

# An Introduction to The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

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# Contents

<b>Foreword by the Minister</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>vii</b>
Aims of the SCQF	vii
Management and development of the SCQF	vii
Levels and credit points	viii
Finally...	ix
<b>1 Background and introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Origins and aims of the SCQF	1
Development of the SCQF	2
<b>2 How the SCQF works</b>	<b>5</b>
Levels and credit points	5
Levels	5
Credit points	7
The qualifications in the SCQF	9
<b>3 The future development of the SCQF</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>17</b>
The Joint Advisory Committee for the SCQF and the development partners	17
The Joint Advisory Committee	17
The development partners	18
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>21</b>
Level descriptors and credit points, and their use in the SCQF	21
The level descriptors	21
Using the level descriptors	22
Credit points	23
The basis for credit	23
Credit, exemption and the accreditation of prior learning	24
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>26</b>
The level descriptors	26
SCQF Level 1 – (Access 1)	26
SCQF Level 2 – (Access 2)	27
SCQF Level 3 – (Access 3, Standard Grade Foundation level)	28
SCQF Level 4 – (Intermediate 1, Standard Grade General level, SVQ 1)	29
SCQF Level 5 – (Intermediate 2, Standard Grade Credit level, SVQ 2)	30
SCQF Level 6 – (Higher, SVQ 3)	31
SCQF Level 7 – (SHE level 1, Cert HE, HNC, Advanced Higher)	32
SCQF Level 8 – (SHE level 2, Dip HE, HND, SVQ 4)	33
SCQF Level 9 – (SHE level 3, Ordinary degrees)	34
SCQF Level 10 – (SHE level 4, Honours degrees)	35
SCQF Level 11 – (SHE level 5, PG 1, PG Dip, PG Cert, MA, MSc, SVQ 5)	36
SCQF Level 12 – (SHE level 6, PG 2, Ph.D. – Doctorate)	37

# Foreword by the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning

The central aims of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) are to:

- ◆ 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; and
- ◆ help people of all ages and circumstances access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential.

The SCQF will make the relationships between qualifications clearer. It will clarify entry and exit points and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors. It will also maximise the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways it will assist learners to plan their progress and learning. It will not, however, demonstrate equivalence of qualifications.

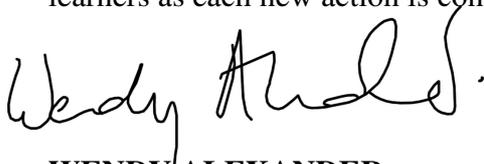
The Scottish Framework is at the forefront of European and world-wide developments, achieving as it does the inclusion of qualifications across academic and vocational sectors into a single credit-based framework. This framework lays the foundations for an exciting period of working together to achieve its full potential.

Our people are our greatest asset in ensuring that Scotland remains competitive and vibrant in an increasingly global and multi-dimensional learning and trading world. The opportunities to realise everyone's full potential and enjoy economic, social and cultural success must be provided here in Scotland.

The SCQF can help provide these opportunities, but only if all organisations involved work together across the varied sectors of education and training, and with stakeholders. There is also potential for the SCQF to benefit employers who provide their own training programmes. These will be included in the framework over time, to help employers understand the range of qualifications and programmes which might meet their training needs in ways not presently envisaged.

The joint Development Plan for the SCQF sets out some of the ways in which the Partners aim to realise the full potential of the Framework. The Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) established by the development partners provides an important locus for working together. Under the new Chair of the JAC, Andrew Cubie, there is good cause for optimism that all those with an interest in education and training in Scotland will work together to maximise the potential of the SCQF to ensure flexibility, inclusivity, credit transfer, learner choice and progression.

The next few years offer the opportunity for some interesting and innovative developments. Crucial to this is that everyone must keep in mind the needs of learners as each new action is considered and implemented.



**WENDY ALEXANDER**

**Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning**

# Executive summary

This guide provides an overview of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and its main features. It also describes how the framework will help to address issues regarding lifelong learning and increasing participation in education.

## Aims of the SCQF

The general 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

The SCQF will provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and make the relationships between qualifications clearer. It will also clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors and increase the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways it will assist learners to plan their progress and minimise duplication of learning.

## Management and development of the SCQF

The SCQF is managed and developed by a partnership of national bodies — the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) through its Scottish office, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and Universities Scotland, supported by the Scottish Executive (Department of Education and Department of Enterprise and Lifelong Learning).

The development partners have established a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC). The Chair of the JAC from September 2001 is Dr Andrew Cubie. The JAC provides an important locus for key stakeholders to identify ways in which the SCQF can be used to assist in widening access, encouraging participation and ensuring the development of people's skills and knowledge to their full potential.

Their activities are set out in the agreed Joint Development Plan for 2000-2003 and an Annual Operating Plan. Copies of these are available from the SCQF Development Officer (for contact details, see page 16).

The diagram on page eight of this guide sets out the current qualifications that make up the SCQF. Further work is being undertaken to refine the positioning of SVQs, and the processes and criteria for including other suitable qualifications and programmes of learning in the framework will be agreed as the work of extending the framework progresses.

## Levels and credit points

Two measures are used to place qualifications in the framework. These are the levels of the outcomes of learning and the volume of these outcomes, described in terms of SCOTCAT (Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer) points.

The SCQF has 12 levels. Increases in level of demand relate to changes in factors such as:

- ◆ complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding
- ◆ links to associated academic, vocational or professional practice
- ◆ the degree of integration, independence and creativity required
- ◆ the range and sophistication of application/practice
- ◆ the role(s) taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks

Levels are not directly related to years of study. Over a lifetime of learning individuals will move from higher to lower levels or across levels of qualifications as they take on new learning and acquire new skills.

The SCQF level descriptors are described in Appendix 2 and set out in Appendix 3. Each level is described in terms of its characteristic general outcomes under five broad areas:

- ◆ knowledge and understanding — mainly subject based
- ◆ practice (applied knowledge and understanding)
- ◆ generic cognitive skills, eg evaluation, critical analysis
- ◆ communication, numeracy and IT skills
- ◆ autonomy, accountability and working with others

The descriptors are designed to allow broad comparisons to be made between outcomes of learning. It is not envisaged that every qualification will or should have all of the characteristics set out in the level descriptors.

The positioning of two or more qualifications or programmes of learning at the same level only indicate that they are broadly comparable in terms of the general level of outcome. It does not indicate that they have the same purpose, content or outcomes. The framework does not demonstrate equivalence of qualifications.

SCOTCAT points are used to quantify the outcomes of learning and give them a value or currency. The allocation of points is based on the amount of time that an 'average' learner at a specified level might expect to take to achieve the outcomes.

Credit points can be used to assist learners to transfer between programmes. The awarding bodies — SQA and individual universities — will continue to determine the extent to which this kind of credit transfer can take place. This decision will

depend upon the nature/content of the learning for which the credit has been given and the requirements of the programme into which transfer is being sought.

The level, credit points and design features of the main qualifications in the SCQF are set out on pages 9 to 14.

## **Finally...**

The next few years offer the opportunity for some exciting and innovative developments based on the potential of the SCQF to provide a shared national context for this work. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that the needs of individual learners are kept paramount in all these future developments.

# 1 Background and introduction

From 2001, mainstream Scottish qualifications are being brought into a single unifying framework known as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). In this framework, qualifications are described in terms of their level and their credit value as defined by a number of Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SCOTCAT) points. These qualifications provide the foundations of a learning and credit transfer framework that will be implemented and embedded in Scotland's education and training provision.

This publication provides a general guide to the SCQF, and is the first of a series of documents that will describe the aims, features, development and use of the framework. This first publication provides an overview of the SCQF and its main features. It is likely to be of use to a wide range of general readers in higher education, further education, schools and work-based training.

