set situations and/or problems and adapt these as necessary.
7	• Use some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline. • Practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts.
8	• Use a range of routine skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline, a few of which are advanced or complex. • Carry out routine lines of enquiry, development or investigation into professional level problems and issues. • Adapt routine practices within accepted standards.
9	• Use a selection of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline. • Use a few skills, techniques, practices and/or materials that are specialised or advanced. • Practise routine methods of enquiry and/or research. • Practise in a range of professional level contexts that include a degree of unpredictability.
10	• Use a range of the principal skills, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/ discipline. • Use a few skills, practices and/or materials which are specialised, advanced or at the forefront of a subject/discipline. • Execute a defined project of research, development or investigation and identify and implement relevant outcomes. • Practise in a range of professional level contexts that include a degree of unpredictability and/or specialism.

SCQF Level	Practice: Applied Knowledge and Understanding
11	• Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are associated with a subject/discipline. • Use a range of specialised skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are at the forefront of, or informed by, forefront developments. • Apply a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry. • Plan and execute a significant project of research, investigation or development. • Demonstrate originality or creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and/or practices. • Practise in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.
12	• Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and materials associated with a subject/discipline. • Use and enhance a range of complex skills, techniques, practices and materials at the forefront of one or more specialisms. • Apply a range of standard and specialised research/equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry. • Design and execute research, investigative or development projects to deal with new problems and issues. • Demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge, understanding and practices. • Practise in the context of new problems and circumstances.

SCQF Level	Generic Cognitive Skills
1	SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.
2	• Use rehearsed stages for solving problems. • Operate in personal and/or everyday contexts. • Take some account, with prompting, of identified consequences of action.
3	• Identify, with some prompting, a process to deal with a situation or issue. • Operate in familiar contexts using given criteria. • Take account of some identified consequences of action.
4	• Use, with guidance, given stages of a problem-solving approach to deal with a situation or issue. • Operate in straightforward contexts. • Identify and/or take account of some of the consequences of action/inaction.
5	• Use a problem-solving approach to deal with a situation or issue that is straightforward in relation to a subject/discipline. • Operate in a familiar context, but where there is a need to take account of or use additional information of different kinds, some of which will be theoretical or hypothetical. • Use some abstract constructs – e.g. make generalisations and/or draw conclusions.
6	• Obtain, organise and use factual and theoretical information in problem solving. • Make generalisations and predictions. • Draw conclusions and suggest solutions.
7	• Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas which are routine to the subject/discipline. • Use a range of approaches to addressing defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts.
8	• Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues that are within the common understandings of the subject/discipline. • Use a range of approaches to formulate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues. • Critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues.
9	• Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues. • Identify and analyse routine professional problems and issues. • Draw on a range of sources in making judgements.
10	• Critically identify, define, conceptualise and analyse complex/professional level problems and issues. • Offer professional level insights, interpretations and solutions to problems and issues. • Critically review and consolidate knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline. • Demonstrate some originality and creativity in dealing with professional level issues. • Make judgements where data/information is limited or comes from a range of sources.

SCQF Level	Generic Cognitive Skills
11	• Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to issues which are at the forefront of, or informed by, developments at the forefront of a subject/discipline. • Identify, conceptualise and define new and abstract problems and issues. • Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues. • Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline. • Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.
12	• Apply a constant and integrated approach to critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas, information and issues. • Identify, conceptualise and offer original and creative insights into new, complex and abstract ideas, information and issues. • Develop creative and original responses to problems and issues. • Deal with very complex and/or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.

SCQF Level	Generic Cognitive Skills

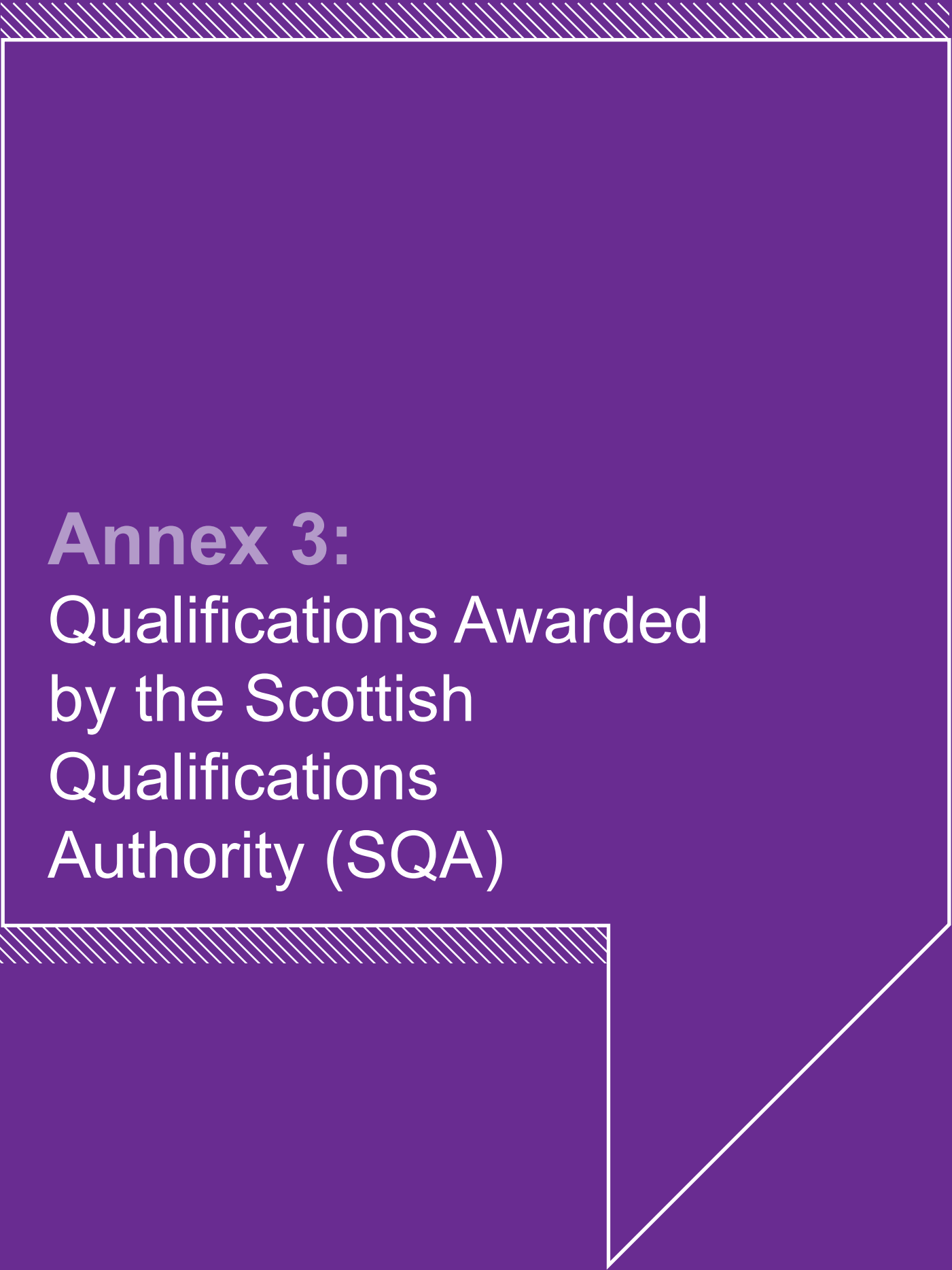| SCQF Level	Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills
1	SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.
2	Use very simple skills with assistance, for example: • Produce and respond to a limited range of very simple written and oral communication in familiar/routine contexts. • Carry out a limited range of very simple tasks to process data and access information. • Use a limited range of very simple and familiar numerical and graphical data in familiar and everyday contexts.
3	Use simple skills, for example: • Produce and respond to simple written and oral communication in familiar, routine contexts. • Carry out simple tasks to process data and access information. • Use simple numerical and graphical data in everyday contexts.
4	Use straightforward skills, for example: • Produce and respond to simple but detailed written and oral communication in familiar contexts. • Use the most straightforward features of familiar applications to process and obtain information. • Use straightforward numerical and graphical data in straightforward and familiar contexts.
5	Use a range of routine skills, for example: • Produce and respond to detailed written and oral communication in familiar contexts. • Use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information. • Use a range of numerical and graphical data in straightforward contexts that have some complex features.
6	Use a wide range of skills, for example: • Produce and respond to detailed and relatively complex written and oral communication in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts. • Select and use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information. • Use a wide range of numerical and graphical data in routine contexts that may have non-routine elements.
7	Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with the subject/discipline, for example: • Convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form. • Use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and new contexts. • Use standard applications to process and obtain a variety of information and data. • Use a range of numerical and graphical skills in combination. • Use numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.
8	Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills associated with a subject/discipline, for example: • Convey complex information to a range of audiences and for a range of purposes. • Use a range of standard applications to process and obtain data. • Use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets.

