# Developing Qualification Products for SQA Accreditation Approval:

**A guide for submitting organisations**

**March 2022**

Version 1 (March 2022)

# Contents

# 1 Introduction

This document is for standard setting organisations (SSOs) to use when developing qualification products for SQA Accreditation approval.

Throughout the document we have adopted the term 'submitting organisations', which includes sector skills councils, sector bodies, professional bodies, awarding bodies, industry regulatory bodies and standards setting bodies, as well as partnerships of these organisations. We continue to use the term 'awarding body' to describe organisations, companies and charitable bodies that are approved by SQA Accreditation to offer accredited qualifications.

We approve qualification products for use by our approved awarding bodies. This guidance describes our expectations and recommends how to develop and review your qualification products. It also explains our qualification product approval process.

For further information, advice and support in implementing the guidance, please speak to your Accreditation Manager (AM) or contact SQA Accreditation:

- E-mail: accreditation@sqa.org.uk
- Web: accreditation.sqa.org.uk

## 1.1  What are qualification products?

The term 'qualification products' is used to describe the documents developed by a submitting organisation that define a qualification and may be used by awarding bodies to develop qualifications. Qualification products must be approved by us before we can accredit a qualification. These include:

- a **qualification structure** that includes the qualification title, and the number and combination of units required to achieve it

- **unit specifications:** in the case of SVQs this will be approved National Occupational Standards (NOS)

- **SCQF credit rating** for the qualification and component units — this is added to the qualification structure

- an **assessment strategy** that gives guidance to those who will deliver, assess and quality assure the qualification

- **Core Skills signposting** opportunities for assessment of workplace Core Skills in the assessment of the qualification.

## 1.2 What qualification products do you need to develop?

You must produce the qualification products relevant to your development as defined in the following table:

|  | All qualifications | Competence based qualifications (CBQs) | Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Qualification structure** | Mandatory | Mandatory | Mandatory |
| **Unit specifications** | Mandatory | Mandatory | Approved NOS |
| **SCQF credit rating** | Encouraged/ recommended | Encouraged/ recommended* | Mandatory |
| **Assessment strategy** | Mandatory | Mandatory | Mandatory |
| **Core Skills signposting** | Not necessary | Not necessary | Mandatory |

Where qualifications are included in an apprenticeship framework, they must be SCQF credit rated.

# 2 Qualification requirements

We have a set of qualification requirements that apply to both qualification products submitted for approval and qualifications submitted for accreditation. The requirements give details of what we expect for all qualifications, with additional requirements specifically for CBQs and SVQs. This guidance document has been designed with the qualification requirements embedded throughout. Following the guidance should result in qualification products that meet our requirements. If you want to review the qualification requirements, you can find them on our website.

## 2.1 Engage with your Accreditation Manager (AM)

We must approve your final qualification product documents before an awarding body can seek accreditation to offer the qualification. Your AM will scrutinise and assess your qualification product submission, before deciding if it is fit to be presented to Accreditation Co-ordination Group (ACG) for an approval decision.

You must have an initial discussion with your AM before embarking on the development. To avoid any issues arising it is essential to involve your AM at all stages of your project. Discussions will cover areas such as:

- project planning and timelines
- regular project updates
- attendance at meetings, including: key stakeholder group meetings; workshops; credit-rating activity; and consultation events
- draft documents for feedback
- consultation methodology and questions prior to circulation
- analysis of consultation responses
- SCQF credit-rating methodology, training and support

Involving the AM does not constitute Scottish representation for your project. We do not represent industry sectors or awarding bodies. Our involvement is to ensure that the project is conducted according to our requirements and to facilitate approval of the final qualification products.

## 2.2 Planning qualification product development

The activities covered in this section of the guide should all be considered before qualification product development, and should enable you to develop a comprehensive project plan.

## 2.3 Establish the purpose for qualification development or review

It is important to know from the outset whether it is appropriate to develop or review a qualification. If it is, the purpose of that qualification needs to be clear.

Considering the following will help you define this:

- the purpose of the qualification
- who the qualification is aimed at

- the content and functions the learner will cover in the qualification
- the competence, skills, knowledge and understanding the qualification will develop
- qualifications that are currently available
- identification of gaps in current provision
- whether the qualification is intended to be used within a Scottish Apprenticeship or for a regulatory or licensing scheme

This will help you to decide what type of qualification you need to develop and whether it is appropriate to develop qualification products. You might decide that it is more appropriate to revise or amend an existing qualification, create a new version or add a new pathway.