## Origins and aims of the SCQF

A framework of qualifications was initially recommended in the Garrick Report (1997) as a key development to the achievement of its vision of higher education in the next 30 years. The aims of the SCQF are also based on the views expressed in the introduction to the Government Green Paper on Lifelong Learning, *Opportunity Scotland* (1998):

*We believe in a culture of lifelong learning where the education system, provision of learning and the benefits of new technology are focused on making it easier for people to participate in learning at any stage of their lives. We recognise that for many people, real or perceived barriers do still exist and we are committed to tackling these on several fronts.*

The Green Paper put forward a ten-point action plan that included the implementation of the SCQF as part of a lifelong learning strategy for Scotland.

Within this overall context the general aims of the SCQF are to:

- ◆ assist 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.

The SCQF is also intended to help describe the programmes of learning that lead to the various qualifications; support the development of routes to progress from qualification to qualification; and maximise the opportunities to transfer credit points between qualifications. It will do this by making the overall system of

qualifications and relevant programmes of learning easier to understand. It will provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and will:

- ◆ make the relationships between qualifications clearer
- ◆ clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression
- ◆ maximise the opportunities for credit transfer
- ◆ assist learners to plan their progress and learning

The SCQF will also assist in making clear the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby clarifying opportunities for international progression routes and credit transfer. This is exemplified through the alignment of qualifications at higher education levels in the UK. At the postgraduate levels, qualifications are common with those in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Honours Degree levels are considered to be in broad alignment. Below Honours Degree the qualifications reflect the different educational structures and contexts. There are some points of comparability — for example, HNDs north and south of the border, and Advanced Highers and A-levels are considered comparable. SVQs and NVQs at all levels are also comparable. Further discussions are taking place to inform developments in Scotland, the rest of the UK and Europe.

## **Development of the SCQF**

The SCQF is based on a series of national agreements about the levels of the main programmes and qualifications that characterise the Scottish education and training system. A framework of 12 levels has been derived from these agreements, and this is illustrated in the diagram on page four. The diagram shows what the qualifications are and where they sit within the SCQF.

Across all the levels of the framework, the partners built on a range of developments undertaken by:

- ◆ the Scottish Executive and the SQA (and their predecessor bodies: the Scottish Office, the Scottish Examination Board, and the Scottish Vocational Education Council)
- ◆ the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SCOTCAT) system that operates in higher education

In 1999 the development partners undertook a consultation exercise on the main features of the SCQF (*Adding Value to Learning*, 1999). Broad support was expressed for the development of a framework. In particular, there was general support for the use of levels and SCOTCAT points to locate qualifications and other formally-assessed learning programmes in a framework.

To help take forward the framework, the development partners have established a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) made up of representatives of the main providers, funders and users of Scottish qualifications (see Appendix 1). From

September 2001, Dr Andrew Cubie takes up appointment as the Chair of the JAC. JAC members help to promote the SCQF and encourage its use within their own areas. The JAC provides a means for key stakeholders to identify ways in which the SCQF can be used to assist in widening access and encouraging increased participation and progression.

The development partners and the Joint Advisory Committee believe that the framework will be of significant value to all who have an interest in learning in Scotland: learners, providers and employers. The development partners anticipate that those with responsibility for the delivery of education and training in Scotland will use the SCQF as a basis for developing and describing provision. This could be schools, further education, higher education, community education and providers of work-based learning who are developing programmes to meet local and national education and training needs. In the future, provided that it comes within an appropriate quality assurance system, and is subject to reliable and valid methods of assessment, any short programme, module, unit, or work-based learning has the potential for incorporation into the framework.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework has been created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework: the qualifications of higher education institutions; SQA National Qualifications and Higher National Qualifications; and SVQs. There are 12 levels ranging from Access 1 (National Qualifications) at SCQF level 1 to Doctorate at SCQF level 12.

<b>The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework</b>				
SCQF level	SQA National Units, Courses and Group Awards	Higher Education	SVQs*	SCQF level
12		<b>Doctorates</b>		12
11		<b>Masters</b>	<b>SVQ 5</b>	11
10		<b>Honours Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate**</b>		10
9		<b>Ordinary Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate**</b>		9
8		<b>Higher National Diploma Diploma in Higher Education</b>	<b>SVQ 4</b>	8
7	<b>Advanced Higher</b>	<b>Higher National Certificate Certificate in Higher Education</b>		7
6	<b>Higher</b>		<b>SVQ 3*</b>	6
5	<b>Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade</b>		<b>SVQ 2</b>	5
4	<b>Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade</b>		<b>SVQ 1</b>	4
3	<b>Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade</b>			3
2	<b>Access 2</b>			2
1	<b>Access 1</b>			1

*\*The positioning of SVQs in the table gives a broad indication of their place in the framework. Like most group awards, SVQs are likely to be made up of Units at a number of levels. The current placing of SVQ 3 at level 6 is based on the way in which SVQs are positioned in statutory documents and national targets. However, there is a view that in some sectors SVQ 3 could be placed at level 7. Further work with the Scottish Council of NTOs and individual NTOs will clarify this within an overall UK context.*

*\*\* These qualifications are differentiated by volume of outcomes and may be offered at either level.*

**NB** Professional Development Awards (PDAs) and Scottish Progression Awards (SPAs) are under review and do not appear in this table. They will be included in future versions and are explained in the following section on page 14.

## 2 How the SCQF works

### Levels and credit points

The SCQF uses two measures to describe qualifications within the framework:

- ◆ the **level** of the outcomes of learning
- ◆ the **volume** of outcomes, described in terms of the number of credits

The volume of an outcome is arrived at by estimating the amount of time required by the ‘average’ learner, at a particular level, to achieve the outcomes. The number of credits will differ greatly from qualification to qualification, within levels and between levels — see section ‘The qualifications in the SCQF’ starting on page nine.

### Levels

Each of the 12 SCQF levels can be the location of one or more of the main Scottish qualifications, ie qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland and those awarded and accredited by the SQA.

Level 1 represents outcomes designed for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties, while level 12 contains outcomes associated with doctoral studies. Increases in level of demand relate to factors such as:

- ◆ complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding
- ◆ links to academic, vocational or professional practice
- ◆ the degree of integration, independence and creativity required
- ◆ the range and sophistication of application/practice
- ◆ the role(s) taken in relation to other learners/workers in carrying out tasks

SCQF levels are *not* directly related to years of full-time study. In some circumstances, however, all or most of the study undertaken in a year of full-time study will be at one level, and progression will be from level to level (for example in full-time four year Honours Degree studies). This is *not*, however, a requirement of the SCQF — in many programmes individuals are likely to be undertaking courses at different levels in the framework at any one time, and over a lifetime of learning individuals will often move from a higher to a lower level qualification as they take on new learning and acquire new skills.

Each level of the SCQF from 2-12 has a descriptor which sets out its characteristic general outcomes under five broad headings:

- ◆ knowledge and understanding — mainly subject based
- ◆ practice (applied knowledge and understanding)
- ◆ generic cognitive skills, eg evaluation, critical analysis
- ◆ communication, numeracy and IT skills
- ◆ autonomy, accountability and working with others

The level descriptors (see Appendix 3) are designed to allow broad comparisons to be made between the outcomes of any learning that has been, or can be, subject to valid, reliable, and quality-assured assessment. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning at each level, but can provide a useful reference point when:

- ◆ determining the level within the SCQF of a qualification or programme of learning
- ◆ designing a programme of learning
- ◆ determining the level of individual units/modules, etc
- ◆ assessing prior learning
- ◆ giving guidance/information on learning opportunities/training provision

It is not envisaged that every qualification or programme will, or should, have **all** of the characteristics set out in the level descriptors. More detailed guidance on this is given in Appendices 2 and 3.