SCQF Level	Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills
9	Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example: • Make formal and informal presentations on standard/mainstream topics in the subject/discipline to a range of audiences. • Use a range of IT applications to support and enhance work. • Interpret, use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to achieve goals/targets.
10	Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example: • Make formal presentations about specialised topics to informed audiences. • Communicate with professional level peers, senior colleagues and specialists. • Use a range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify refinements/improvements to software to increase effectiveness. • Interpret, use and evaluate a wide range of numerical and graphical data to set and achieve goals/targets.
11	Use a range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/discipline, for example: • Communicate, using appropriate methods, to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge/expertise. • Communicate with peers, more senior colleagues and specialists. • Use a wide range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify new software or refinements/improvements to existing software to increase effectiveness. • Undertake critical evaluations of a wide range of numerical and graphical data.
12	Use a significant range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/discipline, for example: • Communicate at an appropriate level to a range of audiences and adapt communication to the context and purpose. • Communicate at the standard of published academic work and/or critical dialogue and review with peers and experts in other specialisms. • Use a range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify software requirements to enhance work. • Critically evaluate numerical and graphical data.

SCQF Level	Autonomy, Accountability and Working with others
1	SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.
2	• Work alone or with others on simple, routine, familiar tasks under frequent and directive supervision. • Identify, given simple criteria, some successes and/or failures of the work.
3	• Work alone or with others on simple tasks under frequent supervision. • Participate in the setting of goals, timelines etc. • Participate in the review of completed work and the identification of ways of improving practices and processes. • Identify, given simple criteria, own strengths and weaknesses relative to the work.
4	• Work alone or with others on straightforward tasks. • Contribute to the setting of goals, timelines, etc. • Contribute to the review of completed work and offer suggestions for improving practices and processes. • Identify own strengths and weaknesses relative to the work.
5	• Work alone or with others on tasks with minimum supervision. • Agree goals and responsibilities for self and/or work team with manager/supervisor. • Take leadership responsibility for some tasks. • Show an awareness of others' roles, responsibilities and requirements in carrying out work and make a contribution to the evaluation and improvement of practices and processes.
6	• Take responsibility for the carrying out of a range of activities, where the overall goal is clear, under nondirective supervision. • Take some supervisory responsibility for the work of others and lead established teams in the implementation of routine work. • Manage limited resources within defined and supervised areas of work. • Take account of roles and responsibilities related to the tasks being carried out and take a significant role in the evaluation of work and the improvement of practices and processes.
7	• Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level. • Take supervision in less familiar areas of work. • Take some managerial responsibility for the work of others within a defined and supervised structure. • Manage limited resources within defined areas of work. • Take the lead in implementing agreed plans in familiar or defined contexts. • Take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities in carrying out and evaluating tasks. • Work with others in support of current professional practice, under guidance.
8	• Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level. • Take significant managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work. • Manage resources within defined areas of work. • Take the lead on planning in familiar or defined contexts. • Take continuing account of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions in carrying out and evaluating tasks. • Work in support of current professional practice, under guidance. • Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices, under guidance.

SCQF Level	Autonomy, Accountability and Working with others
9	• Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level. • Take some responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources. • Practise in ways which take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities. • Work under guidance with qualified practitioners. • Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices, seeking guidance where appropriate.
10	• Exercise autonomy and initiative in professional/equivalent activities. • Take significant responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources. • Practise in ways which show a clear awareness of own and others' roles and responsibilities. • Work effectively, under guidance, in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners. • Work with others to bring about change, development and/or new thinking. • Deal with complex ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices. • Recognise the limits of these codes and seek guidance where appropriate.
11	• Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities. • Take responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others. • Take responsibility for a significant range of resources. • Demonstrate leadership and/or initiative and make an identifiable contribution to change and development. • Practise in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and others' roles and responsibilities. • Deal with complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.
12	• Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities. • Take full responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others. • Demonstrate leadership and/or originality in tackling and solving problems and issues. • Work in ways which are reflective, self-critical and based on research/evidence. • Deal with complex ethical and professional issues. • Make informed judgements on new and emerging issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.

