

The new National Qualifications — new opportunities for your child



New qualifications are being introduced in Scotland. The new **Nationals**, **Highers** and **Advanced Highers** are replacing Access, Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications, and the existing Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.

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



What's different?

While the new qualifications will continue developing 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, and are designed to reward learners for their skills in performance-based activities as well as in academic tasks.

What is changing?

The table shows how the previous or existing qualifications are being replaced by the new qualifications.

SCQF level	Previous or existing 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 existing SQA qualifications on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) at www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner

How do the new qualifications work?

This is a summary of the courses and units available, how your child's work is marked and what each qualification could lead to.

All new National Courses include units (areas of study) that are taught throughout the year. Your child's teacher or lecturer will assess the work, and each unit is assessed as a pass or fail.

National 1 Units

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

They could lead to other National 2 Courses, other National 1 Units or awards at either of these levels.

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 or to other National 2 Units or Courses or Awards.

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 Units or Courses or Awards, 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 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, including the Added Value Unit, to achieve the qualification.

They could lead to the related course at National 5, other National 4 Units or Courses or Awards, 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.
- They are graded A to D or 'no award'.
- They involve a question paper (exam) or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on), or both, most of which we will mark externally.

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

Higher Courses

- Are made up of units and a course assessment.
- Are graded A to D or 'no award'.
- They involve a question paper (exam) or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on), or both, most of which we will mark externally.

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

Advanced Higher Courses

- These are made up of units and a course assessment.
- They are graded A to D or 'no award'.
- They involve a question paper (exam) or coursework (assignments, practical activities, and so on), or both, most of which we will mark externally.

They could lead to an HND Course, an undergraduate degree or employment opportunities.

You can find out more about how the new National Qualifications are assessed by visiting www.sqa.org.uk/cfeassessment

When are the new qualifications being introduced?

Some of the new qualifications are already being taught in schools and colleges, with the remainder on the way between now and 2015.

Not all schools and colleges are introducing the new qualifications at the same time, so it is worth checking what arrangements your child's school or college has made.

Available now: National 2, National 3, National 4 and National 5 Courses. A number of National 1 Units are also available.

August 2014: The new Higher, and all remaining National 1 Units.

August 2015: The new Advanced Higher.

For learners entering S6 in August 2014, we will continue to make the existing Access, Intermediate and Higher qualifications available alongside the new qualifications.

This will allow learners in S6 in 2014/15 the opportunity to study for the existing qualifications until they leave school. Local authorities, schools and colleges will decide which qualifications learners will study for during this time.



Skills for Learning, Life and Work (SfLLW) and Core Skills

As well as subject-based skills, learners will develop five broad areas of general 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 will also automatically certify Core Skills, such as Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Problem Solving.

To learn more about these, visit www.sqa.org.uk/sfllw and www.sqa.org.uk/cfecoreskills

Literacy and numeracy

Although the new National Courses are designed to develop literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects, SQA has also introduced new National Units in these key areas.

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 candidates 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)

We can make special arrangements in exams and assessments for disabled learners and learners who need additional support, such as using a laptop to type their answers if they have writing difficulties.

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

Ensuring fairness, quality and credibility

We are working with schools and colleges to make sure that assessment decisions made by teachers or lecturers are fair, consistent and in line with national standards. This will make sure that our qualifications continue to be credible, and trusted by colleges, universities and employers.

Find out more about quality assurance at www.sqa.org.uk/cfeqa

Study, revision and preparation

Your child might find the following resources helpful.

1. Specimen question papers & general assessment information

Specimen papers show what the new exams will look like, how they are structured and what's required from learners. You'll find specimen question papers at www.sqa.org.uk/browsecfesubjects

2. Past papers

Existing past papers help test knowledge and understanding. Your child should check with their teacher or lecturer which questions will be most useful.

www.sqa.org.uk/pastpapers/findpastpaper.htm

3. Exam tools

Learners can see the exam timetable, create their own personalised timetable and create a study plan.

www.sqa.org.uk/examtools

4. BBC Bitesize

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

5. Revision in a nutshell

The National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFs) have produced handy revision guides which you can find at www.npfs.org.uk

6. Hodder Education revision materials

A range of materials including model National 5 question papers.
www.hoddereducation.co.uk

Any other questions?

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 SQA qualifications. Prelim papers are set and marked by the school or college.

What happens if my child receives a fail or 'no award' result on results day?

Learners will 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.

What about appeals?

Our appeals service has now been replaced by two new 'results services'.

These are:

- exceptional circumstances consideration service; and
- post-results service.

Find out more about these new services at www.sqa.org.uk/resultsservices

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

View our guide to Recognising Positive Achievement at www.sqa.org.uk/rpa

Awards and Scottish Baccalaureates

Awards

We have developed new awards in Personal Development, Personal Achievement, Modern Languages for Life and Work, Religion, Belief and Values, Wellbeing, Cycling, and Scottish Studies.

You can see the full range of SQA Awards at 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

National Qualifications with a focus on work

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, and you will find more information 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 HNC/HND level. Both NPAs and NCs assess skills and knowledge in specialist work-based areas and are available in lots of different subjects.

You can find out more at www.sqa.org.uk/npa

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.

Finding out more

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

View our frequently asked questions at www.sqa.org.uk/cfefaq

Keep in touch on Facebook at www.facebook.com/scottishqualificationauthority, follow us on Twitter @sqanews, or subscribe to our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/user/SQAonline

The National Parent Forum Scotland (NPFS) has 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



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



it can
be done  SQA

CfE Liaison Team
www.sqa.org.uk/cfeteam
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