The positioning of two or more qualifications or programmes of learning at the same level should be taken as indicating only that they are **broadly** comparable in terms of the general level of outcome. It does not indicate that they have the same purpose, content or 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 of qualifications. An example of this is Advanced Higher, HNC, and the Certificate in Higher Education all being on level 7. Although these qualifications are all on the same level, they have quite different forms of delivery and assessment rules. When programme designers create a qualification they need to think about matters such as course content and the nature of the assessment required, but the SCQF is not directly concerned with either of these.

Qualifications awarded by Scottish higher education institutions, and those awarded or accredited by the SQA, will be placed on the levels of the SCQF. The smallest free-standing qualifications (such as SQA Units) and components of larger qualifications (such as university modules) will be allocated to a single level. Larger qualifications will be allocated a final or exit level, but will often be composed of components at a number of different levels. For example, an individual who completes an SQA Scottish Group Award will normally have completed Units at two levels, while a holder of an Honours Degree will normally have completed units or modules at four levels.

In some cases, all the qualifications of a particular type will have the same exit level. In other cases, such as SQA's Professional Development Awards (PDAs), and Graduate Diplomas/Certificates awarded by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), they will have different exit levels, depending on level and volume of outcomes.

The level of the qualification is likely to be of particular interest to employers, while the level of the individual units or modules which contribute to it will be of concern to learners and those concerned with credit transfer.

Because they relate to all types of learning and qualification, the level descriptors can provide only a general understanding of each level. However, over time, these descriptors will shape the cultural understanding of the level of outcomes of learning at each of the SCQF levels. As a national vocabulary and shared understanding develop, it will become possible to describe qualifications in terms that everyone will be able to understand.

QAA, for example, has already published more specific descriptions of qualifications in Scottish HEIs (*The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*, January 2001).

SQA and individual HEIs will continue to produce descriptions of their own qualifications. These will provide useful internal references for programme designers — and key information to prospective learners and their advisers. In the future, however, these descriptions will be grounded in the shared, national, generic level descriptors of the SCQF. The intention is that, from 2003, all these descriptions will include indications of level and credit value as laid out in the SCQF.

For SQA qualifications, reference to the SCQF levels and credit points will be made in Course Arrangements documents, Unit specifications, and other sources of information as these are revised and re-published.

The process of describing qualifications within the context of the SCQF is underway — the first stages are illustrated on page nine onwards — but, a great deal of work has still to be done to improve everyone's understanding of qualifications across the education and training sectors. This work will result in a series of publications tailored to the needs of particular audiences, for example employers, learners, and guidance advisers.

## **Credit points**

SCOTCAT points are used to quantify the outcomes of learning and give them a value or currency. These general SCOTCAT points are allocated to outcomes of learning that are subject to valid, reliable methods of assessment.

The number of SCOTCAT points is worked out on the basis of the amount of time that an 'average' learner at a specified level might expect to take to achieve the outcomes. In common with other credit systems, the SCQF works on the basis that one credit point represents the outcomes of learning achieved through 10 *notional*

hours of learning time. However, this is merely a **guide** and no points are added or taken away if more or less time is taken to achieve the outcomes. No points are 'earned' by a learner if the outcomes of learning are not achieved.

Most mainstream qualifications in Scotland have been developed on a credit basis with design rules related to the amount and level of credit required. For example, the achievement of an Honours Degree requires the accumulation of 480 SCOTCAT points, at least 90 of which must be at level 10, while an SQA Course at Higher requires the accumulation of 24 SCOTCAT points at level 6.

General SCOTCAT points can be used to assist learners to transfer between programmes. The awarding bodies — SQA and individual universities — decide the extent to which this kind of transfer can take place. They determine how much of the credit already achieved is relevant to the new programme and the specific number of credits that can be transferred.

Through the SCQF, the processes involved in making these decisions should become clearer, more consistent, and more public. More detailed information on the nature and uses of levels and credits, plus examples of credit transfer, is given in Appendix 2.

The table which starts overleaf shows the levels and general credit values of the main Scottish qualifications in the SCQF.

## The qualifications in the SCQF

<b>DOCTORAL DEGREES</b>	
SCQF level	12 (Scottish Higher Education (SHE) level D)
Credit points	At least 540 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 420 is at level 12. (Research-based Doctorates do not have a credit rating)
Design	Doctorates are available through several routes. The PhD is normally awarded following the successful completion of a thesis requiring the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study to complete. Professional Doctorates also require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study, and will frequently involve work-based as well as HEI-based research and study.

<b>MASTERS DEGREES</b>	
SCQF level	11 (SHE level M)
Credit points	At least 180 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 150 is at level 11. For integrated Masters, at least 600 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 120 is at level 11. (Credit definitions do not normally apply to the MPhil — see Doctoral Degrees)
Design	Masters degrees are available through several different routes: as a programme for graduates or equivalent through the equivalent of at least one year of full-time study; as a programme of, typically, the equivalent of five years of full-time study that integrates undergraduate study with the Masters degree.

<b>THE SCOTTISH BACHELORS DEGREE WITH HONOURS</b>	
SCQF level	10 (SHE level H)
Credit points	At least 480 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 180 is at levels 9 and 10 including at least 90 at level 10.
Design	The honours degree is typically offered through the equivalent of four years' full-time higher education. The honours degree is recognised as the normal entry to postgraduate study.

<b>THE SCOTTISH BACHELORS DEGREE</b>	
SCQF level	9 (SHE level 3)
Credit points	At least 360 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 60 is at level 9.
Design	The ordinary degree is typically offered through the equivalent of three years' full-time higher education. The ordinary degree is recognised as the normal entry to a number of professions across the UK.

<b>THE GRADUATE DIPLOMA/CERTIFICATE</b>	
SCQF level	9 and 10 (SHE level 3 and H)
Credit points	At least 120 SCOTCAT points at the minimum of level 9 for a diploma and at least 60 SCOTCAT points at the minimum of level 9 for a certificate.
Design	These qualifications are typically for graduates or equivalent but are not of postgraduate level of outcome.

### **DIPLOMAS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

SCQF level	8 (SHE level 2)
Credit points	At least 240 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 90 are at level 8 or higher.
Design	The Diploma of Higher Education is typically offered after the equivalent of the first two years of full-time higher education in Scotland. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

### **CERTIFICATES OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

SCQF level	7 (SHE level 1)
Credit points	At least 120 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 90 are at level 7 or higher.
Design	The Certificate of Higher Education is typically offered as an exit award after the equivalent of one year of full-time higher education in Scotland. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

### **HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMAS**

SCQF level	8
Credit points	120 SCOTCAT points at level 8 and 120 credit points at level 7 (at present units are not allocated to a level).
Design	HNDs are normally offered through the equivalent of two years' full-time higher education. They can give entry to degree programmes at either level 8 or 9, depending on articulation agreements. <i>Note: From 2003, new design rules will be introduced which will require newly-validated HNDs to be composed of levelled units and assessments to the minimum value of 240 SCOTCAT points, of which at least 120 must be at level 8 or above. These design rules will be subject to evaluation during 2001-2002.</i>

### **HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATES**

SCQF level	7
Credit points	120 SCOTCAT points at level 7.
Design	HNCs are normally offered through the equivalent of one year's full-time higher education. They can give entry to HNDs and degree programmes at level 7 or 8 depending on articulation agreements. <i>Note: From 2003 new design rules will be introduced which will require newly validated HNCs to be composed of units and assessments to the minimum value of 120 SCOTCAT points of which at least 104 must be at level 7 or above. These design rules will be subject to evaluation during 2001-2002.</i>

<b>SCOTTISH VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS</b>	
SCQF level	4-11
Credit points	<i>Note: Work is underway in consultation with SCONTO and NTOs, to develop an agreed model for allocating credit points to SVQs.</i>
Design	SVQs are based on the National Occupational Standards developed by National Training Organisations (NTOs). Typically an SVQ is achieved in the workplace. Some SVQs or SVQ Units are incorporated into other awards or programmes including HNCs, Scottish Progression Awards and Modern Apprenticeships. SVQs combine work-based competences and underpinning knowledge.