## 2.4 Support the need for the development or review of qualifications

You must gather evidence to determine the need for a qualification. This can often be established by determining demand for a new qualification or confirming current uptake when revising a qualification. This information is essential to gain approval and subsequent accreditation of the qualification. When awarding bodies are putting together a business case to fully develop and offer the qualification, they will rely on you providing such information.

You should consider:

- type, size and geographical spread of organisations and employers involved in the sector
- skills gaps and shortages
- workforce age profile
- legislative and licensing considerations
- changes in technology and working practices
- uptake figures for any related qualification
- progression opportunities

You should consider any available labour market intelligence or sectoral information. For information on the take-up of existing qualifications and units you can contact the awarding bodies.

## 2.5 Identify stakeholders

Market data should enable you to identify the wider range of stakeholders who need to be consulted. These may include:

- Scottish employers
- awarding bodies
- training providers
- professional bodies
- trade unions
- regulators
- Scottish Government
- further and higher education institutions

A key resource for the development of an SVQ will be the stakeholders involved in the National Occupational Standards (NOS) development.
You must involve awarding bodies from an early stage so they can confirm they can implement and deliver any proposed qualification. We do not have a minimum requirement for learner numbers but awarding bodies may make business decisions on the viability of a qualification based on potential learner numbers.

## 2.6 Plan project timelines

When planning your project, you should consider timelines for the following key stages:

- functional and occupational analysis (see section 3.2)
- first draft of qualification products
- consultation activity
- outcome and analysis of consultation
- final draft of qualification products
- SCQF credit rating (including training)
- submission to SQA Accreditation for approval
- submission to the Apprenticeship Approval Group (AAG) for approval (if appropriate)

When planning your timelines for key stages of your project you need to be aware of the approval process timelines for qualification products — see section 5.1 for further details.

Lead times will be longer if your project is related to a Scottish apprenticeship framework as you may need to factor in both awarding body accreditation for the qualification and the AAG approval process. AAG expects qualifications to be accredited by an awarding body prior to a Scottish apprenticeship submission being made. You should consult AAG to confirm their submission timelines.

## 2.7 Plan your consultation

This section highlights some appropriate methods of planning your consultation (section 3.6 is about carrying out your consultation). Appropriate consultation is critical to the approval of the qualification products.

You will have different levels of engagement with stakeholders. Some will be involved in the development of draft proposals and the refinement of the drafts, while others will be consulted to see if draft proposals are appropriate.

There are a range of methods of physical or virtual engagement that can be used. Examples of these include:

- consultation/focus events
- one-to-one consultation
- questionnaires/surveys
- publications/articles
- existing/developing networks

You must consider the make-up of your sector and select the most appropriate methods of consultation. A combination of methods may be required to maximise involvement of the sector.

Consideration must be given to planning the timing of the consultation. For example, you should avoid peak holiday times.

Specific risks associated with your consultation should be considered, along with mitigating actions to ensure successful consultation. For example, plan how you would mitigate against a low response rate.

See section 3.6 for further guidance on consultation outputs.

Where demand indicates that the qualification(s) could be included in a Scottish apprenticeship, you should consider carrying out simultaneous consultation for both the qualification products and the apprenticeship proposal. This will help save time and effort on your part and reduce the consultation burden on participants. You should consult AAG to confirm their approval requirements.

# 3 Developing qualification products

This section is about the methodology and process of developing qualification products.

## 3.1 Methodology for qualification product development

We recommend the following methodology for qualification product development, which you should discuss with your AM:

- Appoint a **project manager** who oversees and manages the project. They will be responsible for quality assuring project outputs and submitting final qualification products to us.

- Establish a **steering/development group,** made up of Scottish employers and delivery representatives who understand the sector and will guide the project. This group should include people with knowledge of the qualification area and an understanding of training, delivery and assessment. The remit of this group is to determine the content of the qualification pathways. If you plan to adopt a different approach you must discuss this with your AM.

- With agreement of the steering/development group, **consult** a wider audience of practitioners and industry representatives, who can confirm or suggest amendments. This may be carried out more than once as necessary, for discussion of draft and 'final' versions. The consultation may also identify specific support for the qualification from individuals and organisations that will use the qualification once it has been developed.

We require you to focus on Scottish employers on your groups. It is not acceptable to assume UK-wide employers are able to comment on behalf of the sector in Scotland. If individuals do not have sufficient knowledge to do this, they are expected to consult with colleagues who have sufficient knowledge of the Scottish sector.