Notes

Annex 3:

Qualifications Awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

Annex 3: Qualifications Awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

National Units	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Access 1	1	6

General Information
Courses at Access 1 are used in programmes of learning that deal with the personal needs of learners and contribute to enhancing their life skills and therefore their independence. They are usually taken in secondary schools, special schools or colleges. In schools, they are usually taken from the third year upwards. National Units at Access 1 are available in a range of subjects such as Science, Healthy Basic Cooking, Office Skills and Using Computer Aided Learning.

Design of Qualification
An Access 1 Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 1. Typically, a National Unit at Access 1 will require 60 hours of learning – although learners may need more time and substantial teacher/lecturer support.

Typically, holders of a National Course at Access 1 will have developed learning and life skills achieved through participation in experiential situations and basic tasks to enhance their independence.

Progression
National Units at Access 1 are designed to support progression. Learners may progress to:
- other Units at Access 1 or Access 2;
- National Courses at Access 2.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Access 2	2	18

General Information

National Courses at Access 2 are designed for learners who need to build up confidence or may have additional support needs. National Courses aim to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area. Achieving a National Course at Access 2 shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills in a particular subject at the defined national standard. They are usually taken in secondary schools, special schools or colleges. In schools, they are usually taken from the third year upwards. National Courses are available in a range of subjects such as Biology, Computing, Maths and Media Studies.

Design of Qualification

A National Course at Access 2 is allocated 18 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 2 and is usually made up of three Units, all at the SCQF Level of the Course. Each Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit. In some cases, learners may count Units at higher levels towards a National Course at Access 2. There is no external assessment. The Units that make up the National Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications.

Typically, holders of a National Course at Access 2 will be able to:
   • demonstrate a knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject;
   • relate knowledge to some simple everyday contexts, with prompting;
   • use some very simple skills;
   • carry out, with guidance, some familiar tasks;
   • use rehearsed stages for solving problems.

Progression

National Courses at Access 2 are designed to support progression. Learners may progress to:
   • other National Courses or Units at Access 2 or Access 3;
   • National Progression Awards at SCQF Level 2 or 3;
   • National Certificates at SCQF Level 2 or 3;
   • other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Access 3	3	18

General Information

National Courses at Access 3 are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area. Achieving a National Course at Access 3 shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills in a particular subject at the defined national standard.

There may be a choice of Units available. They are usually taken in the third or fourth year of secondary schools or colleges. National Courses are available in a range of subjects such as Biology, Computing, Maths and Media Studies.

Design of Qualification

A National Course at Access 3 is allocated 18 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 3. It is usually made up of three National Units at the SCQF Level of the Course. Each Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit. In some cases, learners may count Units at higher SCQF Levels towards a National Course at Access 3. The Units that make up the National Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications.

Typically, holders of a National Course at Access 3 will be able to:
  • demonstrate basic knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject;
  • relate knowledge, with some prompting, to personal and/or everyday contexts;
  • use a few basic routine skills to undertake familiar and routine tasks;
  • identify, with some prompting, a process to deal with a situation or issue.

Progression

National Courses at Access 3 are designed to support progression. Learners may progress to:
  • National Courses at Intermediate 1;
  • National Progression Awards at SCQF Level 3 or 4;
  • National Certificates at SCQF Level 3 or 4;
  • other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Qualification Group Award	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
National Certificates at SCQF Levels 2-3	2-3	54

General Information
National Certificates at SCQF Levels 2-3 are designed to provide candidates with the skills and knowledge (including transferable skills and Core Skills*) that employers expect and also to provide articulation to higher level programmes of study (for example, National Certificates at higher SCQF Levels). They are delivered within the broad context of a subject or occupational area and are vocationally-related qualifications, which are linked to National Occupational Standards. They are mainly delivered in college and can be taken through full-time study or part-time study and, in some cases, can be taken on a flexible or distance-learning basis.

Design of Qualification
At SCQF Levels 2-3, National Certificates are made up of Units with a total credit value of 54 SCQF Credit Points. At least half of the SCQF Credit Points must be at the SCQF Level of the award. They have mandatory and optional sections. The mandatory section must have a minimum of 27 SCQF Credit Points. National Certificates are designed and developed by Qualification Design Teams in consultation with employers, students, colleges and Sector Skills Councils.

Progression
National Certificates at SCQF Levels 2-3 are designed to provide a progression pathway to employment and to articulate to higher level qualifications (National Certificates at higher SCQF Levels).

National Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Standard Grade at Foundation Level	3	24

General Information
Standard Grades are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.
Achieving a Standard Grade at Foundation Level shows that a learner has demonstrated the defined knowledge and skills for a particular subject to the defined national standard. They are usually taken in secondary schools over two years, in the third and fourth years.

Design of Qualification
A Standard Grade at Foundation Level is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 3.
They are made up of different parts called elements; e.g. Knowledge and Understanding, Practical Abilities and Problem Solving. Each element is assessed to determine a grade for a learner. Standard Grades at Foundation Level are awarded at grades 5 and 6. The Course assessment is an external assessment and can be, for example, an exam, project work or a folio completed during the Course and then marked by SQA.

Typically, holders of a Standard Grade at Foundation Level will be able to:
   • demonstrate basic knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject;
   • relate knowledge, with some prompting, to personal and/or everyday contexts;
   • identify, with some prompting, a process to deal with a situation or issue;
   • use a few basic routine skills to undertake familiar and routine tasks.

Progression
Standard Grades at Foundation Level support progression to National Courses at Intermediate 1 or to other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Standard Grade at General Level	**4**	**24**

General Information
Standard Grades are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.
Achieving a Standard Grade at General Level shows that a learner has demonstrated the defined knowledge and skills for a particular subject to the defined national standard. They are usually taken in secondary schools over two years, in the third and fourth years.

Design of Qualification
A Standard Grade at General Level is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 4.
Standard Grades are made up of different parts called elements; e.g. Knowledge and Understanding, Practical Abilities and Problem-solving. Each element is assessed to give a grade to the candidate.
Standard Grades at General Level are awarded at grades 3 and 4.
The Course assessment is an external assessment and can be, for example, an exam, project work or a folio completed during the Course and then marked by SQA.

Typically, holders of a Standard Grade at General Level will be able to:
  • demonstrate basic knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject;
  • relate knowledge, with some prompting, to personal and/or everyday contexts;
  • identify, with some prompting, a process to deal with a situation or issue;
  • use a few basic routine skills to undertake familiar and routine tasks.

