



About this handbook

This handbook provides a general overview of the conditions, arrangements and procedures under which SQA carries out its functions in awarding National Qualifications. The information here is not intended to be comprehensive — other SQA publications which give more detail are referred to throughout the handbook, and there is a list of these in Appendix 3.

The National Qualifications covered by this handbook are: Standard Grades, National Courses, and National Units which are part of National Courses. The handbook provides general information on:

- conditions and arrangements for the approval of centres
- registration and entry of candidates for National Qualifications
- arrangements and procedures for external assessment and verification of internal assessment, and conditions and arrangements for certification

There is a list of subjects in Appendix 1. Details of the examination materials that should be provided for candidates are also included.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is a way of understanding and comparing qualifications in Scotland. Its main purposes are to:

- make the relationships between the various qualifications that are available clearer
- make progression and transfer between qualifications easier by clarifying entry and exit points and routes for progression

The Framework currently includes most of the main Scottish qualifications from Scottish universities and the SQA. They are described in terms of level and credit.

These will provide the benchmark to which other types of qualifications can be compared as they come in to the Framework.

The level a qualification is assigned to in the Framework is an indication of the level of difficulty involved in achieving it. There are 12 levels, from level 1 for Access 1 to level 12 for doctorates.

The amount of credit attached to a qualification indicates how big it is, in terms of the amount of learning required. Credit is expressed in terms of SCQF credit points — one credit point represents a notional 10 hours of learning. This includes, for example, contact time, work experience and directed self-study. Credit points are gained upon successful achievement of the Outcomes contained in a qualification.

SCQF information for SQA qualifications is shown on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate.

The diagram below shows the SCQF level and credit assigned to National Qualifications.

National Courses

SQA level	SCQF level	SCQF credit points
Access 2	2	18
Access 3	3	18
Intermediate 1	4	24
Intermediate 2	5	24
Higher	6	24
Advanced Higher	7	32

Scottish Baccalaureates

SCQF level	SCQF credit points
7	104

National Units

Where SQA Unit credit value is 1

SQA level	SCQF level	SCQF credit points
Access 1	1	6
Access 2	2	6
Access 3	3	6
Intermediate 1	4	6
Intermediate 2	5	6
Higher	6	6
Advanced Higher	7	8

For Units with SQA Unit credit values other than 1

Access 1 to Higher	0.5 SQA Unit credits	3 SCQF credit points
Access 1 to Higher	2 SQA Unit credits	12 SCQF credit points
Advanced Higher	0.5 SQA Unit credits	4 SCQF credit points
Advanced Higher	2 SQA Unit credits	16 SCQF credit points

There is more information on the SCQF website: www.scqf.org.uk.

Other sources of information

More detailed information on the arrangements for the assessment of National Courses and National Units which are part of National Courses, at all levels, is provided in the the Arrangements documents on the subject pages of our website — there are links to these in

this handbook. Paper copies of the Arrangements documents for Standard Grade Courses and National Courses can be purchased from Business Development and Customer Support by telephone on 0303 333 0330 or by e-mailing: mycentre@sqa.org.uk.

There is a list of all the National Qualifications awarded by SQA in the [Catalogue of National Qualifications](#)

Information on the Core Skills delivered by National Qualifications is provided in the publication [Automatic Certification of Core Skills](#).

You can also find information on National Qualifications on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

2 Centre approval, and registering and entering candidates for qualifications

2.1 Centre approval

Centres wishing to deliver SQA qualifications must meet our quality assurance criteria — details can be found in [SQA's Quality Framework: a guide for centres](#). Centres which meet the criteria are recognised as approved centres. Only approved SQA centres can seek approval to offer specific qualifications, and only those centres which have approval for specific qualifications can enter candidates for those qualifications.

There are details on how to obtain approval as an SQA centre and approval to offer specific qualifications in the publication [Guide to Approval](#). SQA's [Guide to Assessment](#) will also help in preparation for approval to offer specific qualifications.

Further information, including downloadable application forms for approval, is available on SQA's website by accessing the Approval section: www.sqa.org.uk/approval.

2.2 Registering candidates

Before candidates are entered for an SQA qualification, they must first be registered. **A candidate must be registered only once.** In session 2005/06 schools allocated a Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) to all pupils down to and including S1. In January 2006 the allocation of a SCN was extended to include primary school pupils. Any candidate in further and higher education, or in the workplace, is likely to have already been registered. If a candidate is registered under more than one SCN, they will be denied the benefits of cumulative certification.

More details are available by accessing the [Operational Help Centre](#).

2.3 Entering candidates for National Qualifications

It is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that candidates are entered for the qualifications that they are seeking. Our acceptance of an entry is subject to our requirements for internal assessment being met.

Notes on Age and Stage Regulations

The Age and Stage regulations — which used to govern when young people could be entered for qualifications — have now been abolished by the Scottish Executive, and have been replaced with guidance. You can find the Executive's full guidance, including principles to guide decisions on possible early presentation in Appendix 3, but here is a summary of the main points:

- The abolition of the Age and Stage regulations should not be seen as encouragement to present young people for formal qualifications early. Any decision on when to

enter a young person for a qualification must be taken in that person's best interests. It is important to protect young people from pressure to be presented for formal qualifications at too early an age.

- It is the school's responsibility to make this decision in consultation with the young person and his or her parents or carers. However, the education authority (or Board of Governors or equivalent) has to make sure that the spirit of the guidance is being observed.
- The young person and his or her parents or carers must be involved in the decision-making process. This means you have to provide full information about the possible implications of the decision, including information about the progression routes which will be available during the young person's school career and beyond.
- Progression routes must be available — to the next level, to other qualifications or to other activities that broaden and extend learning — and should include possible destinations post-school. You must identify the implications for entry to further or higher education, and advise the young person and his or her parents or carers about this.
- The decision must take account of the professional judgement of the young person's subject and guidance or pastoral care teachers.
- Where the qualification involves a formal examination, you have to be sure the young person is mature enough to cope with the demands of that examination. For example, it might be worth considering whether it would be better for the young person to take internally-assessed Unit assessments — these might be 'banked' and the associated external assessment taken at a later date.

There are also some practical issues to consider:

- Do you have the resources — what about timetabling, class sizes, staffing, accommodation, and CPD to support teachers dealing with mixed-age classes?
- Will the necessary teaching expertise be available to support progression routes?
- What about the impact on all learners of mixed-age classes and effects on broader curriculum programmes?
- How will your decision-making processes involve young people, parents/carers, subject teachers and school managers? These processes will need to be open to scrutiny through the normal education authority or HMIE quality assurance processes.

2.4 Procedure for entering candidates for National Qualifications

We can only award candidates the qualifications for which they have been entered by the centre, so it is vital that centres give us this information at entry — we need to know whether the qualification sought for the candidate is a Standard Grade Course, a National Unit and/or a National Course. To achieve a National Course at a specific level candidates must:

- be entered for the Course at the level
- pass all the Units required for the Course at that level, or the level above if the Units are part of a hierarchy (see below)
- achieve all the components of the external assessment (where an external assessment is included in the Course) at the level for which they are entered, in the same diet — component marks cannot be carried forward from one diet to another

There are details of the procedure for entering candidates for qualifications on the [Operational Help Centre](#).