<b>SCOTTISH GROUP AWARD (SGA) AT ADVANCED HIGHER</b>	
SCQF level	7
Credit points	144 SCOTCAT points of which 96 points must be at level 7 (these must come from three Advanced Higher Courses) and 48 points at level 6.
Design	SGAs are made up of National Courses and Units at two levels. They give credit for SVQ 3 or SVQ 4. Achievement of all five Core Skills is required — three at Higher and two at Intermediate 2. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further and higher education, training or employment. <i>Note: At this level there is a single general award. Programme content will reflect learner choice.</i>

<b>SCOTTISH GROUP AWARDS (SGAs) AT HIGHER</b>	
SCQF level	6
Credit points	120 SCOTCAT points of which 72 points must be at level 6 (these must come from three Higher Courses) and 48 points at level 5.
Design	These SGAs are made up of National Courses at level 6 and National Units at level 5 or above. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Intermediate 2 or Higher is required. These qualifications are designed to prepare people for entry to further and higher education, training or employment. The focus is reflected in the titles of particular awards. There is also a general SGA.

<b>SCOTTISH GROUP AWARDS (SGAs) AT INTERMEDIATE 2</b>	
SCQF level	5
Credit points	96 SCOTCAT points of which 48 points must be at level 5 (these must come from two Intermediate 2 Courses) and 48 points at level 4.
Design	These SGAs are made up of National Courses at level 5 and National Units at level 4 or above. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Intermediate 1 or 2 is required. These qualifications are designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment. The focus is reflected in the titles of particular awards. There is also a general SGA.

### SCOTTISH GROUP AWARD (SGA) AT INTERMEDIATE 1

SCQF level	4
Credit points	96 SCOTCAT points of which 48 points must be at level 4 (these must come from two Intermediate 1 Courses) and 48 points at level 3.
Design	<p>These SGAs are made up of National Courses at level 4 and National Units at level 3 or above. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Access 3 or above is required. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.</p> <p><i>Note: At this level there is a single general award. Programme content will reflect learner choice.</i></p>

### SCOTTISH GROUP AWARD (SGA) AT ACCESS 3

SCQF level	3
Credit points	72 SCOTCAT points of which 36 points must be at level 3 and 36 points at level 2. <b>NB</b> This is for a single award — candidates can go on to achieve double or triple awards.
Design	<p>These SGAs are made up of National Clusters and/or Units at two levels. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Access 2 or above is required. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.</p> <p><i>Note: At this level there are only general awards. Programme content will reflect learner choice.</i></p>

### SCOTTISH GROUP AWARD (SGA) AT ACCESS 2

SCQF level	2
Credit points	54 SCOTCAT points of which all 54 points must be at level 2. <b>NB</b> This is for a single award — candidates can go on to achieve double or triple awards.
Design	<p>These SGAs are made up of National Clusters and/or Units. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Access 2 or above is required. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.</p> <p><i>Note: At this level there are only general awards. Programme content will reflect learner choice.</i></p>

### NATIONAL COURSES AT ADVANCED HIGHER

SCQF level	7
Credit points	32 SCOTCAT points at level 7.
Design	<p>Advanced Higher Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment — an examination or a project — all at the level of the Course. Each Advanced Higher Unit is worth 8 SCOTCAT points at level 7. There may be a choice of Units available. These Courses are typically used for entry to higher education and employment.</p>

### **NATIONAL COURSES AT HIGHER**

SCQF level	6
Credit points	Normally 24 SCOTCAT points at level 6 (if Advanced Higher Units are counted towards the Course, it will be worth more points).
Design	Higher Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment – an examination or a project – all at the level of the Course. Each Unit is worth 6 SCOTCAT points at level 6. There may be a choice of Units available. In some cases learners may count Advanced Higher Units (level 7) towards the Course. These Courses are typically used for entry to higher education and employment.

### **NATIONAL COURSES AT INTERMEDIATE 2**

SCQF level	5
Credit points	24 SCOTCAT points at level 5.
Design	Intermediate 2 Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment – an examination or a project – all at the level of the Course. Each Unit is worth 6 SCOTCAT points at level 5. There may be a choice of Units available. In some cases learners may count Higher Units (level 6) towards the Course. These Courses are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.

### **NATIONAL COURSES AT INTERMEDIATE 1**

SCQF level	4
Credit points	24 SCOTCAT points at level 4.
Design	Intermediate 1 Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment – an examination or a project – all at the level of the Course. Each Unit is worth 6 SCOTCAT points at level 4. There may be a choice of Units available. In some cases learners may count Intermediate 2 Units (level 5) towards the Course. These Courses are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.

### **NATIONAL CLUSTERS AT ACCESS 3**

SCQF level	3
Credit points	18 SCOTCAT points at level 3.
Design	Access 3 Clusters are usually made up of three Units, all at the level of the Cluster, with no external assessment. There may be a choice of Units available. Each Unit is worth 6 SCOTCAT points at level 3. In some cases learners may count Intermediate 1 Units (level 4) towards the Cluster. These Clusters are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.

### **NATIONAL CLUSTERS AT ACCESS 2**

SCQF level	2
Credit points	18 SCOTCAT points at level 2.
Design	Access 2 Clusters are usually made up of three Units, all at the level of the Cluster, with no external assessment. There may be a choice of Units available. Each Unit is worth 6 SCOTCAT points at level 2. In some cases learners may count Access 3 Units (level 3) towards the Cluster. These Clusters are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.

### **NATIONAL UNITS AT ACCESS 1**

SCQF level	1
Credit points	Each Access 1 Unit is worth 6 SCOTCAT points at level 1.
Design	Access 1 Units are designed to be used in programmes of learning designed for the personal needs of learners with severe and profound learning difficulties. Many of these Units are designed to articulate with the outcomes of Access 2 Units, offering progression.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS (PDAs)**

SCQF level	4-9
Credit points	Dependent on Units that make up the particular PDA.
Design	PDAs are qualifications for people already in a career who wish to develop an aspect of their existing skills, develop new ones or change direction. There are four kinds of PDA: Advanced Diploma at SCQF level 9; Diploma at SCQF level 7 or 8; Advanced Certificate, normally at SCQF level 6; and Certificate, normally at SCQF level 4 or 5. <i>Note: As each PDA is reviewed and revised, it will be positioned within the SCQF.</i>

### **SCOTTISH PROGRESSION AWARDS (SPAs)**

SCQF level	4-11
Credit points	Dependent on the Units that make up the particular SPA.
Design	SPAs are normally subsets of SVQs and offer learners an opportunity to achieve a group of Units which encourages progression to a full SVQ. The design rules are very flexible, allowing SPAs to meet the needs of occupational sectors. They can comprise SVQ, National and Higher National Units or a combination. They can help a learner develop capability and demonstrate potential to prospective employers. <i>Note: As each SPA is reviewed and revised, it will be positioned within the SCQF.</i>

### 3 The future development of the SCQF

The next few years will see the growth of the framework through the combined efforts of the development partners and members of the JAC. Together, they will build on an already firm foundation, and increasingly work towards these goals:

- ◆ Establish a national framework and vocabulary for describing and recognising all learning, including that which is not already part of any formal qualifications system, provided it has been, or can be, subject to valid, reliable and quality-assured assessment. Work is underway on developing guidelines to extend the framework.
- ◆ Make the overall system of qualifications easier to understand and use by clarifying relationships between qualifications, and by making clear the entry and exit points and the routes for progression and credit transfer.
- ◆ Build more credit links between the different types of qualifications to enhance flexibility and enable the accumulation and transfer of credit from different routes. This will enable learners to carry forward credit for previous learning while recognising that the framework creates no mandatory system of credit transfer.
- ◆ Provide a common means for describing and recording all individual achievement, including the potential for a harmonised format for all records of achievement and transcripts.
- ◆ Assist in making clear the relationships between qualifications in Scotland and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, thereby clarifying opportunities for progression and credit transfer.

