

Realising Your Potential

A guide to the SCQF for lifelong learners





Plan your learning and skills development more effectively using the SCQF

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland's national qualifications framework. By using the SCQF you can find out about qualifications in Scotland and plan your future learning to realise your full potential.

What is the SCQF?

The SCQF gives each qualification a level and number of credit points, so it can help you compare the wide range of Scottish qualifications. It recognises achievements from school, college and university, and work-based qualifications.

The diagram on the next page shows that there are 12 levels. Qualifications at level 1 are the easiest to achieve, and qualifications at level 12 are the most demanding. SCQF credit points show how much learning is needed to achieve qualifications. One SCQF credit point represents an average of 10 hours of learning.

The SCQF makes qualifications easier to describe and understand. Before the SCQF, there was no easy way to compare different types of qualifications. Now it is easy to understand that, for example, an Advanced Higher is at the same level as a Higher National Certificate (HNC), the first year of a degree or a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) level 3. They are all at SCQF level 7

because, although they have a different focus, content and types of assessment, the level of learning is roughly the same.

How is the SCQF being used?

All Scottish universities and colleges use SCQF levels and credit points to describe their courses. A wide range of other learning is also being recognised using SCQF levels and credit points. Some employers, such as local authorities, are also using SCQF levels instead of, or as well as, types of qualifications when they advertise jobs.

Some organisations, such as university admissions departments and employers within Social Services are also using the SCQF to help with the 'Recognition of Prior Learning' (RPL) of potential learners or current or potential employees. This can help you to identify and get recognition for the skills and knowledge you have gained through life and work experiences which may count towards a particular qualification or job role that you want to achieve.

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SVQs/MAs
12				Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11				Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
10				Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
8		Higher National Diploma		Diploma Of Higher Education	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate		Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher				Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5				Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award		SVQ 1
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3				
2	National 2, Awards				
1	National 1, Awards				

The SCQF can:

- help you identify what skills you need and choose the best way to progress with your learning;
- help you understand qualifications you are not familiar with;
- help employers understand different types of qualifications;
- help universities or colleges identify the level you have studied at in a particular subject, and make it easier to transfer credits between different learning programmes; and
- recognise other areas of formal and informal learning or skills that may help you to develop and achieve your goals in the future.

Diagram notes

We have produced this Framework diagram to show the Scottish qualifications that the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), colleges and universities have already given an SCQF level and credit points to. However, there are many more learning programmes on the Framework, which we cannot show here. If you want more information on other learning that has an SCQF level and credit points, visit the SCQF database at scqf.org.uk/the-framework/search-database/.

The credit values for some learning programmes, such as Professional Development Awards, National Certificates and SVQs, can vary depending on the number of units involved. If you need more information on credit values for specific qualifications, contact your learning provider or the awarding body.

Other learning programmes and wider achievement

Some other learning programmes and professional qualifications that you might take at college, university, in the workplace or your local community centre may have an SCQF level and credit points. This area of the Framework will continue to develop, so it is worth checking our website at scqf.org.uk. There are some examples in the following table.

SCQF level	Award owner	Award name	Credit points
9	Young Enterprise Scotland	Can, Plan, Do: Supporting the Enterprise Journey	4
8	The Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland	Professional Banker Diploma	30
8	Institute of Counselling	Certificate in Mentoring	20
7	British Association of Snowsport Instructors (BASi)	BASi Nordic Ski Level 2	12
7	Scottish Autism	Autism Trainer Award	9
6	First Aid Awards Limited	Award in First Aid at Work	3
5	Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)	CIH Scottish Certificate in Housing Practice	20
5	West College Scotland	Introduction to Economics	4
3	Voluntary Action Ayrshire	Ready to Volunteer	4

Frequently asked questions

I studied and gained qualifications outside the UK. Can you tell me what my qualifications are comparable to in Scotland?

If you studied in Europe, your qualifications may be compared against the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). You can find out by speaking to the institution where you studied or through that country's Department of Education. You can then visit the EQF portal at <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/compare> to find the level of your qualification on the SCQF. If your qualifications do not have an EQF level, or if you studied outside Europe, you should contact an organisation called UK NARIC, which is the national agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide. You will need to pay for this service. For more information, visit www.naric.org.uk/naric/. You may also be able to get help from Skills Development Scotland by calling **0800 917 8000**.

What do you mean by prior informal learning and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

Prior informal learning is learning based on experience. It includes all learning which you have done which has not already been assessed or credit rated. This includes things you have learned through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), as well as community-based learning, workplace learning and training and professional development. RPL is a term to describe the processes used to recognise

learning from the past. It means that you may be able to count things you have learned through experience towards a promotion at work, getting a job or getting a place on a course. Have a look at the RPL Online Guide at <http://scqf.org.uk/more/rpl/> for more information.

Are SCQF credit points the same as UCAS tariff points?

No, SCQF credit points are not the same as UCAS tariff points. UCAS is the organisation that processes applications for higher-education courses. The tariff points relate to the qualification grade that has been achieved. SCQF credit points are a measure of how much learning needs to be done to achieve a qualification or learning programme, whatever the final grade.

Do credits help me to study for another qualification or job?

Yes, they can help. However, it's up to the awarding body, such as SQA, and individual universities and colleges, to decide how relevant one piece of learning is to the programme of learning that you want to do. This is called credit transfer.

Are Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) now on the SCQF?

Yes, they are available in many industries across SCQF levels 5-12. There's lots more information on MAs on the Skills Development Scotland website at www.apprenticeships.scot/.

You will find more frequently asked questions for learners on our website at scqf.org.uk/more/faqs/learners-parents-and-carers/.

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