We reserve the right to reject an entry for a qualification, but will not exercise this right without prior consultation with the centre concerned.

Hierarchies

Most National Courses, and many of their associated National Units, have been designed in hierarchical series — that is, they have the same title and code, and are available at different

levels. In Group Award specifications where Units or Courses of this kind are specified at one level, Units and Courses achieved at a higher level can count towards the Group Award.

2.5 Alternative Venues

Sitting at — presenting centre

If required, candidates may sit external assessments at any other SQA approved centre, provided there is an agreement for this between both centres. The presenting centre (the centre that entered the candidate) must, after agreeing the arrangement with the other centre, submit a completed [External Exam – Alternative Centre Form \(SA00\)](#) to SQA as soon as they become aware of the situation and no later than 25 February 2011. This form can be found on SQA's website under Services for Centres, top links, Data Forms (NQ) and returned to national.qualifications@sqa.org.uk or sent to Data Services Team, Dalkeith or faxed to 0845 213 5000 (for the attention of Data Services — Dalkeith).

Alternative venue — non-presenting centre

If a candidate needs to sit an external assessment at another venue which is not an approved centre (either within or outwith Scotland), we need to know in advance in order to consider the request and to ensure that the appropriate examination stationery, question paper and invigilation arrangements are in place.

1. Alternative venues **within** Scotland are usually special educational units or non-presenting centres, used where candidates cannot for various reasons sit their examinations in their presenting centres.

Candidates may also need to sit their examinations:

1. in hospital
2. in a secure environment, eg residential school or prison
3. at another campus of a college
4. in their own home (if educated at home, have additional support needs or have a temporary disability)
5. in suitable accommodation when representing their country in a sporting event
2. Requests for an alternative venue **outwith** Scotland are normally only approved if the candidate:
 1. has undertaken the course and has moved to live outside Scotland
 2. is taking part in a school exchange visit
 3. is on an educational trip
 4. is representing their country in a sporting event

To seek approval for an alternative venue request, an Alternative Venue form should be completed by the candidate's presenting centre and submitted for consideration to the Assessment Arrangements team. This form, with notes on completion and the criteria, can be found on SQA's website under Services for Centres, top links, Exam Support documentation. Completed forms can be submitted electronically to alternative.venues@sqa.org.uk.

If assessment arrangements are also required for candidates who have a temporary disability, contact the Assessment Arrangements team on 0131-561 6890 to discuss. If required for candidates with additional support needs, requests should be submitted via the AAR System (<https://aar.sqa.info.net>) for consideration.

2.6 Assessment Arrangements

Assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

In some cases, candidates who are disabled and/or who have additional support needs may require assessment arrangements (for example a reader, scribe, etc) during their assessments.

Arrangements can be made for internally and externally-assessed qualifications or components of qualifications. **Please note that arrangements in external assessments must not be implemented without prior agreement with SQA.** For National Units being taken on a stand-alone basis, any proposed assessment arrangements which might significantly affect the assessment should be discussed in advance with SQA.

Details of the assessment arrangements that are available are set out in the [Assessment Arrangements](#) section of our website.

Requests should be submitted to SQA using the Assessment Arrangements Requests (AAR) software, which can be found at <https://aar.sqa.info.net>. SQA will e-mail centre login details annually in October. User guides for the software will also be available at the above address.

Requests for adapted papers must be submitted by the end of January. Requests for any other arrangements should, wherever possible, also be submitted by this date and at the latest by one month before the start of the examination diet. Please note that SQA cannot guarantee that requests submitted after these dates will be processed in time. **Arrangements must not be implemented without prior confirmation from SQA.**

In all cases, evidence of the candidate's learning support needs must be available to substantiate requests. SQA may ask to see this evidence before processing a request. In addition, quality assurance visits to a number of centres will be conducted during September-November, and supporting evidence will be examined then. Centres to be visited were notified in writing in August.

Before the start of the diet, centres should provide their Chief Invigilator with information regarding arrangements that are to be in place for candidates during the external examinations. Reports to facilitate this will be available from the software.

Candidates with temporary disabilities

Assessment arrangements may be permitted for candidates who suffer temporary disabilities. Heads of Centre must submit requests either by telephone or e-mail the Assessment Arrangements section (aarequests@sqa.org.uk) to discuss the arrangements required.

Candidates for whom English is an additional language

Candidates for whom English is an additional language, and whose knowledge of English could impair their ability to communicate their attainment, may be permitted the use of a language dictionary (with extra time of 10 minutes per hour) in all examinations except English, ESOL and their first language.

Requests for this arrangement must be submitted to SQA on the spreadsheet which is available to download from our website. The completed spreadsheet should be sent as an e-mail attachment to SQA's Assessment Arrangements Section (eal.requests@sqa.org.uk). A direct link to the spreadsheet, and related guidance and documentation, will be e-mailed to all SQA Co-ordinators in October.

Extensions to submission dates

Depending on the circumstances, an extension to the published dates for the submission of estimate grades, projects, internal assessment results, and to the dates arranged for examinations held outwith the main timetable may be permitted. Requests should be made in writing to the Assessment Arrangements Section at SQA's Dalkeith offices or alternatively e-mail to extensions@sqa.org.uk.

2.7 Candidates and access to centres

Where candidates are completing a qualification in a location other than the centre's premises (for example, candidates involved in open/distance/IT-based learning, or where learning is taking place at home or in the workplace), the centre which enters the candidate must ensure that all internal assessment requirements are met, including authentication of the candidate's work and appropriate internal quality assurance.

3 External Assessment arrangements and procedures

3.1 External assessment arrangements

External assessment leading to certification will be carried out each year under our arrangements. At the examination diet in May/June, all qualifications with an external assessment requirement will be offered. Project-based National Courses (PBNs) can be completed at any of four points in the year. Operational arrangements are given in [Project-based Courses](#) procedural guide for centres and on the [Operational Help Centre](#).

There are full details of assessment arrangements for each subject in the Arrangements documents. These are published on SQA's website at www.sqa.org.uk and there are links to them in this handbook. We also publish details of the qualifications on offer, the dates on which the examinations will be held, and the arrangements and instructions under which they will be conducted.

If circumstances change after the documents have been published, and if, in our opinion, they require a review of a qualification or the form or date of examination, we reserve the right to amend arrangements.

3.2 Accommodation and seating for examinations

Accommodation

Centres are responsible for providing suitable accommodation for examinations, and for informing each candidate of where the examinations will be held.

Ideally, all rooms used for examinations should have level floors and should be without galleries. Before the start of the examination, all pictures, teaching aids, maps, and diagrams should be removed from the walls.

For each examination room there must be a means for the invigilator to summon assistance (see section 3.3).

Seating

Seats should be consecutively numbered. Candidates will be required to enter their seat number in each answer book used. In those examinations which involve Objective Tests a seating plan must be produced and all candidates must be advised, in advance of the examination, of the seat number they have been allocated.

A record of the arrangement of seat numbers in each room should be taken and retained for six months after the date of the examination. After this, if we have not asked for it, it may be destroyed.