It is the intention of the development partners to widen the framework to recognise other qualifications and programmes of learning developed and delivered within Scotland as soon as possible. This process will also include qualifications being developed on a UK-wide basis, for example by public and statutory or professional bodies.

Many of the qualifications being delivered in Scottish education and training institutions have been developed outside Scotland. These include GCE A levels; NVQs; City and Guilds, RSA and BTEC courses; and the Irish Leaving Certificate. These qualifications come within the frameworks of other countries, particularly those of the regulatory bodies QCA, ACCAC and CCEA. This means that they cannot be directly located in the SCQF. However, discussions are underway to allow comparisons of levels and credit rating of outcomes to be made between the frameworks. This situation will be clarified in the future as frameworks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are further developed and finalised.

To avoid misunderstanding, it is important to emphasise at this point that these developments have no effect on Scottish institutions' ability or right to choose

which qualifications to deliver. The SCQF is *not* a regulatory framework, but a descriptive framework — it facilitates the awarding of credit and supports credit transfer and progression routes within the Scottish system. It seeks to help everyone involved in education and training in Scotland to make comparisons between qualifications offered throughout Scotland, and to understand how these relate to each other.

The practical means by which these goals will be met are set out in the agreed Joint Development Plan for the SCQF that covers the period 2000-2003. Copies of this are available from the Development Officer.

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# Appendix 1

## The Joint Advisory Committee for the SCQF and the development partners

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework is being established jointly by: the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Universities Scotland (formerly COSHEP), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) through its Scottish office, the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department (SEELLD) and the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED).

### The Joint Advisory Committee

The development partners are keen to ensure that the framework is developed in ways that take account of and can support the range of education and training interests in Scotland. For this reason, a Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) has been established that provides a forum for the continued development and maintenance of the framework.

The Chair of JAC from September 2001 is Dr Andrew Cubie, CBE. Dr Cubie's previous contributions to public life in Scotland are well known through his chairmanship of amongst other organisations, the Court of Napier University, Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW), CBI Scotland and of the Independent Committee of Inquiry into Student Funding. The development partners believe his appointment to the Chair of JAC will have a significant impact on the development of the SCQF.

The JAC is made up of representatives from a number of key organisations in Scottish education and training. In addition to the development partners, these are:

- ◆ the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- ◆ the Headteachers Association for Scotland (HAS)
- ◆ the Association of Scottish Colleges (ASC)
- ◆ Community Learning Scotland (CLS)
- ◆ the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Access (SACCA)
- ◆ the Scottish University for Industry (SUFI)
- ◆ Scottish Enterprise (SEnt)
- ◆ Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)
- ◆ the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Councils (SFEFC/SHEFC)
- ◆ the Scottish Council of National Training Organisations (SCONTO)
- ◆ the Confederation of British Industry Scotland (CBI)
- ◆ the Scottish Trade Unions Congress (STUC)

This Committee will advise on the development, implementation and maintenance of the framework in ways which support wider education and training initiatives in Scotland, elsewhere in the UK and internationally. The Committee will act as a

forum for the exchange of views and proposals on the development and maintenance of the framework. It will oversee consultative processes and practical work in developing the framework and offer advice to the development partners on ways in which the framework can support education and training needs and initiatives.

The development partners and the JAC are supported by an SCQF Development Officer (see page 16).

## **The development partners**

### **The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education:**

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for higher education in the UK. It is an independent body funded by subscription from universities and colleges of higher education and the Higher Education funding councils.

The Agency's main activities are to review the quality of teaching and learning and the standards of qualifications in higher education institutions.

It is also charged with working with the higher education institutions to: develop and implement the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework within the higher education sector; to develop and publish benchmark information on standards of higher education qualifications; to develop programme specifications in higher education; to develop Progress Files in higher education; and to develop a Code of Practice on the assurance of quality and standards in higher education.

The QAA is a UK-wide organisation, but in order to take into account the features and needs of the higher education sector in Scotland, it has a Scottish office, located in Glasgow, and a Scottish Advisory Committee. It is through its Scottish office and Scottish Committee that QAA is working in partnership with Universities Scotland and SQA to develop and implement the SCQF as a whole, and working with the higher education sector to develop that part of the SCQF that relates specifically to the qualifications of higher education institutions.

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**The Scottish Qualifications Authority:**

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is Scotland's statutory awarding and accrediting body for qualifications delivered in Scotland's schools, colleges, training centres, and workplaces. SQA offers qualifications at most levels in the SCQF. These include National Units, Courses, and Group Awards at levels 1 – 7, HNCs and HNDs at levels 7 and 8, and SVQs from levels 4 –11.

Although it is self-financing, the SQA is answerable to the government, and to the people of Scotland, for the credibility, reliability and value of its qualifications. Its most important functions are to uphold the quality of established qualifications and to develop new ones where there is a need. It does this in partnership with people in education, industry, commerce and government to develop qualifications that are relevant to the needs of individuals, society and the economy.

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## **Universities Scotland**

*(formerly COSHEP – The Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals)*

Universities Scotland is the voice of the higher education sector in Scotland. It is a membership organisation, funded by the 22 Scottish universities and colleges of higher education, which it supports and promotes.

The member institutions had a significant input into the Garrick Report. The Report made several recommendations, emphasising that the SCQF would play a crucial role in achieving these. Universities Scotland works in partnership with the other organisations with responsibility for credit and qualifications in Scotland to develop and implement the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework in the higher education sector.

Scottish higher education is essential to the prosperity of Scotland — the quality of its graduates and its cutting edge research are the foundations of the Scottish economy. The work undertaken to reach people who might, in the past, have missed out on a higher education is vital in achieving social inclusion.

The member institutions are diverse in character, enabling them to meet a wide range of needs. Universities Scotland exists to promote their good work, to argue for the public support needed to maintain and build on their achievements, and to develop policy on Scottish higher education issues.

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# Appendix 2

## Level descriptors and credit points, and their use in the SCQF

### The level descriptors

The SCQF has 12 levels, reflecting the current Scottish system of education and training. Level 1 relates to outcomes designed for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties, while level 12 relates to outcomes associated with doctoral level studies. The descriptors show how each level becomes increasingly demanding by changes to factors such as complexity and depth of knowledge, links to associated academic, vocational or professional practice, and the degree of autonomy exercised by the learner.

SCQF levels provide a basis for broad comparisons between learning and qualifications achieved in different contexts such as the workplace and formal classroom study and by a variety of modes. But they can only be applied to learning which has been or can be subject to valid, reliable and quality assured assessment.

