

New qualifications — new opportunities for your child



The new **National 1 to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher** qualifications are designed to give your child the knowledge and skills they will need to succeed in the 21st century.

The world is becoming ever more competitive. For future generations, it will be essential to have the right skills, knowledge and experience if they are to make the most of the many opportunities on offer.

At SQA, we understand the challenges young people face when they leave school or college, and that is why we have developed the new National Qualifications. We aim to nurture the skills and expertise your child needs whether applying for a job, an apprenticeship, or a place at college or university.

It is our responsibility to give learners the best start through qualifications that are challenging, relevant and meet national standards. The new qualifications support Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), which is transforming the way young people learn, and they reflect the skills, knowledge and experience that your child has gained during their courses. This will help them to demonstrate what they know and what they can do.

We want to give Scotland's young people the best possible chance, when they go out beyond the classroom, to fulfil their potential and take their place in a modern society and economy.

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive
Scottish Qualifications Authority
(SQA)



What is different about the new qualifications?

While the new qualifications continue to develop learners' knowledge and understanding, they also have more of a focus on developing skills.

The new qualifications recognise that different learners perform at their best in different ways. Exams and tests continue to play an important role in some courses. However the new qualifications are also designed to reward learners for their skills in performance-based activities.

In other words, your child will be able to demonstrate what they know and what they can do and this is particularly welcomed by employers.

What has changed?

The table shows how the previous qualifications have been replaced by the new qualifications.

SCQF level	Previous National Qualifications	Replaced by	New National Qualifications
1 and 2	Access 1 and Access 2	▶	National 1 and National 2
3	Access 3 Standard Grade (Foundation level)	▶	National 3
4	Standard Grade (General level) Intermediate 1	▶	National 4
5	Standard Grade (Credit level) Intermediate 2	▶	National 5
6	Higher	▶	Higher (new)
7	Advanced Higher	▶	Advanced Higher (new)

You can find out how the new qualifications compare with other SQA qualifications on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) at www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner

A chart comparing old and new qualifications from the 1960s to the present day is available from www.scqf.org.uk, where you can also find out more about the SCQF and what it means for your child.

How do the new qualifications work?

This is a summary of the new qualifications, how they are assessed and what each qualification could lead to.

All new National Courses include Units (areas of study) that are taught throughout the year. Each Unit is assessed by the teacher or lecturer as a pass or fail based on the work your child has completed for the Unit.

National 1 Units

- These are assessed as a pass or fail by the teacher or lecturer.

They could lead to National 2 Courses, other National 1 Units, or Awards at SCQF level 1 or 2.

National 2 Courses

- These are made up of Units.
- They are assessed as a pass or fail by the teacher or lecturer.
- Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to the related course at National 3, other National 2 Courses, or Awards at SCQF level 2 or 3.

National 3 Courses

- These are made up of Units.
- They are assessed as a pass or fail by the teacher or lecturer.
- Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to the related course at National 4, other National 3 Courses, Awards at SCQF level 3 or 4, National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs) or employment opportunities.

National 4 Courses

- These are made up of Units, including an Added Value Unit that involves a test or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on) and assesses learners' overall performance across the course.
- They are assessed as a pass or fail by the teacher or lecturer.
- Learners need to pass all Units to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to the related course at National 5, other National 4 Courses, Awards at SCQF level 4 or 5, National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs), Modern Apprenticeships or other employment opportunities.

How do the new qualifications work?

National 5 Courses

- These are made up of Units and a Course assessment. Learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.
- They are graded A to D or 'no award'.
- The Course assessment involves a question paper (exam) or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on), or both.*

They could lead to the related course at Higher; other National 5 Courses, Awards at SCQF level 5 or 6, National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs), Modern Apprenticeships or other employment opportunities.

Higher Courses

- These are made up of Units and a Course assessment. Learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.
- They are graded A to D or 'no award'. Learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.
- The Course assessment involves a question paper (exam) or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on), or both.*

They could lead to the related course at Advanced Higher, other Higher Courses, Scottish Baccalaureates, National Certificates (NCs), National Progression Awards (NPAs), Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) Courses, an undergraduate degree, technical apprenticeships or other employment opportunities.

Advanced Higher Courses

- These are made up of Units and a Course assessment. Learners need to pass all Units plus the Course assessment to achieve the qualification.
- They are graded A to D or 'no award'.
- The Course assessment involves a question paper (exam) or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on), or both.*

They could lead to a Higher National Diploma (HND) Course, an undergraduate degree or employment opportunities.

For more information on assessment, visit www.sqa.org.uk/cfeassessment

* We will externally mark most coursework.

Developing skills

As well as subject-based skills, learners will develop Skills for Learning, Life and Work (SfLLW) throughout the new National Courses. These are: Literacy, Numeracy, Health and wellbeing, Employability, enterprise and citizenship, and Thinking skills.

A number of new National Courses also have Core Skills that will automatically be recognised on your child's qualifications certificate. These include: Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Problem Solving.

To learn more, visit www.sqa.org.uk/sfllw and www.sqa.org.uk/coreskills

Literacy and numeracy

Although the new National Qualifications are designed to develop literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects, we have also introduced new National Units in Literacy and Numeracy.

For more information, visit www.sqa.org.uk/literacyandnumeracy

Support for learners doing National Literacy Units

We have produced guidance on supportive practices in these Units, for disabled learners and those with additional support needs (ASN).