Progression
Standard Grades at General Level support progression to National Courses at Intermediate 2 or to other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Intermediate 1	4	24

General Information

National Courses are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.

Achieving a National Course at Intermediate 1 shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills in a particular subject at the defined national standard. They are usually taken in secondary schools or colleges. In schools, they are usually taken in fifth year, although some schools are introducing them earlier – in the third or fourth year.

Many learners taking National Courses at Intermediate 1 will previously have taken Courses at SCQF Level 3, such as Standard Grade at Foundation level or a National Course at Access 3 or Units at this level, but this is not mandatory.

In some cases, learners may count Units at higher levels towards a National Course at Intermediate 1. The Units that make up the National Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications. National Courses are available in a wide range of subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills – from Biology to Business Management, Information Systems to Italian, and Maths to Media Studies.

Design of Qualification

A National Course at Intermediate 1 is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 4. It is usually made up of three National Units and a Course Assessment, all at the SCQF Level of the Course.

Each Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit, and the Course as a whole is allocated a further 6 SCQF Credit Points.

National Courses are awarded at four grades – A, B, C and D. The Grade is determined by a learner's performance in the Course assessment.

Typically, holders of a a National Course at Intermediate 1 Level will be able to:

- demonstrate a basic, mainly factual knowledge of a subject;
- relate knowledge to personal and/or practical context;
- use, with guidance, given stages of a problem-solving approach to deal with a situation or issue;
- select and use, with guidance, appropriate tools and materials safely and effectively.

Progression

National Courses at Intermediate 1 are designed to support progression. Learners may progress to:

- National Courses at Intermediate 2;
- National Progression Awards at SCQF Level 4 or 5;
- National Certificates at SCQF Level 4 or 5;
- other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Skills for Work Course at Intermediate 1	4	24

General Information

Skills for Work National Courses at Intermediate 1 are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific vocational area as well as an understanding of the workplace, skills and attitudes for employability, and Core Skills.

Achieving a Skills for Work National Course at Intermediate 1 shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills in a particular area at the defined national standard. In some cases, learners may count Units at higher levels towards a Skills for Work National Course at Intermediate 1. Learning programmes include practical experience and learning through reflection. The Units which make up the National Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications.

Skills for Work are usually offered by partnerships of schools and colleges, sometimes working with employers or other training providers. In schools, they are usually taken from the third year onward.

Design of Qualification

A Skills for Work National Course at Intermediate 1 is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 4. They are usually made up of four National Units at the SCQF Level of the Course.

Each Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit.

Progression

Skills for Work National Courses at Intermediate 1 are designed to support progression.
Learners may progress to:
  • National Courses at Intermediate 2;
  • National Progression Awards at SCQF Level 4 or 5;
  • National Certificates at SCQF Level 4 or 5;
  • other courses in further education, training or employment

National Qualification Group Award	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
National Certificates at SCQF Levels 4-6	4-6	72

General Information

National Certificates are designed to provide candidates with the skills and knowledge (including transferable skills and Core Skills) that employers expect and also to provide articulation to Higher National (HN) programmes of study. They are delivered within the broad context of a subject or occupational area. They are vocationally-related qualifications linked to National Occupational Standards, which are undertaken mainly in colleges.

National Certificates can be taken through full-time study or part-time study and, in some cases, can be taken on a flexible or distance-learning basis.

Design of Qualification

National Certificates at SCQF Levels 4-6 are made up of Units with a credit value of 72 Credit Points. Half of the SCQF Credit Points must be at the SCQF Level of the award.

They have mandatory and optional Units. The mandatory section must have a minimum of 36 SCQF Credit Points.

They are designed and developed by Qualification Design Teams in consultation with employers, students, colleges and Sector Skills Councils.

Progression

National Certificates at SCQF Levels 4-6 are designed to prepare candidates for progression into employment or further education and to articulate to HN programmes.

National Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Standard Grade at Credit Level	5	24

General Information
Standard Grades are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.
Achieving a Standard Grade at Credit Level shows that a learner has demonstrated the defined
knowledge and skills for a particular subject to the defined national standard. They are usually taken
in secondary schools over two years, in the third and fourth years.

Design of Qualification
A Standard Grade at Credit Level is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 5.
Standard Grades are made up of different parts called elements; e.g. Knowledge and Understanding,
Practical Abilities and Problem Solving. Each element is assessed to give a grade to the candidate.
Standard Grades at Credit Level are awarded at grades 1 and 2. The Course assessment is an
external assessment and can be, for example, an exam, project work or a folio completed during the
Course and then marked by SQA.

Typically, holders of a Standard Grade at Credit Level will be able to:
   • demonstrate a basic knowledge of a subject which is mainly factual but has some theoretical
     content;
   • relate ideas and knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts;
   • use a problem solving approach to deal with straightforward issues in relation to the subject;
   • use a range of routine skills;
   • use some abstract constructs; e.g. make generalisations and/or draw conclusions.

Progression
Standard Grades at Credit Level support progression to National Courses at Higher or to other
courses in further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Skills for Work Course at Intermediate 2	5	24

General Information
Skills for Work National Courses at Intermediate 2 are designed to develop skills and knowledge
in a specific vocational area as well as an understanding of the workplace, skills and attitudes for
employability and Core Skills.
Achieving a Skills for Work National Course at Intermediate 2 shows that a learner has demonstrated
the specified knowledge and skills in a particular area at the defined national standard. In some
cases, learners may count Units at higher levels towards a Skills for Work National Course at
Intermediate 2. Learning programmes include practical experience and learning through reflection.
The Units that make up the National Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications.
Skills for Work are usually offered by partnerships of schools and colleges, sometimes working with
employers or other training providers. In schools they are usually taken from the third year onward.

Design of Qualification
A Skills for Work National Course at Intermediate 2 is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF
Level 5. They are usually made up of four National Units at the level of the Course and each Unit is
allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit.

Progression
Skills for Work National Courses at Intermediate 2 are designed to support progression.
Learners may progress to:
   • National Courses at Higher;
   • Skills for Work National Courses at Higher;
   • National Progression Awards at SCQF Level 5 and 6;
   • National Certificates at SCQF Level 5 or 6;
   • other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Intermediate 2	5	24

General Information

National Courses are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.

Achieving a National Course at Intermediate 2 shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills for a particular subject at the defined national standard. They are usually taken in secondary schools or colleges. In schools, they are usually taken in fifth or sixth year, although some schools are introducing them earlier – in the third or fourth year.