These generic level descriptors have been designed to provide a general understanding of each level, and their development has drawn extensively on:

- ◆ Standard Grade Extended Grade Related Criteria developed by the SQA
- ◆ the levels for Courses and Core Skills developed by the Higher Still Development Programme
- ◆ earlier work to develop level descriptors for the SCOTCAT Framework
- ◆ the benchmarks developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) for Honours Degrees
- ◆ the level descriptors for N/SVQs developed by the regulatory bodies — SQA for SVQs, and QCA for NVQs

The descriptors give broad, general, but meaningful, indicators of the characteristics of learning at each level. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning at each level. The descriptors can be used in a number of ways:

- ◆ to allocate levels to learning programmes and qualifications
- ◆ in validation events for qualifications and programmes
- ◆ as a basis for communication with learners and other users of qualifications
- ◆ as a guide for mapping progression routes within and across the education and training sectors
- ◆ by programme designers when making entry requirements and recommendations for programmes

At each level five headings have been identified to make the descriptors manageable. These are:

- ◆ knowledge and understanding — mainly subject-based
- ◆ practice: applied knowledge and understanding
- ◆ generic cognitive skills, eg evaluation, critical analysis
- ◆ communication, numeracy and IT skills
- ◆ autonomy, accountability and working with others

There is no separate descriptor for level 1, which covers all provision that comes below the full achievement of level 2.

Where two or more qualifications or programmes of learning are placed at the same level they will be comparable in certain respects, particularly their overall level of outcome, but they will each have their own purpose, content or structure. The SCQF does not, however, demonstrate equivalence of qualifications.

Many programmes of learning have grading systems, eg SQA's National Courses, HNCs and HNDs, and awards of higher education institutions. The characteristics that distinguish grades of attainment are not included in the level descriptors. Judgements on *how well* a learner has performed and the grading and classification systems used to report that performance, are the responsibility of SQA and the HEIs.

The development of the descriptors has been a complex task and has involved workshops and consultations with a range of interested bodies in the different sectors. What is published here is the first edition of a workable set of descriptors. The development partners and the Joint Advisory Committee recognise that the utility of these descriptors can only be tested by using them, and so feedback will be actively sought with a view to refining the descriptors and publishing amplification and clarification where this is shown to be needed.

## **Using the level descriptors**

The descriptors flesh out the levels of the qualifications in the framework. They are designed to help programme designers and the writers of unit specifications to look at the range of skills that might be covered at a particular level, select appropriate headings and peg outcomes accordingly.

It is envisaged that people assigning a level to a qualification will employ an approach that involves both matching against a level and identifying the levels above and below which don't match. This will be done by direct matching with the descriptors, and by making comparisons with the SQA and HEI qualifications that make up the framework.

It is not envisaged that a learner in every unit/course/programme will cover all of the headings. That decision lies with the designers/writers of a piece of learning.

However, it is envisaged that *Knowledge and Understanding* and/or *Practice – applied knowledge and understanding* will be a key to allocating a level to most programmes.

Level descriptors can be used at any stage in the design, development and validation of programmes, courses or units. The intention is for them to be used as a *guide* to locate the level of outcomes but not to *prescribe* the content, range, and so on.

Communication, numeracy, and IT skills have been included under a separate heading. However, where one (or more) of these skills is the main component of a course/programme, eg a Diploma in Computing, then outcomes should be considered under the ‘knowledge and understanding’ and/or ‘practice’ headings.

Further guidance of this kind will be developed in the light of feedback on the use of the descriptors.

## Credit points

### The basis for credit

Credit is a way of quantifying the outcomes of learning, and SCQF points provide a method of describing and comparing the amount of learning achieved at the same or different levels of the Framework. To be measured in this way, learning must be assessed by a method that is valid, reliable, and subject to appropriate quality assurance.

Credit points are allocated on the basis that the volume of the outcomes of learning in a qualification or learning programme will be related to the amount of time that an ‘average’ learner might expect to take to complete them. This is called *notional time* because it does not measure the time actually taken by any individual learner. One credit point represents the outcomes of learning achieved through 10 *notional* hours of learning time. This is the same unit of credit that has been used successfully in the SCOTCAT system in higher education.

This notional learning time should include all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes including, eg:

- ◆ formal learning, including classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars and tutorials
- ◆ doing practical work in laboratories or other locations
- ◆ undertaking relevant IT activities
- ◆ information retrieval, eg in libraries
- ◆ private study, revision and remedial work
- ◆ work-based activities which lead to assessment
- ◆ practice — gaining, applying and refining skills
- ◆ undertaking all forms of assessment
- ◆ programme planning
- ◆ educational counselling, mentoring and reflection

The need to undertake any or all of these will be considered when credit is being allocated to a qualification or learning programme. The mix of learning activities will vary from programme to programme — in school, the learning might be mostly class-based; in higher education much of the learning time is spent outside of formal lectures, etc. In other situations, much of the learning will be work-based.

In determining the notional learning time involved in achieving outcomes of learning (eg in a module/unit, programme, or any piece of assessed learning), the concept of the notional full time learning year provides one useful reference point. The full time year in school, or further or higher education, is typically around 1200 hours of learning activity. The outcomes achieved will, therefore, be allocated 120 SCOTCAT points — the Higher National Certificate and the Certificate of Higher Education, which typically last one year, are allocated 120 points. No rigid allocation of time is implied in this system, particularly as flexible and distance learning develops. As with the allocation of levels, comparisons with the main SCQF qualifications will also be important.

### **Credit, exemption and the accreditation of prior learning**

In some cases, the credits already gained in one course of study can be counted towards another. This occurs most commonly when the programmes have been *designed* to articulate. In others, credits gained previously can be used to get exemptions from parts of a new course if the receiving institution is satisfied that the content and level of the previous qualifications are compatible with the new course. These arrangements can help learners who want, for example, 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 learning, for example from a previously-gained SVQ, towards a Scottish Group Award, an HNC or HND or towards a degree

In some cases, the SCQF levels and credits may be used as the basis of articulation agreements which will allow previously-gained qualifications or assessed learning to count directly towards a new qualification. An example of the former would include a case where an HNC or HND can be used in place of the first or second year of a degree programme. An example of the latter would include an agreement to allow the first year of a degree programme to be credited towards an HND.

Where actual credit is given for previous learning, this is called turning *general* credit into *specific* credit. The following page lists some examples.

- ◆ A learner wishes to start a post-graduate degree course in Management at university A, having previously completed an SVQ level 5 in Management – her previous learning is worth 120 general SCOTCAT points at level 11: university A, which is running a research-based MSc, offers no specific credit for the SVQ; university B, which offers an MBA at this level, offers 60 credits.
- ◆ A learner completes the first year of a medical degree at university C and wants to transfer to a science course at university D. His previous learning is worth 120 general SCOTCAT points at level 7, of which most covers science courses. University D grants him 100 specific credits at level 7 towards the new course.
- ◆ A learner completes part of a degree in Engineering at university E and wants to transfer to an HND in Information Technology at college F. Her previous learning is worth 80 general SCOTCAT points at level 7, and part of that is on computer-aided design: college F grants her 20 specific credits at level 7 towards the new course<sup>1</sup>.
- ◆ A learner completes an SVQ 2 in Care: Direct Care, and another learner completes an SVQ 2 in Care: Early Years and Education. Both have 24 SCOTCAT points (four SQA Unit credits) counted towards the open section of a Scottish Group Award in Care at Intermediate 2 at their local FE college.

How much specific credit can be given in each case is a matter of judgement based on comparing the outcomes of the previous learning with the requirements of the new course. In some popular areas there are articulation agreements which form a kind of case law, but even here the receiving institution will make the final decision. Through the SCQF, the processes involved in making these decisions should become clearer, more consistent, and more public.

The rules for credit transfer can also be built into the specification for a qualification, as is the case with Scottish Group Awards.

In some cases, it will be possible to accredit uncertificated prior learning by matching it to the outcomes of existing qualifications. Here, the level descriptors and credit points can provide a guide. For example, a college might use evidence of this kind of prior learning towards part or all of a National Unit within a Scottish Group Award. In general, this prior learning will need to be shown to have been (or to have been capable of being) assessed in a valid, reliable and quality assured manner.