To find out more, visit www.sqa.org.uk/literacysupportforlearners

Disabled learners and learners with additional support needs (ASN)

If your child is disabled or needs additional support, an assessment arrangement can be made for them in their assessments or exams (or both), such as using a laptop to type their answers if they have writing difficulties.

Find out more at www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

Study, revision and preparation

Your child might find the following resources helpful.

1. Specimen question papers

These show what the new exams will look like, how they are structured and what your child will be required to do. They are available for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher from www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects

2. Exemplar question papers

These contain updated past paper questions. They are available for Higher Courses. Advanced Higher Exemplar question papers will be published in December 2015. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects

3. Past papers

Past papers can be used when revising for exams. If using past papers from previous National Qualifications, your child should check with their teacher or lecturer which questions will be most useful. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers

4. General assessment information

These documents contain information on coursework at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. Available from www.sqa.org.uk/cfesubjects

5. Exam tools

Your child can view the exam timetable, create their own personalised exam timetable and create a study plan. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/examtools

6. BBC Bitesize

Free interactive revision help for the new National Qualifications. Visit www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

7. Revision in a nutshell

The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFs) has produced handy revision guides for new National Courses. Available from www.npfs.org.uk

8. Hodder Education revision materials

Hodder Education has produced a range of revision materials aimed at those studying for National Qualifications. These include model question papers. Visit www.hoddereducation.co.uk

Learners who receive a fail or ‘no award’ result



Learners will still receive credit for any Units they have passed. These Units will appear on the detailed Record of Attainment section of your child’s qualifications certificate pack, along with the SCQF credit points they have achieved.

If your child does not achieve the National 5 Course assessment, a new arrangement called Recognising Positive Achievement means they could be eligible to achieve the qualification at National 4 instead.

For more information on Recognising Positive Achievement, please speak to your child’s school or college.

Results Services

Our Appeals Service has now been replaced by two new Results Services:

- **Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service**

This service supports candidates who have been unable to attend their exam, or whose performance has been affected as a result of an incident beyond their control, such as a bereavement or medical condition. If the school or college believes a candidate has been affected by an exceptional circumstance, it can tell us and send us alternative assessment evidence for us to consider.

- **Post-results Service**

This service opens after results day and can be used where the school or college has concerns about a candidate’s final result. It consists of a clerical check or marking review (or both). A clerical check will make sure that all the questions have been marked and the marks have been added up correctly. A marking review involves our Senior Examiner reviewing the marks given to check that the paper has been marked according to national standards.

Find out more at www.sqa.org.uk/resultsservices

Awards, Scottish Baccalaureates and vocational qualifications

Awards

We have developed new Awards. These Awards take into account the life and work skills that your child gains from activities they may be taking part in at school or elsewhere — such as mentoring, voluntary work or fundraising activities.

To see the full range of our Awards, visit www.sqa.org.uk/awards

Scottish Baccalaureates

These are qualifications at SCQF level 7, and are available to learners in S5 and S6. There are Scottish Baccalaureates in Expressive Arts, Languages, Science, and Social Sciences.

Find out more at www.sqa.org.uk/baccalaureates

Skills for Work Courses

These courses are designed to introduce your child to the demands and expectations of the world of work.

Skills for Work Courses are available in a variety of areas such as construction, hairdressing and hospitality. Find out more at www.sqa.org.uk/skillsforwork

National Progression Awards (NPAs) and National Certificates (NCs)

NPAs and NCs are about preparing your child for employment, career development or further study at Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) level. They are available in a range of sector areas such as Engineering, Creative Industries and Business and Marketing.

Find out more at www.sqa.org.uk/npa



Any other questions?

Why are there no external exams at National 4?

National 4 follows a similar model to the Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND), which do not have exams and are internally assessed. There are also a number National 5 and Higher Courses which do not have exams. National 4 Courses are mainly assessed through coursework that allows your child to demonstrate what they can do. This will help to prepare your child for National 5 or for moving on to college, training or employment.

Our series of National 4 videos highlight the options available to learners who are working towards, or have gained, National 4 qualifications. You can view them on our YouTube channel, [SQAonline](#)

Will my child sit prelims?

The school or college will decide. Prelims do not form part of the formal assessment process for the new National Courses and are not a requirement of our qualifications. Prelim papers are set and marked by the school or college.

What if my child is planning on applying to university?

Scottish universities will consider both new and previous National Qualifications in their entry requirements. Most Scottish universities have also published policies which outline their position on the new qualifications.

Universities Scotland has also published a paper for other universities in the UK to help them understand the changes.

More information is available from www.sqa.org.uk/cfeforparents

Keeping everyone up to date

We are continuing to work closely with schools and colleges to put the new qualifications in place.

We are also consulting with universities and employers to make sure they have all the information they need about the new qualifications, including how they compare to the previous or existing National Qualifications.

Find out more

To find out more and to download a copy of this guide, visit www.sqa.org.uk/cfeforparents

The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) has also produced a series of 'Nationals in a Nutshell' subject guides for parents and carers. Visit www.npfs.org.uk to find out more.

More information about the new National Qualifications is also available from your child's school or college, and from your local authority.

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YouTube – [SQAonline](https://www.youtube.com/SQAonline)



More information for parents and carers

For advice on supporting learning for young people, visit
www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone

Find the Scottish Parent Teacher Council website at www.sptc.info

Keep up-to-date with Scotland's education community at
www.engageforeducation.org

Find out about additional support for learning at www.enquire.org.uk
and www.callscotland.org.uk



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