Steering/development group and consultation activity can be successfully undertaken online or through in-person meetings.

We also expect you to engage with any existing or potential awarding bodies at an early stage of the project. We recommend you invite them to participate in steering/development group and consultation activities to ensure that your proposals can be delivered.

## 3.2 Develop qualification structures

You will need to develop a draft qualification structure, identifying mandatory and optional units. Some structures include additional units, but these do not contribute to achievement of the qualification.

The structure of many qualifications will be informed by functional and occupational analysis. This analysis will define all the functions and occupations within the parameters of the qualification, which will help you to create a draft structure for consultation. You will find guidance on functional and occupational analysis in the *Guide to Developing National Occupational Standards*, available on the ukstandards.org.uk website. This will help you

identify gaps in existing NOS/unit coverage, and indicate where you may need to develop new NOS/units.

### 3.2.1   Identify potential content

Once you know the purpose, the qualification type, and have defined the qualification outcomes, you should check whether you can use any existing NOS or units to avoid developing unnecessary duplicates.

There is a one-to-one relationship between a NOS and an SVQ unit. For any other units you should still consider any relevant NOS to confirm they underpin the units you use or develop. You should search the NOS database to look for suitable NOS and consider their relevance for your qualification. It is important to consider NOS from other sectors, particularly for generic functions.

Once you've established what NOS and/or units are already available, you should be able to identify any gaps that will require new NOS and/or units to be developed.

For any NOS or units included in your qualification structure that have not been developed by you, please ensure, where possible, that you discuss your use of them with the originating organisation.

Any units that deal with a general function should be written in a general context so that other sectors may have the opportunity to use them in their qualifications in the future.

### 3.2.2   Review of existing qualifications

When undertaking a review of a qualification, you must work with awarding bodies to analyse the performance of the existing qualification. This involves checking how successful it was, whether it meets the current purpose, and how it could be improved. You should check registrations against all of the units and consider whether any units should be removed from the qualification structure, including units with low or zero uptake, or units related to obsolete functions.

### 3.2.3   Qualification and unit titles

The title of a qualification or unit must be unique, and must reflect its function and content, and, where appropriate, the context.

You should consider the relationship between qualifications when allocating titles. Decide whether it is sufficient to have different levels of qualifications with the same title. For example, calling a qualification 'Management at SCQF level 8' and another qualification 'Management at SCQF level 10' may not indicate clearly the differences between content and complexity. Naming the qualifications 'Management at SCQF level 8' and 'Strategic Management at SCQF level 10' may be clearer and more helpful.

The word 'level' must only be used when referring to an SCQF level.

SVQ titles have a specific format. The title must relate to a job function rather than a job title. For example, SVQ in Construction Management is correct, but SVQ in Construction Manager is incorrect.

For SVQ units, the title of each individual unit will be the same as the NOS title.

For more details on titling conventions see *Regulatory Principle Directive RPDIR — 4, Titling conventions for SCQF credit rated qualifications* (see Link appendix)

### 3.2.4 Qualification structure

A qualification structure must show the number and combination of mandatory and optional units required. The structures must indicate any prescribed pathways for sub-functions and identify any imported units and their originating SSO where applicable.

The structure must reflect the exact coding and titling of unit specifications. For SVQs this must be the Unique Reference Number (URN) of the relevant NOS.

The units covering the essential activities, which everyone has to carry out, will become the mandatory section. The mandatory section should reflect the overall purpose of the qualification and should not create any barriers to achievement that may exclude any learners through lack of opportunity. It is important to note that the mandatory section can influence the overall SCQF level.

The optional section should cover specialisms and other activities which not everyone may want to do or need to know for their particular job. You also need to decide and specify how many units within each section need to be achieved to attain the qualification.

### Flexibility and progression

We encourage you to consider flexibility and progression when designing and reviewing your qualification structures. Where possible, you should try to ensure that learners:

- have a choice of units
- can gain recognition for relevant prior achievement
- have opportunities to progress to a higher level or other qualifications

### Qualification pathways

Structures may contain pathways to indicate mandatory and optional units for sub-functions within the qualification. For example, the SVQ in Construction Site Supervision at SCQF level 7 includes pathways for 'Highway Maintenance', 'Building and Civil Engineering' and 'Residential Development'.

Any pathways should be named in the qualification structure and should be comparable in terms of the level of demand. It is possible for the same unit to appear in different pathways.