In some cases, learners may count Units at higher SCQF Levels towards a National Course, and many learners will previously have taken Courses at SCQF Level 4, such as Standard Grade at General Level or a National Course at Intermediate 1 or Units at this SCQF Level, but this is not mandatory.

National Courses are available in a wide range of subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills – from Biology to Business Management, Information Systems to Italian, and Maths to Media Studies.

Design of Qualification

A National Course at Intermediate 2 is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 5. It is usually made up of three National Units and a Course Assessment, all at the SCQF Level of the Course.

Each Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit, and the Course as a whole is allocated a further 6 SCQF Credit Points.

National Courses are awarded at four grades – A, B, C and D. The grade is determined by a learner's performance in the Course Assessment.

Typically, holders of a National Course at Intermediate 2 will be able to:
- demonstrate a basic knowledge of a subject which is mainly factual but has some theoretical content;
- relate ideas and knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts;
- use a problem-solving approach to deal with straightforward issues in relation to the subject;
- use a range of routine skills;
- use some abstract constructs – e.g. make generalisations and/or draw conclusions.

Progression

National Courses at Intermediate 2 are designed to support progression. Learners may progress to:
- National Courses at Higher;
- National Progression Awards at SCQF Level 5 or 6;
- National Certificates at SCQF Level 5 or 6;
- other courses in further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Higher	6	24

General Information

National Courses are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area.

Achieving a National Course at Higher shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills for a particular subject at the defined national standard.

Highers are taken in schools and colleges; in schools, they are normally taken in the fifth year. Learners in full-time education may take up to five or more Highers in a year. Most learners taking Highers will previously have gained Courses or Units at SCQF Level 5, such as Standard Grades or National Courses at Intermediate 2, but this is not mandatory. The Units that make up the Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications.

National Courses are available in a wide range of subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills – from Biology to Business Management, Information Systems to Italian, and Maths to Media Studies.

Design of Qualification

A National Course at Higher is allocated 24 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 6. It is usually made up of three Units and an external or Course Assessment, all at the SCQF Level of the Course.

Each Unit is allocated 6 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 6, depending on the size of the Unit, and the Course as a whole is allocated a further 6 SCQF Credit Points.

National Courses are awarded at four grades – A, B, C and D. The Grade is determined by a learner's performance in the Course Assessment.

Typically, holders of a National Course at Higher will be able to:

- demonstrate a general factual and theoretical knowledge of a subject – and the ideas, terminology, skills and techniques associated with it – and apply this in known practical contexts (when appropriate to the subject);
- obtain, organise and use factual and theoretical information in problem-solving;
- make generalisations and predictions;
- draw conclusions and suggest solutions.

Progression

National Courses at Higher are designed to support progression. Learners may progress to:

- National Courses at Advanced Higher;
- Degree courses in Higher Education (Highers form the main entry qualification for programmes in Higher Education);
- other courses in higher or further education, training or employment.

National Course	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Advanced Higher	**7**	**32**

General Information

National Courses are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area. Achieving a National Course at Advanced Higher shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills for a particular subject at the defined national standard.

They are usually taken in secondary schools or colleges; in schools, they are usually taken in sixth year, building on the knowledge and skills gained in the related National Courses at Higher.

Most learners taking National Courses at Advanced Higher will previously have taken Courses at SCQF Level 6 – i.e. National Courses at Higher – but this is not mandatory.

The Units that make up the National Course can also be taken as freestanding qualifications.

National Courses are available in a wide range of subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills – from Biology to Business Management, Information Systems to Italian, and Maths to Media Studies.

Design of Qualification

A National Course at Advanced Higher is allocated 32 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 7. They are usually made up of three National Units and a Course Assessment, all at the SCQF Level of the Course. Each Unit is allocated 8 SCQF Credit Points or a proportion of 8, depending on the size of the Unit, and the Course as a whole is allocated a further 8 SCQF Credit Points.

National Courses are awarded at four grades – A, B, C and D. The Grade is determined by a learner's performance in the Course Assessment.

Typically, holders of a National Course at Advanced Higher will be able to:

- demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of the subject and its main theories, concepts and principles;
- present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas that are routine to the subject;
- use a range of approaches to address defined problems;
- convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form.

Progression

National Courses at Advanced Higher are designed to support progression.

Learners may progress to:

- degree courses in higher education;
- other courses in further and higher education;
- training or employment.

Higher National Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Higher National Certificates (HNCs)	7	96

General Information

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) are designed to provide people with the practical skills and theoretical knowledge that employers expect and also to provide articulation to HNDs and degree programmes. They are higher education vocational qualifications related to National Occupational Standards, which are undertaken mainly in Further Education Colleges but also in some Higher Education Institutions.

Some HNCs exempt learners from taking all or part of the professional examinations needed to gain membership of the associated professional body.

HNCs can be taken through full-time study or part-time study and, in some cases, can be taken on a flexible or distance-learning basis.

They cover a wide range of areas, from Business to Social Science to Game-keeping.

Design of Qualification

They are designed to SCQF Level 7 and are worth 96 SCQF Credit Points. At least 48 SCQF Credit Points must be at the SCQF Level of the award, but, typically, most of the Units in HNCs are at the SCQF Level of the award.

They are made up of mandatory and optional Units; the mandatory section must have a minimum of 48 SCQF Credit Points and include a Graded Unit of 8 SCQF Credit Points at SCQF Level 7. The Graded Unit will be an examination or project that will allow students to demonstrate that they can integrate and apply the knowledge and skills they have gained in the individual Units to meet the principal aims and objectives of the HNC.

Candidate achievement will be graded A, B or C.

HNCs are designed and developed by Qualification Design Teams in consultation with employers, professional bodies and higher education, who ensure they are fit for purpose.

Typically, holders of a Higher National Certificate will be able to:
 • demonstrate a broad knowledge of the subject/discipline/vocational area in general;
 • use professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a vocational area and practise them in vocational contexts;
 • demonstrate core skills to the level specified by the vocational sector;
 • exercise initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level;
 • work with others in support of current professional practice, under guidance.

Progression

HNCs are designed to provide progression to employment at technician/technologist level and articulation to HNDs and degree programmes at SCQF Level 7 or 8, depending on articulation agreements.

Higher National Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)	8	240

General Information

Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are designed to provide people with the practical skills and theoretical knowledge that employers expect and also to provide articulation to degree programmes. Some HNDs exempt learners from taking all or part of the professional examinations needed to gain membership of the associated professional body. They are higher education vocational qualifications related to National Occupational Standards, which are undertaken mainly in further education Colleges but also in some Higher Education Institutions.