Candidates should be seated in such a way that the possibility of copying is reduced to a minimum. Where it is practicable, a minimum distance of approximately 1.25 metres should be maintained between one row of candidates and another.

Candidates taking practical and/or electronic assessments should be accommodated in suitably equipped rooms.

3.3 Invigilation of examinations

Invigilators for a centre will be appointed by SQA following nomination by the Head of Centre. One invigilator will be assigned for each room used for the examination, but when the number of candidates to be examined in one room exceeds 35, two invigilators will be assigned. If the number exceeds 70, three invigilators will be assigned, and so on.

Before nominations are submitted to SQA, all nominees should be advised by the centre that they will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure check prior to undertaking any invigilation duties. No individual will be approved to undertake invigilation duties without SQA approval following these checks.

Duties of invigilators

Invigilators are appointed to distribute the papers and supervise candidates whilst they are sitting examinations. They must not be used in supervision of candidates who are awaiting examinations or who are to be kept in isolation to resolve coincident examinations.

One of the invigilators at each centre should be designated as Chief Invigilator. The Chief Invigilator must have had at least one year's experience of acting as an invigilator, and will be responsible for the general conduct of the examinations. Where a centre needs 10 or more invigilators on any examination day, a Depute should be nominated and deployed.

Invigilators must ensure that all of SQA's instructions relating to the examination are carried out strictly. The co-operation of the Head of Centre is essential in this respect.

Detailed instructions on duties and responsibilities of invigilators are in the *Handbook for Invigilators*. Every invigilator receives a copy of this before the examination diet.

Before the start of the examination period, Attendance Registers will be sent to each centre. These should be retained until required by invigilators.

Invigilators may not leave the room during an examination. Consequently, they must be provided with some means of communicating with centre staff to enable, for example, medical assistance to be summoned for a candidate in physical distress. Please note that if a mobile phone is required for this purpose, it should be switched to silent and only used in an emergency.

Invigilators should ensure that candidates are seated at their desks in the examination room about ten minutes before the start time to allow candidates to enter their details in their answer books, etc.

Where an Attendance Register Supplement is required, the invigilator should pass a copy to the centre's SQA Co-ordinator as soon as possible after the examination, along with the details of candidates who were absent from any part of the examination.

Persons permitted to enter the examination room

Persons permitted to enter the examination room are:

- representatives of SQA, HM Inspectors of Education, the Head of Centre or a delegated representative
- the Chief Invigilator, who may visit the rooms in which invigilators are working
- a member of the staff of the examination centre who is specially summoned by the invigilator for assistance in an emergency
- any person specified in the invigilator's instructions — such persons must leave the examination room as soon as their assistance is no longer required

Persons admitted to an examination room must not:

- communicate with the candidates, other than as required by their prescribed duties
- interfere in any way with the conduct of the examination which remains under exclusive control of the invigilator
- take any confidential examination material, including copies of the question paper, from the examination room

3.4 Stationery provided by SQA for examinations

SQA will provide all stationery required for the candidates' written answers, and for the submission of the various projects and folios, etc. The centre will be responsible for the storage and security of examination stationery, and for making it available to the invigilator as required each day.

3.5 Use of calculators in examinations

Where the use of a calculator is allowed in an examination, the centre is required to provide a reserve supply of calculators in case of breakdowns, or for use by candidates who do not have one. Where possible, candidates should have had opportunity to practise with the reserve calculators, particularly where scientific functions and formulae are to be used. Further details about calculators are given in section 3.9.

3.6 Use of ICT in examinations

Computers, including word processors, personal computers and laptops which can be used simply as typewriters (ie without spell-check/thesaurus, facilities, etc) may be used by candidates except where there are particular requirements, such as the production of graphs in an external assessment. No other candidate's performance may be disturbed, and no extra invigilation costs may be incurred.

Requests for candidates to use ICT in external examinations should be submitted in writing to the Assessment Arrangements Section at SQA. For candidates who need to use ICT because of a physical or learning difficulty, requests should be submitted to SQA using the Assessment Arrangements software (see Section 2.5). Regardless of the reason for use of ICT, the centre must prepare written confirmation that ICT security steps (detailed below) will be implemented before the examination.

In advance of the examinations, we will provide SQA Co-ordinators with a report listing the candidates who will be using ICT in the examinations. These reports should be seen by the invigilator prior to the examination, along with the centre's confirmation that the steps below have been implemented.

Access to the following hardware components should be denied:

- USB ports (apart from those required for a keyboard, mouse and/or memory stick)
- CD/DVD drive
- infrared Ports
- bluetooth communication
- PC/MIA ports

Memory sticks must be supplied by the centre and must not be the candidate's own. The use of a candidate's own memory stick will be treated as use of a prohibited item. Memory sticks must be checked by the centre before the examination to ensure nothing is stored on them and wiped clean immediately after the examination has finished and the candidate's script has been printed.

The operating system should be running with minimum services started. The start menu should also be restricted so that no one can use Run, Search, etc. A Local Computer Policy should be implemented to prevent access to non essential parts of the operating system, eg:

- spell check facilities
- games
- Command Prompt
- Hyper Terminal
- Notepad
- WordPad
- Telnet
- remote desktop

3.7 Times of examinations

The official start and finish times for examinations are given in the published examination timetable. The timetable is published by July of the year before the examination diet. Centres should at this time identify and report any areas where specific Course selections could impact on the running of examinations — see section 3.12. It is produced both as a printed document and on the SQA website at [2011 Exam Timetable](#).

Normally, the official start times of examinations should be strictly adhered to. However, to meet the needs of varying local circumstances, the Head of Centre has the flexibility to amend the start time of examinations by up to a maximum of half an hour before or after the time given in the examination timetable. There is no requirement to advise us of this amended start time, but the Head of Centre is responsible for confirming the amended details, in writing, to the Chief Invigilator, invigilators and teaching staff affected by the change, and to all candidates. Candidates involved in an **earlier** session must not be released from the examination room until **half an hour after the official starting time**.

Requests to SQA to move the start of examinations by more than half an hour must be made by the Head of Centre, in writing, clearly stating the reasons for the proposed change. Only in exceptional circumstances would such a request be granted.

The summary examination timetable and other relevant information for candidates are included in the booklet *Your Exams*, copies of which will be issued to centres well before the start of the examination diet. Centres must ensure that each candidate receives a copy of *Your Exams* and has the examination regulations explained to her/him. It is particularly important that you explain to all candidates what they may and may not take into the examination room — see section 3.9.

3.8 Recorded/dictated assessments

For certain examinations, as described by the Arrangements document, suitably qualified centre staff must be available for the reading of questions/passages or to operate audio/video equipment.

During the conduct of recorded/dictated tests, a responsible person should be on duty outside the examination room to prevent any disturbance of the candidates and to prevent the entry of any unauthorised person.

A candidate arriving late for an assessment in which the playing of recordings or dictation to the candidates is taking place will not be admitted to an examination room.

3.9 Conduct of candidates

Malpractice

Malpractice is a serious matter. Candidates may forfeit marks, receive a warning, or have an award — in any or all of their subjects — cancelled if they attempt to gain an award by any form of deceit, or if their conduct is contrary to any of the conditions set out here. Eligibility for assessment appeal may be affected by the application of a penalty or issue of a warning.