### Overlap

You must consider how your qualification relates to other qualifications. Using the same units in too many different qualification structures can lead to achievement by default, with minimal or no additional work required from learners to acquire a supposedly distinct qualification. This would generally not be approved by ACG. Contact your AM for further advice.

## 3.3  SCQF credit rating

All SVQs and CBQs in the mandatory section of Scottish Apprenticeships must be SCQF credit rated as part of the development process.

For all other qualification types the credit rating can take place either during the qualification development process or after accreditation of the qualification.

Before you start the qualification development/review process, you must discuss your plans for credit rating with your AM. They will be able to advise you on timing and training and will provide you with support at all stages of the credit rating process. Please read *Credit Rating of SQA Accredited Qualifications for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* for a full explanation of our credit rating methodology and processes (see Link appendix).

If you are reviewing the credit rating of a current qualification, it may not be necessary to undertake a full credit rating exercise. It may be more effective to consult with providers and learners on whether the existing credit rating values reflect the time taken to complete a unit and whether the level is accurate. You must consider whether the review has had an impact on SCQF credit rating. A meeting should then be held with representatives of the sector to discuss an agreed approach to updating the credit rating. You must discuss your approach to reviewing credit rating with your AM.

## 3.4  Develop an assessment strategy

The assessment strategy describes how qualifications must be assessed and quality assured. You are responsible for developing an assessment strategy for the qualification that is appropriate for your sector and can be implemented by awarding bodies.

An assessment strategy is a mandatory qualification product. Its purpose is to provide prospective awarding bodies with a consistent approach to assessment and quality assurance. It can apply to one or more qualifications. There may be different assessment strategies for qualifications at different levels in a sector, or a single strategy with appendices covering specific aspects for each occupational group within a common framework. It is important that the strategy is appropriate to each of the qualifications to which it applies. Awarding bodies must use the assessment strategy as the basis for developing and defining the evidence requirements and assessment methods their providers will use.

In defining the assessment strategy for your qualifications, you must consult with interested awarding bodies, and other relevant stakeholders. It is important to be able to evidence awarding body support for the strategy, and to confirm that there are no barriers for the delivery and assessment of the qualification. For example, you should consider whether specific requirements might cause difficulties for providers or awarding bodies in recruiting personnel.

You will need to complete the *SQA Accreditation Assessment Strategy Template* (see Link appendix) when submitting your document for approval. This will involve providing clear and agreed guidance on the following:

**Assessment requirements:**
This section should outline requirements for assessment and could include:

- specific methods of assessment or evidence requirements, for example, a requirement for direct observation of the learner's performance in the workplace by a qualified assessor
- requirements for the assessment of knowledge and understanding
- sector-specific assessment requirements
- approaches to assessment

For competence based qualifications, including SVQs, it should also specify what must be assessed through performance in the workplace. Workplace assessment should be the norm for competence based qualifications, and learners are expected to demonstrate competence over a period of time. Therefore, to ensure validity, evidence should be naturally occurring and collected through performance in the workplace.

**Simulation:**

This section should identify if simulation is permissible and should specify which parts of the qualification can be simulated.

Competence based qualifications, including SVQs, need to demonstrate that an individual can perform consistently in the workplace over a period of time. You need to identify any of the exceptional situations where simulation may be used to assess competence. For example, there may be situations that are dangerous, emergency-related, or very rare, and which need to be covered by simulation.

You may also include any assessment environment conditions and definitions of a realistic work environment related to the simulation, or these can be noted in the next section.

**The assessment environment:**

This section should outline any requirements for the assessment environment and can be used to specify requirements related to the use of remote assessment where this is appropriate. For competence based qualifications, including SVQs, this section should specify requirements for the conditions for simulation and define realistic work environments.

**Requirements for roles in assessment and quality assurance:**

You need to define the requirements for those involved in the assessment and internal and external quality assurance of the qualification. This may extend to other personnel/roles involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the qualifications, for example the requirements for expert witnesses or trainers.

This should consider any requirements for experience, occupational experience, assessment and/or quality assurance expertise and the requirement to hold qualifications. In addition, you should specify necessary requirements for training and continuous professional development (CPD).

References to assessor and verifier qualifications:
For competence based qualifications, including SVQs, we would suggest you use the following statement:

*… hold or be working towards an appropriate assessor (or verifier) qualification as identified by the qualification regulator SQA Accreditation*

For example:

*Assessors must hold or be working towards an appropriate assessor qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation, the qualification regulator. Assessors holding older assessor qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are assessing to the current standards.*

Assessor and verifier competence:
We have produced a revised list of current and predecessor qualifications for assessors and verifiers to support your assessment strategies (see Link appendix). Please note these qualifications and statements only relate to competence in assessment and verification. Assessors and verifiers must always meet the occupational competence requirements, and these should be clearly stated in the assessment strategies.