HNDs can be taken through full-time study or part-time study and, in some cases, can be taken on a flexible or distance-learning basis.

They cover a wide range of vocational areas, from Accountancy to Engineering to Music, with the content of each HND reflecting the needs of a particular sector.

Design of Qualification

HNDs are designed to SCQF level 8 and are worth 240 SCQF credit points.

64 SCQF credit points must be at the SCQF Level of the award, but, typically, most of the Credit Points in the second year of an HND are at the SCQF Level of the award.

They are made up of mandatory and optional Units. The mandatory section must have a minimum of 96 SCQF Credit Points and include a Graded Unit of 8 SCQF Credit Points at Level 7 and 16 SCQF Credit Points of Graded Unit(s) at SCQF Level 8.

The Graded Units will be an examination(s) or project(s), which will allow students to demonstrate that they can integrate and apply the knowledge and skills that they have gained in the individual Units to meet the principal aims and objectives of the HND. Candidate achievement will be graded A, B or C.

HNDs are designed and developed by Qualification Design Teams in consultation with employers, professional bodies and higher education, who ensure they are fit for purpose.

Typically, holders of a Higher National Diploma will be able to:

- demonstrate a broad knowledge of the scope, defining features and main areas of a subject/ discipline;
- use a range of skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a vocational area, some of which are advanced or complex and practice them in a vocational context;
- demonstrate Core Skills to the level specified by the vocational sector;
- exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level;
- work in support of current professional practice and deal with ethical and professional issues under guidance.

Progression

Holders of an HND may progress to employment at a higher technician, technologist or first line manager level, or to the second or third year of a degree programme (Level 8 or 9), depending on the articulation arrangements of particular universities.

National Qualification Group Award	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
National Progression Awards (NPAs)	2-6	**Minimum of 12**

General Information
National Progression Awards (NPAs) are small flexible group awards that are linked to National Occupational Standards or other professional or trade standards and are designed to assess and certificate a defined set of skills in a specialist vocational area. NPAs are aimed at candidates in work or those preparing to enter or return to work and can be delivered in college or the workplace.

They can be taken through full-time study or part-time study and, in some cases, can be taken on a flexible or distance-learning basis.

Design of Qualification
National Progression Awards are made up of a minimum of 2 Units with a minimum credit value of 12 SCQF Credit Points. There is no maximum credit value and therefore each NPA will vary.
NPAs have mandatory and/or optional Units that reflect the title of the award.
However, the credit value will be determined by the defined aims and rationale of the Group Award.
They are designed and developed by Qualification Design Teams, in consultation with employers, students, colleges and Sector Skills Councils.

Progression
NPAs can be used as part of the ongoing skills development of candidates and allow progression within an occupation. They can also be used to gain the required skills/knowledge to enter employment in a particular occupational area.

National Qualification Group Award	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Professional Development Awards (PDAs) at SCQF Level 6	6	**Minimum of 12**

General Information
Professional Development Awards (PDAs) are designed for those normally already in a career or vocation who wish to extend or broaden their skills base, usually after completing a degree or vocational qualification relevant to their area of interest. However, in some cases, they will be designed for those wishing to enter or re-enter employment. They are designed to assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills and are aligned to National Occupational Standards or other professional body standards.

Design of Qualification
At SCQF level 6, PDAs will have a minimum credit value of 12 SCQF Credit Points and will comprise at least two Units. There is no maximum credit value, and therefore each PDA at this SCQF Level will vary.
At least half the SCQF Credit Points will be at the SCQF Level of the Group Award. The maximum credit value for each PDA will be determined by the defined aims and rationale of the Group Award.

Progression
PDAs can be used as part of ongoing professional development and allow progression within an occupation or a move to another occupation.

National Qualification Group Award	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Professional Development Awards (PDAs) at SCQF Levels 7-12	**7-12**	**Minimum of 16**

General Information
Professional Development Awards (PDA) are designed for those normally already in a career or vocation who wish to extend or broaden their skills base, usually after completing a degree or vocational qualification relevant to their area of interest.
However, in some cases, they will be designed for those wishing to enter or re-enter employment. They are designed to assess and certificate progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills. They are aligned to National Occupational Standards or other professional body standards.

Design of Qualification
At SCQF Levels 7-12 PDAs will have a minimum of 16 SCQF Credit Points and will comprise at least two Units. At least half the Credit Points will be at the SCQF Level of the Group Award. There is no maximum credit value and therefore each PDA at this SCQF Level will vary. The maximum credit value for each PDA will be determined by the defined aims and rationale of the Group Award, and this will be checked at validation.

Progression
PDAs can be used as part of ongoing professional development and allow progression within an occupation or a move to another occupation.

Vocational Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)	**Dependent on the SVQ**	**Dependent on the Structure of the SVQ**

General Information
SVQs are work-based qualifications that are delivered in the workplace and/or in partnership with a college or other training provider. They are a means of recognising the skills and knowledge people need in employment and are based on National Occupational Standards that reflect the competences in a particular industry.
SVQs are composed of Units that define one aspect of a job or work-role and say what it is to be competent in that aspect of the job. They cover all types and levels of job, including operatives, craft-workers, technicians and managers. To be awarded an SVQ, learners must achieve each of the SVQ Units that make it up by demonstrating to an Assessor that they are competent in that aspect of the job. The Units that make up the SVQ can also be taken as freestanding awards.

Design of Qualification
SVQs range from SVQ level 1 to SVQ level 5, from operational level to senior management level. They can have mandatory and optional sections and the number and size of Units that make up the SVQ will vary dependent on the competence standards of the particular industry they reflect. The defined competences and structure of the SVQ is agreed by Sector Skills Councils with input from relevant employers and Awarding Bodies and others with a role in the vocational area, e.g. practitioners, professional and regulatory bodies, trades unions.