Candidates must not:

- take into the examination room any prohibited item (see below); all rough work must be done in the answer book or any authorised rough work sheets provided — scrap paper should not be used for this purpose
- communicate in any way with, seek assistance from, or give assistance to, another candidate or candidates during an examination
- intentionally cause a disturbance in the examination room

- remove a question paper of any kind from an examination room before the end of the examination to which it relates
- include vulgarity, racism, discrimination or swearing in scripts or coursework
- plagiarise materials from another source, give assistance to or lend materials to another candidate or work with other candidates on a task which should be completed on the candidate's own (see also section 3.11)

Centres should refer to the booklet [Candidate Malpractice in External Assessments](#) for full details regarding the procedures which will be followed during cases of suspected malpractice.

Items prohibited from the examination room

Any candidate found in possession of such equipment will have their entry for the exam cancelled.

Mobile phones

Including mobile or WAP enabled telephones, or any other electronic communication device.

Digital audio players (DAP)

Including devices which store, organise and play digital music/audio files. DAP devices, which are most commonly known as MP3 players or iPods, play music files and may also play other file formats and store text.

Other prohibited items

Personal electronic aids, calculator cases, pencil cases, books, notes, or paper of any kind should not be taken into the examination room except when specifically allowed in the instructions for the examination.

Calculators

A list of the external assessments where a calculator can be used will be provided in the *Handbook for Invigilators*.

For question papers where the use of a calculator is allowed, candidates are responsible for making sure that their calculators meet the regulations. Centres should make candidates aware of these regulations and their responsibilities beforehand.

It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that:

- the calculator has sufficient power supply
- the calculator is in good working condition
- calculators are not designed or adapted to offer any of the following facilities:

- language translators
- symbolic algebra manipulation
- symbolic differentiation or integration
- communication with other machines or the internet

there is no retrievable information stored in them, this includes:

- databanks
- dictionaries
- mathematical formulas

An invigilator should issue a candidate with a replacement calculator if required.

Candidates found in possession of an unauthorised calculator may have their examination entry cancelled.

Sharing of calculators is not permitted.

Candidates arriving late for examinations

Candidates arriving late for an examination, other than in the cases mentioned below, may be admitted to the examination room provided no candidate has left the examination room in the meantime. No extension of time can be granted to latecomers, no matter what the reason for their lateness.

In the case of those assessments which are conducted in two parts, or which involve two readings, a candidate may only be admitted during the period between the two parts or readings of the assessment concerned. The latecomer must not be granted any extension of time.

In the case of an assessment involving either the playing of recordings or dictation, any candidate arriving late will not be admitted.

Leaving the examination room

Candidates will normally be expected to remain in the examination room under the control of the invigilator for the complete duration of the examination.

The Head of Centre, in consultation with the Chief Invigilator, has the authority to enforce this advice to meet local circumstances. However, candidates may leave the examination room after half an hour from the start of the examination (subject to the proviso outlined in section 3.7, for examinations starting **before** the official start time). Where the examination is of one hour's duration or less, the Chief Invigilator will have discretion to allow candidates to leave the room after twenty minutes. Thereafter, candidates who have completed the question paper or such parts of it as they feel capable of attempting will, on giving up both the answer book and the question paper to the invigilator, be allowed to leave the room.

In the case of pressing necessity, ie illness or distress, a candidate may be allowed to leave the room and return to it provided there has been supervision during the period of absence. For each session of the examination, Heads of Centre should arrange to have a male and a female member of staff available to supervise the male and female candidates respectively in such emergencies.

In the case of a candidate being prevented from completing the paper by illness or other cause, both the answer book and the question paper must be given up to the invigilator before leaving the examination room.

Assessment materials

All examination material and answer booklets submitted for assessment will become the physical and intellectual property of SQA. Consequently, we will not return such items to candidates. By submitting examination material and answer booklets to SQA for assessment, candidates permit us to use, free of charge, any copyright or other intellectual property included in the examination material or answer booklets for any purpose we think appropriate (including its use as teaching and exemplification material). We will not disclose the candidate's name or SCN.

If a candidate attempts a question paper, the responses, whatever their character, must be sent to us. A candidate who removes their answer booklet from the examination room, whether intentionally or not, will forfeit the marks for the question paper concerned.

3.10 Submission and authenticity of coursework: projects, folios, reports etc, generated for external assessment

Submission

For those qualifications where candidates are required to undertake a project, or produce a folio or report for external assessment, the following conditions apply:

- the submission of evidence relating to projects, folios, reports, etc in respect of an entry for a previous year does not exempt the candidate from the relevant requirement if they are re-sitting the subject
- failure to submit projects, etc, by the specified date without a satisfactory explanation will lead to a penalty being applied
- all submitted material is the property of SQA (see the section on Assessment Materials on page 15). In certain subjects, arrangements may be made for the return of projects, etc. A charge is made for this service.

Authenticity

Apart from clearly acknowledged and identified quotations, any assessment material submitted by a candidate which has been completed outwith the timetabled examination must be the candidate's own. Even if group work is permitted by the assessment arrangements, the final submission must be identifiable as the candidate's own work. It is the primary responsibility of the candidate to ensure that it is the candidate's own work. The centre must use its best endeavours to ensure it is the candidate's own work, and must ensure that each candidate signs the declaration on the flyleaf prior to submission of the work, confirming that, prior to submission the candidate has:

- read and understood the *Your Coursework* booklet (see below)
- understood that SQA imposes penalties on candidates who do not follow the guidelines in the *Your Coursework* booklet
- brought to his/her teacher/lecturer's attention any pieces of work that should not be submitted to SQA
- checked the content of his/her coursework and wishes to submit it to SQA for marking
- confirmed that the coursework is all his/her own work, with all sources of information clearly acknowledged

SQA reserves the right to refuse a submission if the appropriate declaration has not been signed by the candidate.

SQA also reserves the right to determine the authenticity of the candidate's work when it is submitted to SQA. Where it is determined that the work is not the candidate's own, forfeiture of marks or cancellation of any part or all of the award may be applied. Cancellation of all of the candidate's other awards in the current diet may also be applied, as appropriate.

Centres must ensure that each candidate working on coursework materials during the academic year receives a copy of *Your Coursework* (issued in August) and is provided with an explanation regarding the regulations relating to the submission of materials. It is particularly important that the meaning of plagiarism and the consequences of submitting work which is not the candidate's own are explained in detail.

Project-based National Courses

All Project-based National Courses are externally-assessed — either by a marker appointed by SQA, or by a visiting assessor at the centre. Full details of the external assessment arrangements for these National Courses are available in the publication [*Project-based National Courses: procedural guide for centres*](#)

3.11 Submission of estimates and internal assessment results

Centres will be asked to submit estimates of how candidates are likely to perform in each of the externally-assessed Elements of Standard Grade Courses and in the external assessment for National Courses. Centres will also submit the results derived from internal assessments which contribute to the candidate's overall Course award.

Estimates

Centres should submit estimates of each candidate's overall attainment in each of the externally-assessed Elements of Standard Grade Courses and for the external assessment in National Courses. Further details are available in the Estimates, Absentees and Appeals document which can be found on SQA's website.