**External Quality Assurance:**

This outlines the requirements for awarding bodies for checking the quality of assessment. Awarding bodies can integrate these requirements into their own processes and expand on them to provide enhanced quality assurance.

Monitoring and standardising assessment decisions require robust systems for assessment and for internal and external quality assurance. Reliable and effective systems help to ensure that standards and the integrity of the qualifications are maintained. Such systems must comply with the requirements of the qualification regulator.

**Additional Information:**

This section can be used for any additional requirements or information which will help to ensure a standardised approach to delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the qualification.

For example, it could include the following:

- the use of remote assessment and remote quality assurance and the requirements which apply
- additional information on sources of evidence
- alternative forms of recording evidence using ICT

Additional guidance and support can be sought from your AM.

## 3.5  Develop Core Skills signposting

The five Core Skills are:

- Communication
- Information and Communication Technology
- Numeracy
- Problem Solving
- Working with Others

Core Skills signposting indicates whether there are opportunities within units to develop Core Skills to a specified SCQF level. When developing SVQs you are required to produce Core Skills signposting for each SVQ unit. You are not required to develop Core Skills signposting

for other types of qualification. The signposting document should also acknowledge where there are no opportunities to develop Core Skills. This signposting can be used by providers and assessors to plan the development and assessment of Core Skills. You will need to complete the *SQA Accreditation Core Skills Signposting Template* (see Link appendix) when submitting your document for approval.

The Core Skills should be signposted against the current Workplace Core Skills units, which range from SCQF level 3 to level 6. The Workplace Core Skills unit specifications can be found on the SQA Accreditation website.

Where SVQ units have been imported from another organisation, the Core Skills signposting should also be imported if available. Please check with the relevant SSO to confirm any approved Core Skills signposting. Where Core Skills signposting is not available, or the originating organisation is no longer operating in that sector, you will need to undertake your own signposting.

It can be helpful to arrange Core Skills signposting to match each qualification structure. This can be useful to awarding bodies, which may not offer all qualifications in a suite. If an awarding body chooses to offer only one level of SVQ from a suite which contains several levels, it should be easy to identify the relevant signposting. However, it is also acceptable to present a list of Core Skills signposting, so long as it covers each unit and does not include any additional units that are not included in the qualification structure.

Please note that the Core Skills signposting required by SQA Accreditation is not the same as the Core Skills mapping. Mapping is a more detailed description of where Core Skills will definitely be achieved by learners completing the qualification.

## 3.6  Consultation

Section 2.7 highlights some appropriate methods of planning your consultation.

Once you have produced a draft qualification structure, you must consult to confirm that:

- employers and representative organisations from the sector agree that the qualification structure and content are fit for purpose
- awarding bodies can implement the proposed qualification
- there is an awarding body which intends to seek accreditation for the qualification

You should decide what constitutes an appropriate overall response in terms of quantity and quality. This can vary from project to project. You need to form an opinion of what would be acceptable before carrying out your consultation activity. You should be prepared to monitor responses during the consultation and consider how you will deal with a low or poor response. It is not acceptable just to record this or assume that no response means agreement.

When there is a low response rate, you should consider using a more suitable method. For example, a low response to a questionnaire could be followed up by telephone interviews.

You must analyse the responses to the consultation and present your conclusions and evidence.

### 3.6.1 Involve your Accreditation Manager

You should provide information on your consultation and draft questions to your AM. They can advise you on the content of questionnaires and consultation documents, and may have information on stakeholders with an interest in the project.

Although your AM can't participate in the consultation, they can advise on whether the questions will elicit meaningful responses and whether you can infer any direction from the responses.

By providing information at this stage, you will enhance your AM's understanding of the process you have carried out, and this will assist them in making recommendations to ACG.

### 3.6.2 Engage with Scottish employers and stakeholders

There are two main constituent groups which must be consulted, for different aspects:

- **Employers and representative organisations from the sector:**

You should use your networks of Scottish employers, unions, trade associations, industry bodies, institutions and professional bodies to ensure qualifications meet the needs of the end-users. When determining the content of qualifications, the employer voice may take precedence over that of the assessment network.

Employers should be able to comment on whether their staff job roles are appropriately reflected in the frameworks and combinations of units.