Typically, holders of a Scottish Vocational Qualification will be able to:
This will be dependent on the particular SVQ, but, in general, possession of an SVQ will demonstrate that the learner is competent in carrying out the job that the SVQ covers and has demonstrated this competence in the workplace.
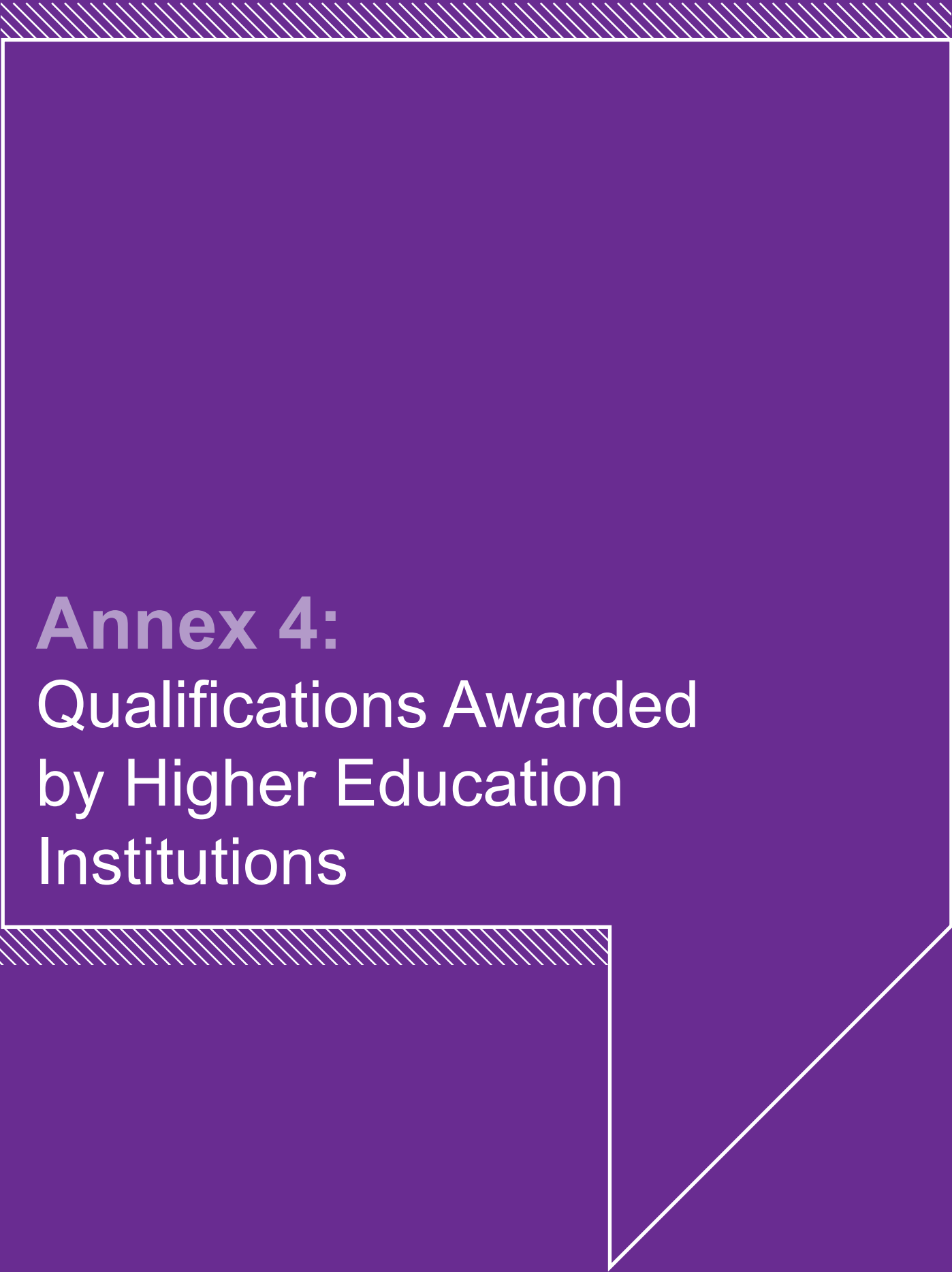
Progression
This will be dependent on the particular SVQ but, in general, will enhance the learner's opportunities for progression within their chosen career.

Notes

Annex 4:
Qualifications Awarded by Higher Education Institutions

Annex 4: Qualifications Awarded by Higher Education Institutions

Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Certificate of Higher Education	7	120

General Information

The Certificate of Higher Education (Cert HE) is available in a number of Scottish Higher Education Institutions typically as an exit award after the equivalent of one year of full-time study.

Design of Qualification

Some Cert HEs are awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas, while others focus on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

The credit value is at least 120 SCQF Credit Points, of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF Level 7 or above.

Typically, holders of the Certificate of Higher Education will be able to:
- demonstrate and outline knowledge of the scope and main areas of the subject(s) and its links with related subjects and a more extensive knowledge of some of the key areas;
- use their knowledge of the subject and its techniques in a routine manner to evaluate and formulate a range of arguments and solutions to problems and issues of a routine nature;
- show an understanding of the major theories, principles and concepts;
- communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably and within structured and coherent arguments;
- gain familiarity with some of the routine materials, techniques and practices of the subject;
- undertake further learning within a structured and managed environment;
- develop skills for the gathering, basic analysis and presentation of routine information, ideas, concepts and quantitative and qualitative data within a clearly defined context. This will include the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as appropriate to the subject;
- apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts where individuals may have some limited personal responsibility but the criteria for decisions and the scope of the task are well defined.

Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Diploma of Higher Education	8	240

General Information
The Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE) is typically offered after the equivalent of the first two years of full-time higher education in Scotland.

Design of Qualification
Some Dip HEs are awarded for achievement over a breadth of subject areas, while others focus on one subject, in some cases with a strong vocational focus. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

The credit value is at least 240 SCQF Credit Points, of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF Level 8 or above.

Typically, holders of the Diploma of Higher Education will be able to:
- demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the scope and main areas of the subject(s) and its interactions with related subjects;
- demonstrate detailed knowledge of some key areas, which may include some knowledge of current issues in limited specialised areas;
- use their knowledge, understanding and skills to critically evaluate and formulate evidence-based arguments and identify solutions to clearly defined problems of a generally routine nature;
- show familiarity with and understanding of a range of the essential theories, principles and concepts and an awareness of major issues at the forefront of the subject(s);
- communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably using a range of specialist techniques;
- gain familiarity with and demonstrate effective deployment of essential/routine materials, techniques and practices of the subject(s);
- identify and address their own major learning needs within defined contexts and to undertake guided further learning in new areas;
- develop skills for the gathering, critical analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and/or quantitative and qualitative data that are core to the subject(s); this will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s);
- apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts where the scope of the task and the criteria for decisions are generally well-defined but where some personal responsibility and initiative is required.

Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Scottish Bachelors degree	9	360

General Information
The Scottish Bachelors (non-Honours) degree is typically achieved after the equivalent of three years of full-time higher education. In the main, and depending on the subjects or professional area(s) studied, it is awarded either as a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or a Bachelor of Arts (BA).