Assessment appeals and absentee consideration will only be allowed for candidates for whom an estimate has been submitted. We will interpret the submission of an estimate of a candidate's attainment as an assurance that the centre can provide evidence to support it.

Candidates transferring into a Standard Grade Course from another course, eg GCSE, may have their coursework for their former course assessed against the Grade Related Criteria in the Element concerned.

Internal assessment results

Centres are required to submit results, in the form of grades or marks, as appropriate, for Standard Grade Elements and aspects of National Courses where these are assessed internally for certification. Internal assessment results that are generated for certification purposes may be subject to verification by SQA.

3.12 Coincident examinations

The preliminary examination timetable is available to centres in May of the preceding session. Centres should consider the detail of the timetable when entering candidates for the forthcoming session in order to avoid examination clashes, particularly involving more than two subjects. Here candidate entries should be reconsidered.

Where coincident examinations with two subjects occur the centre should, if possible, make arrangements for all the papers in these subjects to be taken on that day, provided that the candidate can be isolated during the intervals between examination papers.

Where the coincident examinations involve papers of more than six hours' duration in total, permission may be sought from our Assessment Arrangements Team for one of the examinations to be taken on the following day. Permission will depend on the willingness of the centre to accept responsibility for the arrangements, including costs, and on the supervision of the candidate being carried out by an independent person who has no connection with the candidate.

If these arrangements are impracticable, or if they may cause stress to the candidate, the centre should submit a request for absentee consideration for the paper(s) where it is felt that there is valid and reliable supporting evidence. In such cases the examiner will base their decision upon scrutiny of the combination of papers taken and evidence provided (see 3.14).

SQA will provide reports to centres identifying candidates involved in coincident examinations. Guidance notes detailing the various options available will also be sent.

3.13 Adverse circumstances

If circumstances occur which are considered highly exceptional and have had a significantly adverse effect on candidate performance, eg a question paper is faulty, and the centre feels that they should be drawn specifically to SQA's attention, the Head of Centre should submit details in writing.

The submission of a claim for adverse circumstances consideration does not preclude the submission of an assessment appeal.

3.14 Absentee candidates

If a candidate is prevented by illness, or other valid cause, from attending the whole or part of an examination, and the centre wishes us to consider an award in such a case, the centre must submit:

- full details of the reason for absence — we will provide a form for this purpose
- evidence of attainment for all parts of the Course as measured against the Grade Related Criteria or Grade Descriptions described in the Course Arrangements. Further details are available in the Estimates, Absentee and Appeals document.
- a medical certificate where appropriate — a medical certificate will not form part of the evidence for making an absentee award; its purpose is to confirm the validity of the request for absentee consideration

The submission should be received by us, in one package, no later than seven days after the date of the examination.

Absentee consideration is not normally available to candidates who choose not to sit an examination in order to fulfil another commitment (eg holidays), or for whom no estimate has been submitted.

3.15 External assessment appeals

The external assessment appeals process is designed to provide an opportunity for individual candidates who, for whatever reason, underperform on the day of the external assessment. This means that it is extremely unlikely that a large number of candidates would underperform on the same day. When this happens, other factors may be in play. For example, estimates may have been overly optimistic when originally submitted. Centres should consider all factors carefully before submitting any assessment appeal.

Where a candidate receives an award below that estimated by the centre, and the Head of Centre is confident that there is sufficient evidence to support an improved award, an assessment appeal may be submitted on the candidate's behalf.

Details of candidates on whose behalf the centre wishes to appeal must be submitted by completing an Appeals Request Form, and must be accompanied by evidence of attainment as measured against the Grade Related Criteria or Grade Descriptions given in the Course Arrangements. Further details on the submission of appeals can be found in *Instructions for Centres on the submission of NQ Appeals*

Submission of evidence of attainment

Evidence of candidate attainment should be capable of satisfying the examiners that the standards against which the candidate's attainment has been measured are those described in the Course Arrangements. The evidence submitted must be appropriate to the grade sought for the qualification. Further details regarding evidence are available in *Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals*. Details regarding appeals submission dates and result dates will be provided annually.

Invalid assessment appeals

An assessment appeal will not be considered in the case of absentee candidates or candidates who have had a penalty applied following a malpractice investigation.

Assessment appeals must be pursued through the Head of Centre. Assessment appeals from candidates or the parents or guardians of candidates will not be considered.

Assessment appeals for National Courses

After a candidate's examination results have been issued, it will be open to the centre to submit an assessment appeal for an award at grade C or above, provided that the estimate is higher than the original grade award and there is sufficient evidence to support that estimate. An assessment appeal should normally be submitted only on behalf of a candidate who was estimated by the centre as having already reached a standard equal with an award at grade C or better in the examination.

Assessment appeals for Standard Grade Courses

Please only submit assessment appeals for elements of Standard Grade qualifications where, if successful, this would result in an upgrade to the overall award.

After consideration of all factors, centres may submit an assessment appeal on behalf of a candidate for an award at grade 6 or above, on an Element basis, provided that the estimate is higher than the original award and there is sufficient evidence to support that estimate.

Any improvement to an overall Course award resulting from a successful assessment appeal will be made automatically. An appeal for the award of a grade above that estimated by the centre will not normally be considered.

Assessment appeals for Project based National Courses

Assessment appeals can also be submitted for externally-marked Project-based National Courses (PBNCs). There is more detailed information about submission dates for assessment appeals, and about generating evidence for PBNC estimates and assessment

appeals, in the documents, *Project-based National Courses: procedural guide for centres and Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals*.

4 Verification of internal assessments

Verification is the process by which we ensure that national standards are applied in assessments that are carried out by centres. Information on our policy and the key dates in the process can be found on the [Operational Help Centre](#).

We will use visiting, central, and postal verification for Standard Grade Courses, National Courses and National Units. The form of verification used depends on the nature of the evidence generated.

Centres will be selected for verification in accordance with the criteria published on the [Operational Help Centre](#). When centres are notified that they have been selected for verification, they will also be notified of the candidates whose work will constitute the sample to be scrutinised at verification. All candidates entered for Units, Standard Grade, and Courses that a centre has been selected for, should be informed that internal assessment decisions including internally assessed course marks or grades are subject to external verification.

Central verification of National Qualifications will take place at events which will be held in April and May. Visiting verification of National Qualifications will take place within the timescales published on the [Operational Help Centre](#). However, verification can take place at any time of the year and some centres may be asked to participate in a programme of verification visits where the Verifier will visit and look at work in progress — this may or may not be completed assessment evidence.

Details of individual arrangements for the verification of internal assessments for Standard Grade and National Courses/Units will be issued by SQA.

All assessment material submitted for verification will be returned to centres free of charge.

5 Certification of candidates

5.1 The Scottish Qualifications Certificate

The Scottish Qualifications Certificate will be issued to candidates who have been entered by a centre for one or more qualifications and who have satisfied us that they have met the requirements for the award of the qualification.