- **Approved awarding bodies and assessment providers:**

For qualifications under review, you should include in the consultation awarding bodies that already offer the current qualification and any potentially interested awarding bodies. For new developments all potentially interested awarding bodies should be included.

You must ensure that there is an awarding body who is intending to seek accreditation for the qualification. It is critical to confirm the awarding body can deliver and certificate the proposed qualifications. Awarding body personnel, and external verifiers and assessors from providers can comment on assessment strategies and whether the proposed qualifications can be delivered and assessed.

### 3.6.3 Review effectiveness of consultation and analyse responses

While your consultation is underway, we expect you to monitor how effective it is. We expect you to respond to low or poor consultation responses by reviewing your consultation methodology, in discussion with your AM.

If the issue is a small number of responses, you should consider using another consultation method. If the issue is a lack of detail or poor quality of responses, then alternative approaches should be taken to seek clearer or more detailed responses, eg one-to-one discussions or focus groups.

Once your consultation is complete, we expect you to formally analyse the results of the consultation. The analysis must be sufficiently detailed to show feedback from Scottish

stakeholders. In the analysis, you should determine whether the consultation was appropriate and whether it gained a sufficient rate and quality of response.

Your qualification products should reflect the results of the consultation and your final report should explain how you addressed the feedback.

# 4 Preparing final products for submission

The material you submit will be assessed by your AM to see whether the qualification products are ready for approval. This section provides detailed information about how to prepare for a formal submission of your proposed qualification products.

## 4.1 Qualification products sign-off

It is important that you discuss and confirm changes brought about by your consultation with your key stakeholder group(s), eg your steering group or national working group. Depending on the scale of the changes you may require a group discussion to confirm sign-off (or this could be agreed by email).

## 4.2 Internal quality assurance

It is important that you carry out internal quality assurance of all your qualification products and your supporting documents before submitting them to us.

Use the checklist provided in Section 5 to ensure you include all the appropriate information.

## 4.3 Submission documentation and qualification products

You will need to provide final documents and evidence of the development process you have followed. This section gives guidance on preparing your documents, and Section 5 details what to submit when you seek approval.

### 4.3.1 Qualification Product Development Report

You must prepare a report summarising the qualification products development process. This must include information and evidence to cover the following:

- who was involved
- who you consulted
- analysis of the consultation responses
- how you managed the development
- whether the development deviated from your original plan, and how that affected the outcomes
- confirmation from awarding bodies:
    - that the qualification structures, including any proposed pathways and endorsements, can be implemented
    - whether the awarding body proposes to seek accreditation for the qualification(s)
    - that the assessment strategy can be implemented
- evidence demonstrating demand for the qualification(s), including employers and stakeholders based in Scotland and SQA Accreditation approved awarding bodies. Please note that employer support should indicate whether they will use the qualification. This could be a summary of the evidence gathered to support the need for the qualifications as described in Section 2.4
- An explanation of your SCQF credit rating process. You can build this into your report or you can submit a separate credit rating report. If you create a separate report, you should clearly reference it. See 4.3.5 for further details.

### 4.3.2 Qualification structures

**Qualification structure grid**

Qualification structures must be submitted on the qualification structure grid shown on the following page. The current template can be found through the link appendix. This will also be used in the approval of your SCQF credit rating and in the qualification accreditation process.

The qualification structure grid also has additional information. This allows for more complex explanations of how awarding bodies should interpret and use the structure and credit rating. This is useful to explain complex structures and pathways more fully, and to identify endorsements that awarding bodies may apply against particular units.

For guidance on completing the qualification structure grid, please see the key below:
 Key:
- **(1)** Add the title of the qualification (see section 3.2.3).
- **(2)** Include the name of the qualification developer, ie the SSO responsible for developing the structure.
- **(3)** The date the structure was approved will be completed by SQA Accreditation. Leave blank.
- **(4)** The version number of the structure will be based on ACG accredited versions and will be added post ACG. Leave blank.
- **(5)** Insert the overall SCQF level 1–12 as determined by your credit rating recommendation.
- **(6)** Insert the overall SCQF credit value/range as determined by your credit rating recommendation. If combinations of units result in different credit totals, you should indicate the minimum and the maximum credits which could be achieved for the overall qualification.
- **(7)** Add the name of the credit rating body that approved the SCQF credit rating. If the credit rating is being approved as part of your qualification product submission, please leave this blank.
- **(8)** The awarding body information will be recorded when an awarding body becomes approved to offer the qualification. Leave blank.
- **(9)** Give a summary description of the total number of units required and any combinations of options to achieve the full qualification.
- **(10)** The column for Accred Codes is for the use of SQA Accreditation. Leave blank.
- **(11)** This column is for the unique reference number (URN) or code for the unit.
- **(12)** Indicate if the unit is mandatory, optional or additional.
- **(13)** Insert the correct unit title.

