

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

The SQA is responsible for developing, accrediting, assessing and awarding certificates for all qualifications in Scotland, except Certificates in Higher Education, Diplomas in Higher Education, degrees and postgraduate awards.

SQA aims to deliver qualifications and support which will motivate learners and meet the needs of individuals, society and the economy now and in the future.

Around 1,470 centres throughout Scotland offer courses leading to SQA qualifications.

SQA's work includes:

- developing and validating qualifications at several levels
- reviewing and updating qualifications
- accrediting qualifications
- approving education and training establishments which can enter people for SQA qualifications
- arranging for and carrying out assessment of people taking SQA qualifications
- making sure education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications are of a high standard
- issuing certificates to candidates who succeed.

SQA also develops and distributes 5-14 National Tests to schools as part of the government's 5-14 programme.

The qualifications which SQA awards include:

- National Qualifications (including Standard grades, national units, national certificates and courses at Access, Intermediate, Higher and Advanced Higher levels)
- Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ)
- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC and HND)
- Professional Development Awards (PDA)
- National Progression Awards (NPA)
- Skills for Work courses
- Customised Awards.

One of SQA's main responsibilities is the certification, each summer, of National Courses and Higher National Qualifications for candidates in schools and colleges. This involves a year-round cycle of:

- designing assessments and setting questions
- recruiting markers
- carrying out quality assurance of coursework
- a peak period of marking, assessment and certification from May to August
- processing appeals.

SQA's future plans include developing more e-qualifications and introducing a greater level of e-assessment.

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