The Certificate will include details of candidates' achievements in National Courses, Standard Grade Courses, National Units, Standard Grade Elements, Scottish Baccalaureates and Core Skills. The Certificate is broken into three parts: The Summary of Attainment; The Detailed Record of Attainment and The Profiles Page. The Summary of Attainment is a cumulative record of Courses, Group Awards and Stand Alone Units achieved since 1994. The Detailed Record shows the achievements awarded since the last certificate. The Profiles Page details, cumulatively, the candidate's SCQF points and Core Skills Profile.

Candidates' awards in National Courses will be reported as grades, as shown in the table in section 5.2; awards in National Units will be ungraded.

Standard Grade awards will be reported in terms of grades 1–7 based on the grades awarded for the component Elements. For each subject, the Certificate will show a profile consisting of the grade for each Element. Except in the case of authorised absence, an aggregate award will not be made where a candidate fails to complete the requirements in one or more Elements in a subject; the completed Elements will, however, be recorded on the Certificate.

Core Skills will be reported by means of a Core Skills profile, which is found on the Profiles Page. This records the candidate's highest achievement to date in each Core Skill

component. Entries on the profile will relate to all Core Skills achievement, whether by automatic certification or the completion of dedicated Core Skills Units.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is a system of levels and points, the main purpose of which is to make the relationships between qualifications clearer. The Profiles page of the Certificate shows how many SCQF points the candidate has accumulated, and at what level.

We may, in accordance with arrangements approved by Ministers, provide other information on the Certificate regarding the candidate's attainments.

5.2 Statement of candidates' results

At the time of certification of candidates, a statement of each candidate's results will be sent to the centre which entered that candidate for a qualification. The Statement of Certificated Results will detail the band and grade for National Courses. Candidates need to have passed all of the component Unit assessments to gain the award of a National Course.

The relationship of bands to grades and standardised marks is shown in the following table.

Band	Grade	Standardised Mark
1	A (upper)	85 - 100
2	A (lower)	70 - 84
3	B (upper)	65 - 69
4	B (lower)	60 - 64
5	C (upper)	55 - 59
6	C (lower)	50 - 54
7	D	45 - 49
8	Fail	40 - 44
9	Fail	less than 40

The grade for Standard Grade Courses and details of any National Units awarded are also included in the Statement of Certificated Results, as is the achievement of Skills for Work Courses, Scottish Baccalaureates and Core Skills Profiles.

On completion of the assessment appeals procedure, an updated Statement of Certificated Results for National Courses will be sent to centres.

5.3 Issue of the Scottish Qualifications Certificate

The main release of National Qualifications results to candidates will be in August each year, but certification will also be available throughout the year for those candidates who successfully complete a Group Award or Project-based National Course outwith this time. Unit certification will also be available at appropriate times throughout the year for candidates not undertaking Courses.

Centres must provide us with details of their candidates' home addresses so that candidates can be notified of their results directly.

Any alteration of the Certificate renders it invalid and liable to confiscation by SQA. In these circumstances, a replacement Certificate will not be issued. Any attempt to use a Certificate that has been altered may constitute fraud and may render the candidate liable to legal proceedings.

If an error is identified in a candidate's award after certification, SQA will take the following action:

- If a candidate has been awarded a Unit, a Course or a Group Award in error, our records will be amended to show the correct result, or the award will be removed, as appropriate
- If a candidate has received a lower grade than he or she has actually achieved, our records will be amended to show the correct result
- If a candidate has received a higher grade than he/she actually achieved, we reserve the right to amend our records to show the correct result. All such cases will be considered on their merits

Where the decision is taken to downgrade an award, we will contact the candidate to explain and apologise for the error and for the distress caused. We will request the return of the original certificate and will issue a new one.

We will inform the centre concerned.

5.4 Commemorative certificate

Candidates who are successful in meeting the assessment requirements of a Group Award for which they have been entered will receive, in addition to the Scottish Qualifications Certificate, a commemorative certificate marking this achievement.

English

Courses leading to National Qualifications are offered in English at Standard Grade, Access 2 and 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher. At Access 2, a National Course in English and Communication is available until 2011 only. Full details of the Course content and assessment arrangements are contained in the relevant Arrangements documents. Information on the Core Skills delivered by Courses and Units in English is provided in the publication Automatic Certification of Core Skills, which is available on the SQA website at www.sqa.org.uk.

English Advanced Higher (C270 13)

Course outline

The Advanced Higher English Course offers progression from the Higher English Course. The Course acknowledges the increasing maturity of candidates and enables a high degree of specialisation. The Course consists of two mandatory Units and one other Unit from a choice of four optional Units.

The Units are as follows:

Mandatory Units

D9GT 13	English: Specialist Study (AH)	1 credit (40 hours)
D8VJ 13	English: Literary Study (AH)	1 credit (40 hours)

and

Optional Unit (one to be selected from the following list)

D8VH 13	English: Language Study (AH)	1 credit (40 hours)
D9GV 13	English: Textual Analysis (AH)	1 credit (40 hours)
D9GX 13	English: Reading the Media (AH)	1 credit (40 hours)
D9GW 13	English: Creative Writing (AH)	1 credit (40 hours)

Course assessment

In order to gain an award in the Course, the candidate must pass the internal assessments associated with the component Units. In addition, the candidate must meet the standards targeted by the external assessment instrument.

For external assessment of the mandatory Specialist Study, each candidate will be required to submit a dissertation of 3,500 - 4,500 words.

For external assessment of the mandatory Literary Study and three of the options (Language Study, Textual Analysis and Reading the Media), a question paper will be set (one hour 30 minutes for each section). Candidates will be required to answer one question in relation to each of the Units concerned. Candidates will not be allowed to bring texts or any other material into the examination.

For external assessment of the optional Creative Writing, candidates will be required to submit a folio comprising two pieces of creative writing in different genres.

Specialist Study - 40% weighting
Each of the other two components - 30% weighting

Unit Specifications

The specifications for the component Units for sessions 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 are given below.

The specifications may be changed from time to time.

Specialist Study

The following is the list of study areas specified by SQA

- language; or
- literature; or
- media; or
- oral communication; or
- some combination of these.

Literary Study

The following is the list of authors and texts specified by SQA:

Drama

Candidates must study the texts specified for their chosen author(s).

Beckett	Waiting for Godot, Endgame
Byrne	The Slab Boys Trilogy
Chekhov	Uncle Vanya, The Cherry Orchard
Friel	Translations, Dancing at Lughnasa
Lindsay	Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis
Lochhead	Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off, Dracula
Pinter	The Homecoming, One for the Road, Mountain Language
Shakespeare	either Othello and Antony and Cleopatra or The Winter's Tale and The Tempest
Stoppard	Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Arcadia
Wilde	Lady Windermere's Fan, An Ideal Husband, The Importance of Being Earnest
Williams	A Streetcar Named Desire, Sweet Bird of Youth

Poetry

Candidates must study a selection of poems by their chosen author(s). The selection must include the poems listed for each chosen author.

