Pupil Assessment

The principles shaping assessment in lower secondary education (the 'broad general education' in Curriculum for Excellence) also apply to upper secondary ('the Senior phase'). See Chapter 6.3 Assessment in General Lower Secondary Education for an overview.

The senior phase, which takes place from S4 to S6 in schools and includes ages 16 to 18 out of school, is the phase when the young person will build up a portfolio of qualifications (see the 'Certification' subsection below).

The curriculum framework and the qualifications system provide a range of opportunities to meet the needs of learners at all levels. Whether the student is aspiring to achievements at SCQF first level, or at SCQF seventh level (see National Qualifications Framework). However, the curriculum in the senior phase comprises more than programmes which lead to qualifications. There is a continuing emphasis on:

- Health and wellbeing;
- Physical activity;
- Opportunities for personal achievement;
- Service to others; and
- Experience of the world of work.

Progression of Pupils

Promotion from year to year in lower secondary education (the broad general education in Curriculum for Excellence) and on into upper secondary (the senior phase) is normally by age. Pupils move on to the next stage irrespective of their performance in any single year.

The school’s system of support for learning addresses the needs of all pupils who have additional support needs as they move from class to class with pupils of their own age. The same applies to passage between S4, S5 and S6, though at that stage pupils may often undertake courses at different levels in the national qualifications system. Classes at this stage may therefore sometimes include S4-S6 pupils.

Certification

National Qualifications

There is no school leaving certificate or equivalent in Scotland. Pupils in upper secondary education in schools and colleges (from age 16) may take a number of 'national courses' leading to approved
external national qualifications - including National 2-5, Higher and Advanced Higher. National Qualifications are single-subject qualifications available in a wide range of subjects. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the national awarding and accreditation body for Scotland and is responsible for national qualifications.

The precise number and range of qualifications on offer, as well as when they are taken, is a decision taken by education institutions in consultation with pupils and parents. The main general qualification for progression to Higher Education is the National Qualification Higher.

The qualifications were developed to support Curriculum for Excellence, and are designed to meet the 21st century needs of Scotland and equip learners to take their place in a modern society and economy. They aim to allow learners to develop the skills for learning, life and work that they will need to be able to realise personal ambition. This is realised by equipping learners with the ability to compete in the context of global demographic change, in national and international job markets and fully in the economy and society.

Previously national courses were based on a structure of 'national units'. However, mandatory unit assessments are being removed from National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher during a phased period – National 5 2017/18, Higher 2018/19 and Advanced Higher 2019/20.

The mandatory units are being removed to reduce workloads for teachers and young people. Pupils will only be required to pass the course assessment to achieve a qualification. The unit assessments will be available as free standing units (details of the changes are detailed here).

Assessment in the new qualifications has been designed to be appropriate to the subject and level and to allow a wide range of approaches which benefits both teachers and learners. Assessment is designed to support learning and teaching approaches and not drive them. The new national courses have more of a focus on skills and their application, along with knowledge and understanding.

Course assessment is normally based on a question paper (examination) component and a coursework component. The assessment methods used to assess different forms of coursework are:

- Assignments
- Case studies
- Performance
- Portfolio
- Practical activities and projects

The final grade for the national course is based on a combination of the mark for the question paper and the mark for the coursework component, weighted as appropriate.

National courses at lower levels of the qualifications framework (National 1-4, see National Qualifications Framework) do not have external course assessment.

National 1-4 courses are ungraded (awarded on a pass/fail basis) as this is considered to be a more suitable approach for learners at lower levels of the qualifications framework. Such students can find formal examinations a barrier to achievement. Courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher are graded A to D or 'no award'. To achieve the qualification, learners need to pass course assessment.

Young people receive the results of their national courses in the form of a Scottish Qualifications Certificate in early August (by 8 August for 2017). The Scottish Qualifications Certificate lists all the units, courses and group awards the candidate has achieved (and their components), and lists the candidates current core skills profile. More information on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate can
be found on the SQA website [8].

**Vocational Qualifications**

**National Qualification Group Awards** [9] include National Certificates (NCs) and National Progression Awards (NPAs).

**National Certificates** are designed to prepare people for employment, career development or progression to more advanced study at HNC/HND (Higher National Certificate / Diploma) level. They are aimed at 16-18 year olds or adults in full-time education and are at the second to sixth SCQF. Each one has specific aims relating to a subject or occupational area. For example, the flexible art and design based programme gives learners the opportunity to develop creative expression by learning an applied range of complementary skills and processes.

There are also National Certificates in subjects as diverse as sound production, technical theatre and child, health and social care.

**Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas** are higher education level qualifications delivered by colleges, but designed with employers. This aims to ensure they provide graduates with the skills employers require and the training young people need to sustain employment and develop their careers. Most of these programmes are delivered to school leavers and adults, but a growing number are delivered to school pupils in their senior phase at school.

In many cases, graduates can access degree level study at an advanced stage upon successful completion of the HNC or HND.

**National Progression Awards** are also designed to help people reach their goals. They are available in a variety of sectors, from construction and childcare, to new areas such as digital literacy and social software. They are aimed at assessing a defined set of skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas. They also link to national occupational standards, which are the basis of SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications). NPAs (National Progression Awards) are at the second to sixth SCQF levels and are successfully delivered in partnership between schools, colleges and employers.

Although many schools deliver these awards, they are mainly used by colleges for short study programmes, such as return-to-work courses or part-time learning for those already in work.

**Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs)** [10] are work-based qualifications which are usually delivered in the workplace or in partnership with a college or other training provider. See 'Provision to Achieve a Recognised Qualification during Adulthood' in Chapter 8.4 Main Types of Provision in adult education [11] for more information.

**Foundation, Modern, and Graduate Level Apprenticeships**

**Foundation Apprenticeships** [12] (FA) have been introduced to help senior phase pupils gain work experience and access work-based learning in growth areas in the Scottish economy. Foundation apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity - delivered in partnership between schools, employers, colleges and other training providers. Lasting two years, pupils typically begin their foundation apprenticeship in S5.

Young people spend time out of school at college or with a local employer, and complete the Foundation Apprenticeship alongside their other subjects like National 5s and Highers. Currently, foundation apprenticeships are available in ten subjects:
Civil engineering;
Software development;
Financial services;
Engineering;
Business skills;
Creative and digital media;
Hardware and system support;
Social services – children and young people;
Social services and healthcare; and
Scientific technologies.

They allow the successful learner to use their certificates to advance to a modern apprenticeship (MA) with an employer, having gained advanced standing on the relevant MA programme. Universities and colleges also accept the FA for entry to their programmes.

The aim is that all schools will offer these apprenticeships by 2020.

A modern apprentice performs paid full-time work while receiving training towards a framework of vocational qualifications. The training must lead to a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) second level (SCQF fifth level) or above (National Qualifications Framework), and include core skills. See 'Other Types of Publicly Subsidised Provision for Adult Learners' in Chapter 8.4 Main Types of Provision in adult education for more information.

Graduate and Higher apprenticeships (GA) provide a new way into degree-level study for individuals who are currently employed or who want to go straight into work. They provide work-based learning opportunities from SCQF level 8 up to SCQF level 11 for employees, and have been created in partnership with industry and the further and higher education sectors. They combine academic knowledge with skills development, and are based around the needs of industry.

The introduction of GAs in mostly STEM subjects has been successful. Under the Developing the Young Workforce programme, employers and colleges and universities, will roll out GAs in wider subject areas.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The qualification structure is shown within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework under National Qualifications Framework.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) brings together all mainstream Scottish qualifications and many other qualifications in Scotland into one single, unified framework.

The SCQF is managed by the SCQF Partnership. This is the organisation formed to oversee all aspects of the SCQF and to ensure that the integrity of the Framework is maintained at all times. The SCQF Partnership comprises four partner organisations: the College Development Network (CDN); the Authority (SQA); and Universities Scotland.

The SCQF is designed to make the Scottish Qualifications system easier to understand for everyone, including employers, learners, and those involved in the provision of learning. It demonstrates the relationships between qualifications. It allows learners to plan progress towards their learning and career goals. Since it facilitates the transfer of credits from one qualification towards another in relevant subjects, it avoids repetition of learning.

Qualifications are allocated an SCQF level and SCQF Credit Points. The SCQF has 12 levels and each
level is described by a set of SCQF Level Descriptors. The allocation of the level is based on the
difficulty of the learning. The allocation of SCQF Credit Points represents the time required for a
typical learner to achieve the learning outcomes. One SCQF Credit Point represents a notional 10
hours of learning.

Since its inception in 2001, the scope of the SCQF has extended considerably and it now contains an
increasing number of important local, national and international qualifications. Examples of these
include:

- Qualifications developed by employers for their staff;
- Proprietary qualifications (e.g. developed by major companies to support use of their products);
- Professional body qualifications; and
- Qualifications developed by third-sector and voluntary organisations.

At the time of writing, there are approximately 11,500 qualifications on the SCQF. Of these, almost
1,000 sit beyond mainstream provision, thus widening the relevance and usefulness of the Framework
to different groups of stakeholders in Scotland.

Further information can be found at the [SCQF website](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-general-and-vocational-upper-secondary-education_en)
https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/Developing%20the%20Young%20Workforce%20(DYW)
[16] https://www.scqf.org.uk/