Design of Qualification
Although all degrees will exhibit a balance of breadth and depth, some degrees will be highly focused, while others will develop greater breadth of outcomes. The particular characteristics of each degree will be articulated in the programme specification. Many degrees that have a specific vocational focus carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body. In a small number of universities, in some faculties, this qualification is titled 'MA'. The Scottish Bachelors degree is a recognised 'normal' entry requirement to a number of professions across the UK.

The credit value is at least 360 SCQF Credit Points of which a minimum of 60 are at SCQF Level 9 or above.

Typically, holders of the Scottish Bachelors degree will be able to:
- demonstrate a broad and comparative knowledge of the general scope of the subject, its different areas and applications and its interactions with related subjects;
- demonstrate a detailed knowledge of a defined subject or a more limited coverage of a specialist area balanced by a wider range of study. In each case, specialised study will be informed by current developments in the subject;
- use their knowledge, understanding and skills in both identifying and analysing problems and issues and in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments;
- show a critical understanding of the essential theories, principles and concepts of the subject(s) and of the ways in which these are developed through the main methods of enquiry in the subject;
- show an awareness of the provisional nature of knowledge;
- communicate the results of their studies and other work accurately and reliably in a range of different contexts using the main specialist concepts, constructs and techniques of the subject(s);
- gain familiarity with and competence in the use of routine materials, practices and skills; gain familiarity with and competence in a few that are more specialised, advanced and complex;
- identify and address their own learning needs, including being able to draw on a range of current research, development and professional materials;
- obtain well-developed skills for the gathering, evaluation, analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and quantitative and/or qualitative data, drawing on a wide range of current sources; this will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s);
- apply their subject and transferable skills to contexts where criteria for decisions and the scope of the task may be well defined but where personal responsibility, initiative and decision-making is also required.

Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Scottish Bachelors degree with Honours	10	480

General Information
The Scottish Bachelors degree with Honours is typically offered through the equivalent of four years of full-time higher education. It is awarded mainly as either a Bachelor of Science (BSc Hons) or a Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons).

Design of Qualification
All Honours degrees will exhibit a balance of breadth and depth, as will be clear from particular programme specifications. Many Honours degrees will have a specific vocational focus and in some cases will carry recognition by the appropriate professional or statutory body. In a small number of universities, in some faculties, this qualification is titled 'MA (Hons)'. The Honours degree is the recognised 'normal' entry requirement to postgraduate study and many professions across the UK.

The credit value is at least 480 SCQF Credit Points, of which a minimum of 90 are at SCQF Level 9 and a minimum of 90 are at SCQF Level 10.

Typically, holders of the Scottish Bachelors degree with Honours will be able to:
- demonstrate a systematic, extensive and comparative knowledge and understanding of the subject(s) as a whole and its links to related subject(s);
- demonstrate a detailed knowledge of a few specialisms and developments, some of which are at or informed by the forefront of the subject;
- use their knowledge, understanding and skills in the systematic and critical assessment of a wide range of concepts, ideas and data (that may be incomplete) and in identifying and analysing complex problems and issues;
- demonstrate some originality and creativity in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence based solutions and arguments;
- show a critical understanding of the established theories, principles and concepts and of a number of advanced and emerging issues at the forefront of the subject(s);
- show a comprehensive knowledge and familiarity with essential and advanced materials, techniques and skills, including some at the forefront of the subject;
- communicate the results of their study and other work accurately and reliably, using the full repertoire of the principal concepts and constructs of the subject(s);
- show a critical understanding of the uncertainty and limits of knowledge and how it is developed and an ability to deploy established techniques of analysis and enquiry within the subject;
- systematically identify and address their own learning needs both in current and in new areas, making use of research, development and professional materials as appropriate, including those related to the forefront of developments;
- develop skills in identifying information needs and in the systematic gathering, analysis and interpretation of ideas, concepts and qualitative and quantitative data and information from a range of evaluated sources, including current research, scholarly, and/or professional literature;
- apply their subject-related and transferable skills in contexts of a professional or equivalent nature where there is a requirement for:
  - the exercise of personal responsibility and initiative;
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts;
  - the ability to undertake further developments of a professional or equivalent nature.

Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Masters degree (For integrated Masters, at least 600 credits of which a minimum of 120 are at SCQF Level 11. Credit definitions do not normally apply to the MPhil)	**11**	**180**

General Information

The Masters degree is available through several different routes: as a programme for graduates or equivalent, through at least one year of full-time postgraduate study or an equivalent period of part-time study; as a programme of typically the equivalent of five years' full-time study that integrates a period of undergraduate study with the Masters degree.

The first of these typically leads to the award of Master of Science or Master of Arts, depending on the subject taken, but other titles are also used. Integrated programmes, frequently offered over the equivalent of five years' full-time study, typically lead to a subject-specific qualification title (e.g. MEng) and are often linked to professional/statutory body recognition.

Design of Qualification

In the majority of cases, the Masters degree reflects a specialised knowledge and understanding of particular areas, applications or levels of expertise in particular subject or professional areas. In some professional areas, Masters degrees are linked to structures of continuing professional development.

The credit value is at least 180 SCQF Credit Points, of which a minimum of 150 are at SCQF Level 11. (For integrated Masters, at least 600 credits, of which a minimum of 120 are at SCQF Level 11. Credit definitions do not normally apply to the MPhil.)

Typically, holders of the Masters degree will be able to:

- demonstrate a systematic understanding of knowledge and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at or informed by the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice;
- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- show a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- demonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding and develop new skills to a high level;
- show a conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses;
  - to demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility; decision making in complex and unpredictable situations; and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Qualification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Doctoral degrees (Credit definitions do not apply to research-based doctorates)	**12**	**540**

General Information

The Doctoral degrees are available through several different routes. The PhD is normally awarded following successful completion of a thesis that requires the equivalent of a minimum of three years' full-time research and study to complete.

Professional doctorates also require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study to complete and will frequently involve work-based as well as HEI-based research and study.

Design of Qualification

Doctoral degrees reflect specialised, advanced knowledge, understanding and practice at the frontiers of the subject or professional area.

The credit value is at least 540 SCQF Credit Points, of which a minimum of 420 are at SCQF Level 12. (Credit definitions do not apply to research-based doctorates.)

Typically, holders of the Doctoral degree will be able to:
- demonstrate the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication;
- demonstrate a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- demonstrate the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches;
- gain a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry and demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in professional or equivalent environments.

Acknowledgements

The SCQF Handbook was revised under the auspices of the SCQF Quality Committee, a Sub-Group of which was established to manage the process; a Users Reference Group was also established to provide comment as the work progressed.

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Notes