Burns	The Cotter's Saturday Night The Twa Dogs Holy Willie's Prayer The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie Address to the Deil The Vision Epistle to J. Lapraik Address to the Unco Guid The Holy Fair and a selection of songs
Chaucer	Canterbury Tales: The General Prologue The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue and Tale The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale
Donne	The Good Morrow "Go and catch a falling star ..." The Sun Rising Aire and Angels The Anniversary Twickenham Garden A Valediction: of weeping A Nocturnal upon St Lucie's Day A Valediction: forbidding mourning The Extasie "This is my play's last scene ..." "At the round earth's imagined corners, blow ..." "Death be not proud ..." "Batter my heart three-person'd god ..." "Show me dear Christ, thy spouse ..." Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward Hymne to God my God in my sicknesse
Duffy	Dear Norman Model Village Recognition Selling Manhattan Correspondents Warming her Pearls Miles Away Originally Poet for our Times Dream of a Lost Friend The Captain of the 1964 'Top of the Form' Team Litany Before you were mine Small Female Skull Moments of Grace Valentine Mean Time Prayer
	Personal Helicon Follower Bogland Anahorish

Heaney	Broagh The Tollund Man Funeral Rites Punishment The Ministry of Fear Exposure The Strand at Lough Beg Casualty The Harvest Bow From the Frontier of Writing Clearances
Henryson	The Testament of Cresseid and any three of the Morall Fabillis
Keats	The Eve of St Agnes Ode to a Nightingale Ode on a Grecian Urn Ode to Psyche To Autumn Ode on Melancholy On first looking into Chapman's Homer "When I have fears that I may cease to be ..." "Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art ..."
MacDiarmid	The Bonnie Broukit Bairn The Watergaw Crowdieknowe The Eemis Stane The Innumerable Christ Empty Vessel A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle
Muir	Childhood Horses The Wayside Station The River The Refugees Scotland 1941 The Little General The Castle The Child Dying The Good Town The Animals The Days Outside Eden One Foot in Eden Scotland's Winter The Difficult Land The Horses
	Sleep in the Mojave Desert Two Campers in Cloud Country Morning Song Wuthering Heights Blackberrying Mirror Pheasant

Plath	Poppies in July The Arrival of the Bee Box Daddy Medusa Ariel Lady Lazarus Winter Trees Words Edge
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Yeats	The Stolen Child The Host of the Air The Song of Wandering Aengus The Cold Heaven The Wild Swans at Coole In Memory of Major Robert Gregory An Irish Airman Foresees his Death The Cat and the Moon Easter 1916 The Second Coming Sailing to Byzantium Among School Children Byzantium Lapis Lazuli Long-legged Fly
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Prose fiction

Candidates must study the texts specified for their chosen author.

Atwood	Cat's Eye, Alias Grace
Austen	Pride and Prejudice, Persuasion
Dickens	Hard Times, Great Expectations
Fitzgerald	The Beautiful and Damned, Tender is the Night
Galloway	The Trick is to Keep Breathing, Foreign Parts
Gray	Lanark, Poor Things
Hardy	The Return of the Native, Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Hogg	The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner, The Brownie of the Black Hags, The Cameronian Preacher's Tale, Mary Burnet
Joyce	Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
Stevenson	The Master of Ballantrae, The Merry Men, Markheim, Thrawn Janet
Waugh	A Handful of Dust, Brideshead Revisited

Prose non-fiction

Candidates must study **two** texts selected from the following list.

Angelou	I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
Brittain	Testament of Youth
Jamie	Findings
Muir (Edwin)	Scottish Journey
Muir (Willa)	Belonging
Rush	A Twelvemonth and a Day

Language Study

The following is the list of language topics specified by SQA:

- varieties of English or Scots
- the historical development of English or Scots
- multilingualism in contemporary Scotland
- the use of Scots in contemporary literature
- language and social context
- the linguistic characteristics of informal conversation.
- the linguistic characteristics of political communication

Textual Analysis

The following is the list of genres specified by SQA:

- prose fiction
- prose non-fiction
- poetry
- drama.

Reading the Media

The following is the list of media categories specified by SQA:

- film
- television
- radio
- print journalism
- advertising.

Creative Writing

The following is the list of genres specified by SQA:

- reflective essay
- prose fiction
- poetry
- drama.

Authors, texts and topics central to the work of candidates in the Specialist Study may not be used in any other parts of external Course assessment.

View the arrangements [English](#)

Appendix 1

Subjects

- Accounting and Finance/Accounting
- Administration
- Architectural Technology
- Art and Design
- Automotive Skills
- Beauty
- Biology/Human Biology
- Biotechnology
- Building Construction
- Business Management
- Care
- Chemistry
- Classical Greek
- Classical Studies
- Computing
- Computing Studies
- Construction Crafts
- Contemporary Social Studies
- Craft and Design
- Creative Digital Media
- Dance
- Drama
- Early Education and Childcare
- Economics
- Electrical Installation Fundamentals
- Electronics
- Energy
- Engineering Craft Skills
- Engineering Skills
- English
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Enterprise Through Craft
- Fabrication and Welding Engineering
- Financial Services
- Gaelic (Learners)
- Gàidhlig
- Geography
- Geology
- Graphic Communication
- Hairdressing
- Health and Social Care
- Health Sector
- History
- Home Economics
- Hospitality
- Information Systems
- Laboratory Science
- Latin
- Managing Environmental Resources
- Maritime Skills
- Mathematics
- Mechatronics
- Media Studies

- Modern Languages: Cantonese, French, German, Italian, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish and Urdu
 - Modern Studies
 - Music
 - Personal Care
 - Personal Development
 - Philosophy
 - Physical Education
 - Physics
 - Politics
 - Practical Experiences: Construction & Engineering
 - Product Design
 - Psychology
 - Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies
 - Retailing
 - Rural Skills
 - Science
 - Social and Vocational Skills
 - Social Subjects
 - Sociology
 - Sport and Recreation
 - Technological Studies
 - Travel and Tourism
 - Uniformed & Emergency Services
 - Woodworking Skills
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Appendix 2

Guidance on the appropriate age and stage when young people can be presented for externally assessed qualifications

Background and purpose of this guidance

1. In March 2004, as part of the National Debate on Education, the Scottish Executive consulted on the future of Age and Stage regulations. As a result of that consultation, the Scottish Executive decided to replace the Age and Stage regulations with guidance. Since then the landscape has changed with the publication in 2004 of Ambitious Excellent Schools which sets out the broad agenda within which A Curriculum for Excellence will be developed. This has implications for when it will be appropriate for young people to be presented for formal externally assessed qualifications within the National Qualifications framework.
2. Abolishing the regulations increases flexibility for schools. Challenge, motivation and choice can, of course, be provided without presenting the young person for a formal qualification. As a general principle, formal certification of each young person's attainment should be limited to that necessary to provide evidence to allow him/her to progress to the next stage of education, training or work.
3. It is important to note that the abolition of the Age and Stage regulations should not be seen as encouragement to present young people for formal qualifications early. Rather it allows for this option in particular circumstances. This guidance is intended to provide safeguards to protect young people from pressure to be presented for formal qualifications at too early an age. It is also intended to help education authorities, school managers, and teachers working in partnership to use their professional judgement to decide, in discussion with the young person and his/her parents/carers, when a young person is ready to be presented for a formal qualification.