Since the SCQF will relate only to *general* credit and **not** to *specific* credit, the allocation of SCOTCAT points to a particular qualification does not imply that these can be automatically transferred to another qualification. It is expected, however, that over time those responsible for designing qualifications will increasingly make clear where there are opportunities for credit transfer into their programmes of learning, and to specify the level and number of credits which can be transferred from other programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> In March 2000 SQA published *Credit Transfer from degrees to Higher National Certificates and Diplomas: Guidance for Centres*. The current system requires a centre to do a detailed mapping of the content of degree courses against HNC/HNDs for credit transfer, as in this example, that could then be subject to external moderation. Under the proposed system outlined in the document, bulk credit transfer is available.

# Appendix 3

## The level descriptors

**NB** These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

### **SCQF Level 1 — (Access 1)**

There is no separate descriptor for level 1, which covers all provision that comes below the full achievement of level 2.

## SCQF Level 2 — (Access 2)

**NB** These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with knowledge of simple facts and ideas in a subject/discipline.</p>	<p>Relate knowledge to a few simple everyday contexts with prompting.</p> <p>Use a few very simple skills.</p> <p>Carry out with guidance a few familiar tasks.</p> <p>Use, under supervision, basic tools and materials.</p>	<p>Use rehearsed stages for solving problems.</p> <p>Operate in personal and/or everyday contexts.</p> <p>Take some account, with prompting, of identified consequences of action.</p>	<p>Use very simple skills with assistance — for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>produce and respond to a limited range of very simple written and oral communication in familiar /routine contexts</i></li> <li>• <i>carry out a limited range of very simple tasks to process data and access information</i></li> <li>• <i>use a limited range of very simple and familiar numerical and graphical data in familiar and everyday contexts</i></li> </ul>	<p>Work alone or with others on simple routine, familiar tasks under frequent and directive supervision.</p> <p>Identify given simple criteria some successes and/or failures of the work.</p>

## SCQF Level 3 — (Access 3, Standard Grade Foundation level)

NB These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic knowledge in a subject/discipline</li> <li>• simple facts and ideas associated with a subject/discipline</li> </ul>	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.	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.	Use simple skills — for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>produce and respond to simple written and oral communication in familiar, routine contexts</i></li> <li>• <i>carry out simple tasks to process data and access information</i></li> <li>• <i>use simple numerical and graphical data in everyday contexts</i></li> </ul>	Work alone or with others on simple tasks under frequent supervision.  Participate in the setting of goals, timeliness, 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, Standard Grade General level, SVQ 1)

NB These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual</li> <li>• some simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/discipline</li> <li>• knowledge of basic processes, materials and terminology</li> </ul>	<p>Relate knowledge to personal and/or practical contexts.</p> <p>Use a few skills to complete straightforward tasks with some non-routine elements.</p> <p>Select and use, with guidance, appropriate tools and materials safely and effectively.</p>	<p>Use, with guidance, given stages of a problem solving approach to deal with a situation or issue.</p> <p>Operate in straightforward contexts.</p> <p>Identify and/or take account of some of the consequences of action/inaction.</p>	<p>Use straightforward skills — for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>produce and respond to simple but detailed written and oral communication in familiar contexts</i></li> <li>• <i>use the most straightforward features of familiar applications to process and obtain information</i></li> <li>• <i>use straightforward numerical and graphical data in straightforward and familiar contexts</i></li> </ul>	<p>Work alone or with others on straightforward tasks.</p> <p>Contribute to the setting of goals, timelines, etc.</p> <p>Contribute to the review of completed work and offer suggestions for improving practices and processes.</p> <p>Identify own strengths and weaknesses relative to the work.</p>

## SCQF Level 5 — (Intermediate 2, Standard Grade Credit level, SVQ 2)

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Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• basic knowledge in a subject/discipline which is mainly factual but has some theoretical component</li> <li>• a range of simple facts and ideas about and associated with a subject/discipline</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of basic processes, materials and terminology</li> </ul>	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 (eg without waste).  Adjust tools where necessary following safe practices.	Use a problem solving approach to deal with a situation or issue which 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 – eg make generalisations and/or draw conclusions.	Use a range of routine skills — for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>produce and respond to detailed written and oral communication in familiar contexts</i></li> <li>• <i>use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information</i></li> <li>• <i>use a range of numerical and graphical data in straightforward contexts which have some complex features</i></li> </ul>	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, SVQ 3)

NB These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
Demonstrate and/or work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generalised knowledge of a subject/discipline</li> <li>• factual and theoretical knowledge</li> <li>• a range of facts, ideas, properties, materials, terminology, practices, techniques about/associated with a subject/discipline</li> </ul> Relate the subject/discipline to a range of practical and/or everyday applications.	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.	Obtain, organise and use factual and theoretical information in problem solving.  Make generalisations and predictions.  Draw conclusions and suggest solutions.	Use a wide range of skills — for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>produce and respond to detailed and relatively complex written and oral communication in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts</i></li> <li>• <i>select and use standard applications to process, obtain and combine information</i></li> <li>• <i>use a wide range of numerical and graphical data in routine contexts which may have non-routine elements</i></li> </ul>	Take responsibility for the 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.

## SCQF Level 7 — (SHE level 1, Cert HE, HNC, Advanced Higher)

NB These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a broad knowledge of the subject/discipline in general</li> <li>knowledge that is embedded in the main theories, concepts and principles</li> <li>an awareness of the evolving/changing nature of knowledge and understanding</li> <li>an understanding of the difference between explanations based in evidence and/or research and other forms of explanation, and of the importance of this difference</li> </ul>	<p>Use some of the basic and routine professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Practise these in both routine and non-routine contexts.</p>	<p>Present and evaluate arguments, information and ideas which are routine to the subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a range of approaches to addressing defined and/or routine problems and issues within familiar contexts.</p>	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated with the subject/discipline — for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>convey complex ideas in well-structured and coherent form</i></li> <li><i>use a range of forms of communication effectively in both familiar and new contexts</i></li> <li><i>use standard applications to process and obtain a variety of information and data</i></li> <li><i>use a range of numerical and graphical skills in combination</i></li> <li><i>use numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets</i></li> </ul>	<p>Exercise some initiative and independence in carrying out defined activities at a professional level.</p> <p>Take supervision in less familiar areas of work.</p> <p>Take some managerial responsibility for the work of others within a defined and supervised structure.</p> <p>Manage limited resources within defined areas of work.</p> <p>Take the lead in implementing agreed plans in familiar or defined contexts.</p> <p>Take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities in carrying out and evaluating tasks.</p> <p>Work with others in support of current professional practice under guidance.</p>

## SCQF Level 8 — (SHE level 2, Dip HE, HND, SVQ 4)

NB These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a broad knowledge of the scope, defining features, and main areas of a subject/discipline</li> <li>detailed knowledge in some areas</li> <li>understanding of a limited range of core theories, principles and concepts</li> <li>limited knowledge and understanding of some major current issues and specialisms</li> <li>an outline knowledge and understanding of research and equivalent scholarly/academic processes</li> </ul>	<p>Use a range of routine skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline, a few of which are advanced or complex.</p> <p>Carry out routine lines of enquiry, development or investigation into professional level problems and issues.</p> <p>Adapt routine practices within accepted standards.</p>	<p>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues which are within the common understandings of the subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a range of approaches to formulate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues.</p> <p>Critically evaluate evidence-based solutions/responses to defined and/or routine problems/issues.</p>	<p>Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills associated with a subject/discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>convey complex information to a range of audiences and for a range of purposes</i></li> <li><i>use a range of standard applications to process and obtain data</i></li> <li><i>use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to measure progress and achieve goals/targets</i></li> </ul>	<p>Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level.</p> <p>Take significant managerial or supervisory responsibility for the work of others in defined areas of work.</p> <p>Manage resources within defined areas of work.</p> <p>Take the lead on planning in familiar or defined contexts.</p> <p>Take continuing account of own and others' roles, responsibilities and contributions in carrying out and evaluating tasks.</p> <p>Work in support of current professional practice under guidance.</p> <p>Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices under guidance.</p>

## SCQF Level 9 — (SHE level 3, Ordinary degrees)

NB These descriptors set out the characteristic generic outcomes of each 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 at different levels. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements, and there is no expectation that every qualification or programme should have all of the characteristics. The descriptors have been developed through a series of consultations and are offered as a first working guide and will be revised in the light of feedback on their use.

Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope, main areas and boundaries of a subject/discipline</li> <li>a critical understanding of a selection of the principal theories, principles, concepts and terminology</li> <li>knowledge that is detailed in some areas and/or knowledge of one or more specialisms that are informed by forefront developments</li> </ul>	<p>Use a selection of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a few skills, techniques, practices and/or materials that are specialised or advanced.</p> <p>Practise routine methods of enquiry and/or research.</p> <p>Practise in a range of professional level contexts which include a degree of unpredictability.</p>	<p>Undertake critical analysis, evaluation and/or synthesis of ideas, concepts, information and issues.</p> <p>Identify and analyse routine professional problems and issues.</p> <p>Draw on a range of sources in making judgements.</p>	<p>Use a range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>make formal and informal presentations on standard/mainstream topics in the subject/discipline to a range of audiences</i></li> <li><i>use a range of IT applications to support and enhance work</i></li> <li><i>interpret, use and evaluate numerical and graphical data to achieve goals/targets</i></li> </ul>	<p>Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level.</p> <p>Take some responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources.</p> <p>Practise in ways which take account of own and others' roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Work under guidance with qualified practitioners.</p> <p>Deal with ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices, seeking guidance where appropriate.</p>

## SCQF Level 10 — (SHE level 4, Honours degrees)

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Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge that covers and integrates most of the principal areas, features, boundaries, terminology and conventions of a subject/discipline</li> <li>a critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles</li> <li>detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms some of which is informed by or at the forefront of a subject/discipline</li> <li>knowledge and understanding of the ways in which the subject/discipline is developed, including a range of established techniques of enquiry or research methodologies</li> </ul>	<p>Use a range of the principal skills, practices and/or materials associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a few skills, practices and/or materials which are specialised, advanced, or at the forefront of a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Execute a defined project of research, development or investigation and identify and implement relevant outcomes.</p> <p>Practise in a range of professional level contexts which include a degree of unpredictability and/or specialism.</p>	<p>Critically identify, define, conceptualise, and analyse complex/professional level problems and issues.</p> <p>Offer professional level insights, interpretations and solutions to problems and issues.</p> <p>Critically review and consolidate knowledge, skills and practices and thinking in a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Demonstrate some originality and creativity in dealing with professional level issues.</p> <p>Make judgements where data/information is limited or comes from a range of sources.</p>	<p>Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced and specialised skills in support of established practices in a subject/discipline, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>make formal presentations about specialised topics to informed audiences</i></li> <li><i>communicate with professional level peers, senior colleagues and specialists</i></li> <li><i>use a range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify refinements/improvements to software to increase effectiveness</i></li> <li><i>interpret, use and evaluate a wide range of numerical and graphical data to set and achieve goals/targets</i></li> </ul>	<p>Exercise autonomy and initiative in professional/ equivalent activities.</p> <p>Take significant responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources.</p> <p>Practise in ways which show a clear awareness of own and others' roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Work effectively under guidance in a peer relationship with qualified practitioners.</p> <p>Work with others to bring about change, development and/or new thinking.</p> <p>Deal with complex ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.</p> <p>Recognise the limits of these codes and seek guidance where appropriate.</p>

## SCQF Level 11 — (SHE level 5, PG 1, PG Dip, PG Cert, MA, MSc, SVQ 5)

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Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge that covers and integrates most, if not all, of the main areas of a subject/discipline — including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions</li> <li>• a critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts</li> <li>• a critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, principles and concepts</li> <li>• extensive, detailed and critical knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms, much of which is at or informed by developments at the forefront</li> <li>• critical awareness of current issues in a subject/discipline and one or more specialisms</li> </ul>	<p>Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use a range of specialised skills, techniques, practices and/or materials which are at the forefront or informed by forefront developments.</p> <p>Apply a range of standard and specialised research or equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p> <p>Plan and execute a significant project of research, investigation or development.</p> <p>Demonstrate originality or creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and/or practices.</p> <p>Practise in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.</p>	<p>Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to issues which are at the forefront or informed by developments at the forefront of a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Identify, conceptualise and define new and abstract problems and issues.</p> <p>Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills practices and thinking in a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in situations in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.</p>	<p>Use a range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/discipline — for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>communicate, using appropriate methods, to a range of audiences with different levels of knowledge/expertise</i></li> <li>• <i>communicate with peers, more senior colleagues and specialists</i></li> <li>• <i>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</i></li> <li>• <i>undertake critical evaluations of a wide range of numerical and graphical data</i></li> </ul>	<p>Exercise substantial autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities.</p> <p>Take responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others.</p> <p>Take responsibility for a significant range of resources.</p> <p>Demonstrate leadership and/or initiative and make an identifiable contribution to change and development.</p> <p>Practise in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and others' roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Deal with complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.</p>

## SCQF Level 12 — (SHE level 6, PG 2, Ph.D. — Doctorate)

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Knowledge and Understanding	Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	Generic Cognitive Skills	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	Autonomy, accountability and working with others
Characteristic outcomes of learning at each level include the ability to:				
<p>Demonstrate and/or work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a critical overview of a subject/discipline, including critical understanding of the principal theories, principles and concepts</li> <li>a critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of one or more specialisms</li> <li>knowledge and understanding that is generated through personal research or equivalent work which makes a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline</li> </ul>	<p>Use a significant range of the principal skills, techniques, practices and materials associated with a subject/discipline.</p> <p>Use and enhance a range of complex skills, techniques, practices and materials at the forefront of one or more specialisms.</p> <p>Apply a range of standard and specialised research/equivalent instruments and techniques of enquiry.</p> <p>Design and execute research, investigative or development projects to deal with new problems and issues.</p> <p>Demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge, understanding and practices.</p> <p>Practice in the context of new problems and circumstances.</p>	<p>Apply a constant and integrated approach to critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas, information and issues.</p> <p>Identify, conceptualise and offer original and creative insights into new, complex and abstract ideas, information and issues.</p> <p>Develop creative and original responses to problems and issues.</p> <p>Deal with very complex and/or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/information.</p>	<p>Use a significant range of advanced and specialised skills as appropriate to a subject/discipline — for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>communicate at an appropriate level to a range of audiences and adapt communication to the context and purpose</i></li> <li><i>communicate at the standard of published academic work and/or critical dialogue and review with peers and experts in other specialisms</i></li> <li><i>use a range of software to support and enhance work at this level and specify software requirements to enhance work</i></li> <li><i>critically evaluate numerical and graphical data</i></li> </ul>	<p>Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional and equivalent activities.</p> <p>Take full responsibility for own work and/or significant responsibility for the work of others.</p> <p>Demonstrate leadership and/or originality in tackling and solving problems and issues.</p> <p>Work in ways which are reflective self-critical and based on research/evidence.</p> <p>Deal with complex ethical and professional issues.</p> <p>Make informed judgements on new and emerging issues not addressed by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.</p>