**(14)** The SCQF level must match the recommended level on the credit rating form. If the unit has already been credit rated, the approved level must be inserted. Existing credit rating can be confirmed with your AM.

**(15)** As 14 but for SCQF credit points.

**(16)** There are various circumstances that affect what you will enter in the date approved box:
- If the credit rating is being submitted for approval, leave blank and the date will be completed by SQA Accreditation.
- If the unit and credit rating have been reviewed, leave blank, even if the review results in no change to the existing credit rating.
- If the unit has been credit rated already, insert the date when it was approved.
- If the unit is imported, the date should be supplied by the originating body together with the level and credit values.

**(17)** Where the unit has been imported, enter the name or recognised abbreviation of the originating SSO.

**(18)** Insert your qualification structure, listing all mandatory, optional and additional units. You should delete or add rows and groups of units as appropriate.

**(19)** If your structure has optional groups, state which units or combinations of units must be achieved in each.

**(20)** If you have any additional structure information like endorsements, these can be included here.

**(21)** If you have any additional credit rating information, it can be included here.

**(22)** Where your qualification is linked to an approved Assessment Strategy, you should confirm the title and approval date

**(23)** Where your qualification contains approved Cote Skills Signposting, you should confirm the title and approval date

## Qualification Structure and SCQF Credit Rating

For guidance on how to complete this form see document – Developing Qualification Products for SQA Accreditation Approval: A guide for submitting organisations (section 4.3.2).

| | |
|---|---|
| Qualification Title | |
| Qualification Developer | |
| Data Structure ACG Approved | |
| Structure Version Number | |
| SCQF Overall Level | |
| SCQF Overall Credit | |
| Credit Rating Body | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Awarding Body | |
| Group Award Code | |
| Date Accredited From | |
| Accreditation End Date | |
| Certification End Date | |

**Structure Information (including how many Units are to be selected)**

| Accred Code | Developer Code | Mandatory/ Opitional/ Additional Unit | Unit Title (Insert the Unit title) | SCQF Level | SCQF Credit | Date of SCQF Approval | Imported From (Developer Name) |
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Insert your qualification structure, listing all mandatory, optional and additional units. You should delete or add rows and groups of units as appropriate

## Additional Information

**Additional Structural information**

This box should be used where necessary to provide additional explanatory information regarding the structure.
This may, for example, be related to a particularly complex structure or endorsements.

**Additional Credit Rating information**

This box should be used to provide additional explanatory information regarding the credit rating.
This should include the rationale for the allocation of overall SCQF level
This may, for example, based on the mandatory Units or a more detailed explanation where this is not obvious.

| Assessment Strategy information | Approval Date |
|---|---|
| Assessment Strategy information | |

| Core Skills Signposting information | Approval Date (if applicable) |
|---|---|
| Core Skills Signposting Title (if applicable) | |

### 4.3.3   Units/NOS

You will need to provide copies of the units contained in the qualification structure. For SVQs, the current unique reference number (URN) for the NOS must be provided.

You must comply with the *Qualifications Requirements (November 2020)* — see Link appendix*.*

Providing links to documents that are available online will be acceptable.

For CBQs based on NOS you should demonstrate how NOS have been considered or are incorporated within the qualification. For example, you could provide a document to show mapping to the NOS or a report to demonstrate this. You must also provide copies of the units. Each unit must have a URN.

Please note that NOS must be approved, or units must be finalised, before you make a final qualification product submission.

### 4.3.4   Assessment strategy

You need to provide an assessment strategy. Section 3.4 contains information on how to develop your assessment strategy. This needs to be submitted on the *SQA Accreditation Assessment Strategy Template* (see Link appendix). The template includes some mandatory information, and you have the opportunity to contextualise and expand on this if appropriate.

### 4.3.5   SCQF credit rating evidence

The SCQF credit rating recommendations you make must be submitted on the qualification structure grid shown in section 4.3.2. You also need to provide evidence to support your decisions. You may include this evidence as part of the report in 4.3.1 or you can choose to submit a separate report.