Curriculum principles

4. In Guidance on Flexibility in the Curriculum, the Scottish Executive suggested that:

Ministers are keen to encourage education authorities to review their current approaches to flexibility and innovation in the curriculum. The intention is to ensure that schools and teachers are in a position to take advantage of the full range of existing flexibility in order that all young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential (Circular 3/2001, Scottish Executive, 2001)
5. In A Curriculum for Excellence, the Scottish Executive sets out the values, purposes and principles which should underpin the 3 - 18 curriculum. Seven principles for curriculum design are set out. Three of the principles are particularly relevant to decisions about when a young person is ready to be presented for a formal qualification:

Challenge and enjoyment

At all stages, learners of all aptitudes and abilities should experience an appropriate level of challenge, to enable each individual to achieve his or her potential.

Progression

Young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18. Young people should be able to progress at a rate which meets their needs and aptitudes, and keep options open so that routes are not closed off too early.

Personalisation and choice

The curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents. It should give each young person increasing opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice as they move through their school career, particularly through the personal learning planning process. There should be safeguards to ensure that choices are soundly based and lead to successful outcomes. (A Curriculum for Excellence, Scottish Executive, 2004)

Principles to guide decisions about when a young person is ready to be presented for a formal qualification

6. The following key principles should guide decisions about when a young person is ready to be presented for a formal qualification.

- Any decision on when to enter a young person for a qualification must be taken in the best interests of that individual learner, within the context of his/her current success and further potential. It is the interests of the individual, rather than the cohort, which are key. Decisions must take account of the ability and maturity of the young person, relevance of the qualification, and sustainability of progression routes. Consolidation and broadening of learning at a particular stage may often be more appropriate. Also care should be taken to maintain breadth, depth and coherence in the individual's curriculum.
- It is the school's responsibility to make decisions on how best to meet the needs of the young person within the policy and resources of the school and within the overall policy framework set by the local authority (or, for independent schools, by the Board of Governors or equivalent). It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure their policies are in keeping with the spirit of this guidance and reflect clearly the key role of teachers in judging the readiness of any young person for particular courses or examinations.
- In keeping with personal learning planning, the young person and his/her parents/carers should be involved in the decision-making process. Their participation in the process should be based on an understanding of the implications of decisions. This places a duty on the school to provide full information about the possible implications of the decision, including information about the progression routes which will be available during the young person's school career and beyond. The young person and his/her parents/carers should be made aware that similar opportunities may not be available should the young person move to another school.
- The decision must take account of the professional judgement of the young person's subject and guidance/pastoral care teachers, who should provide advice on the young person's readiness to be presented for a formal qualification in that subject or subjects.
- Annex A sets out the criteria which HMIE will use, as part of their quality assurance activities, in evaluating the appropriateness of early presentation. School staff may wish to draw on this list of questions in coming to a professional judgement on the appropriateness of early presentation and in discussing relevant issues with parent/carers and the young person concerned.
- Where the qualification involves a formal examination, special care should be taken to ensure that the young person is mature enough to cope with the demands of that examination. Consideration should be given as to whether internally assessed Unit qualifications would be more appropriate for the young person at that stage. These might be 'banked'; and the associated external assessment taken at a later date.
- Where a school offers opportunities for learners to be presented for formal qualifications in the early stages of secondary education, it should have in place arrangements to ensure that appropriate progression routes are available. These progression routes should enable young people to progress to the next level, or to other qualifications at the same level that build on their previous achievements and extend their learning.
- Schools should plan progression routes which include possible destinations post-school - the impact of early completion of formal qualifications on entry to

further or higher education must be identified, and guidance on this issue provided to young people. This guidance should take account of the implications of candidate maturity and the varying levels of support provided by different types of institutions. It will be especially important to make young people aware of the possible drawbacks of taking single subjects early. For example, many universities currently prefer candidates to have taken a number of subjects at one sitting, although this is subject to potential change and the position should be monitored.

Practical considerations

7. Any proposal to present a young person for a formal qualification early should be considered in light of the particular circumstances of the school concerned. Not all schools may be able to offer the same opportunities for taking exams early. The practical issues which local authorities and schools will want to consider and plan for before making any decisions about early presentation may include the following:

- Resource issues, including the possible impact on the school timetable, class sizes, staffing, accommodation and CPD (eg the need to support teachers who may be dealing with mixed-age classes);
- Provision of appropriate progression routes (ensuring the necessary teaching expertise will continue to be available to support progression routes);
- Wider impacts such as the impact on all learners of mixed-age classes and effects on broader curriculum programmes.

8. It will be necessary to communicate clearly with staff, young people and parents/carers, so that they are aware of the principles and practicalities which place limits on early presentation. The school should have processes in place to allow all relevant parties, including young people, parents/carers, subject teachers and school managers, to contribute to the decision-making process. These processes, including records of discussions, should be open to scrutiny through the normal local authority and/or HMIE quality assurance processes.

Next Steps

9. The implementation of this guidance will be monitored and the guidance itself kept under review and refined in light of emerging practice.

10. Ambitious, Excellent Schools sets out the commitment to review Standard Grade and its links with other National Qualifications by 2007. To assist schools in the meantime, guidance will be issued later this year on operating in the existing 'mixed economy' of qualifications. An important aspiration within the review will be to deliver a system which ensures challenge for young people without undue reliance on early presentation.

Scottish Executive Education Department July 2005

Annex A

Quality assurance - criteria for self-evaluation and HMIE inspection

A key aspect for authorities, schools and pupils is self-evaluation. To assist with this process, as part of HMIE quality assurance activities, the appropriateness of presenting a young person for qualifications at a stage outside normal expectations will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. Rationale for the individual(s) concerned

- Is the change likely to lead to clear educational gain for the young person in terms of improved attainment and achievement?
- Is it likely to create high pupil motivation and contribute to high self-esteem and confidence?
- Will it lead to opportunities for further study and progression?
- Are the progression routes sustainable?
- Could challenge and choice for the young person have been provided equally well, without turning to formal qualification?

2. Appropriate consultation involving the young person, his or her parents or carers and the appropriate teachers

- Has there been due consideration of the young person's ability, maturity and readiness?
- Have the parents / carers had the opportunity to discuss the issue with the school and be involved in the decision-making process?
- Have the subject and guidance/pastoral care teachers been able to contribute appropriate views and discuss the decision with the young person?
- Is the impact on pupils being monitored effectively?
- Have the local authority / HMIE access to an appropriately clear record of the process of consultation?

3. The extent to which the young person has gained, both in terms of overall achievement and the learning experience.

- How has he / she coped with being with older learners? Has he / she integrated well?
 - To what extent has he / she become a more independent learner / thinker?
 - How well has he/she coped with the additional demands of homework / folio production etc?
-

Appendix 3

Other SQA Publications

An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework @ www.scqf.org.uk.

[Catalogue of National Qualifications](#)

[Guide to Assessment](#)

[Assessment Arrangements](#) Resource Pack

[Guide to Approval](#)

[Project-based National Courses: procedural guide for centres](#)

[Your Exams](#)

[Estimates, Absentees and Assessment Appeals](#). Guidance on evidence requirements

These publications are available from SQA's Business Development & Customer Support Team, telephone 0303 333 0330.

A charge may be made for some publications. A comprehensive list of all SQA publications can be obtained from our website which can be found at: www.sqa.org.uk/publications