The supporting evidence for SCQF credit rating must include:

- summary of the SCQF credit rating work and process
- names and roles of the participants, indicating how they are qualified for this work, eg working as an assessor, examiner, external verifier or industry expert
- profile of the average learner expected to undertake the qualification
- methodology used to allocate SCQF level and SCQF credit to units, including the form of peer review and standardisation activity
- how you arrived at the overall SCQF level and the overall SCQF credit for each qualification
- any issues identified during the process and how these were addressed
- for new or revised credit rating a Credit Rating Form for each unit, Part 1 recommending the SCQF level and Part 2 the SCQF credit points
- for reviewed credit rating that remains the same, confirmation that existing values are still appropriate

For further information please refer to SCQF credit rating and levelling: *Credit Rating of*

*SQA Accredited Qualifications for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Guidance for Sector Skills Councils, Standard Setting Organisations, Awarding Bodies and Participants* (April 2014). See Link appendix.

### 4.3.6  Core Skills signposting

If submitting a Core Skills signposting document, you must cover the whole qualification, showing signposting for each unit, including imported units. Section 3.5 gives further information.

**How to present Core Skills signposting**

You can find the following template for Core Skills signposting in the Link appendix.

| Qualification or Suite Title **(1)** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| URN | Unit title | Communication | ICT | Numeracy | Problem Solving | Working with Others |
| **(2)** | **(3)** | **(4)** | **(4)** | **(4)** | **(4)** | **(4)** |
| **Example:** | | | | | | |
| Ex002 | Develop an assessment strategy | SCQF level 4 | | | SCQF level 3 | SCQF level 3 |

Key:
- **(1)** Add the exact title of the qualification
- **(2)** Add the unique reference number (URN) or code of the unit being signposted
- **(3)** Add the exact title of the unit being signposted
- **(4)** Enter 'SCQF level x' or 'SCQF x' of each core skills signposted for the unit. If a particular core skill is not relevant to the unit, leave blank.

# 5  Approval of qualification products

SQA Accreditation approves qualification products for use in accredited qualifications. This section will give you detailed guidance about our approval process.

## 5.1  Submitting qualification products for approval

We aim to process your submissions within 20 working days of receipt of all required information. Poor quality submissions which lack the requisite information and clarity will take longer to process.

When you submit qualification products for approval, you must send us your:

- qualification product development report
- qualification structures
- units that make up the qualification (where NOS are used in their entirety as a unit, for example in an SVQ, identification of the NOS URN is sufficient)
- assessment strategy
- SCQF credit rating evidence, as appropriate
- Core Skills signposting, as appropriate

These must be sent to SQA Accreditation at qualifications@sqa.org.uk as Word or Excel files (not pdf versions). This will assist SQA Accreditation to produce approved and dated versions of final qualification products. A quality checklist can be found below to help you ensure that you send us all the necessary information.

When we receive your submission, we will acknowledge receipt by email, log it and pass it to the relevant AM.

The AM will assess the submission and will liaise directly with you for any clarification or further information. When your AM has agreed your submission is ready, they will produce a report which they will present at ACG, our decision-making committee.

ACG normally meets weekly. It is made up of six core members of staff from SQA Accreditation:

- Head of Accreditation
- Senior Accreditation Manager
- Senior Regulation Manager
- Information and Research Manager
- Accreditation Officer

In addition to this, ACG includes an AM and a regulation representative on a rota basis.

**Qualification product development report checklist:**
Please use this checklist to quality check your submission before sending it to us.

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**Evidence for qualification products**

**1. Report (see 4.3.1):**
Have you included the following?:

♦ who was involved
♦ who you consulted
♦ analysis of your consultation responses
♦ how you managed the development
♦ deviations from the original plan
♦ awarding body support
♦ evidence of market demand
♦ a summary of the credit rating, methodology and process, including:
  • a note of the participants and their suitability to credit rate
  • the average learner profile
  • a rationale for your overall qualification level and credit

**2. Qualification structure (see 4.3.2 and link):**
♦ Have you used the template?
♦ a completed qualification structure grid for each qualification
♦ recommended SCQF credit rating values, where appropriate
♦ previously approved credit rating values and approval dates included, where appropriate
♦ structure formatted and readable on screen, ready for publication

**3. Units (see 4.3.3):**
♦ copies of or links to each unit descriptor (where NOS are used in their entirety as a unit, for example in an SVQ, identification of the NOS URN is sufficient)

**4. Assessment strategy (see 3.4 and link):**
♦ Have you used the template?
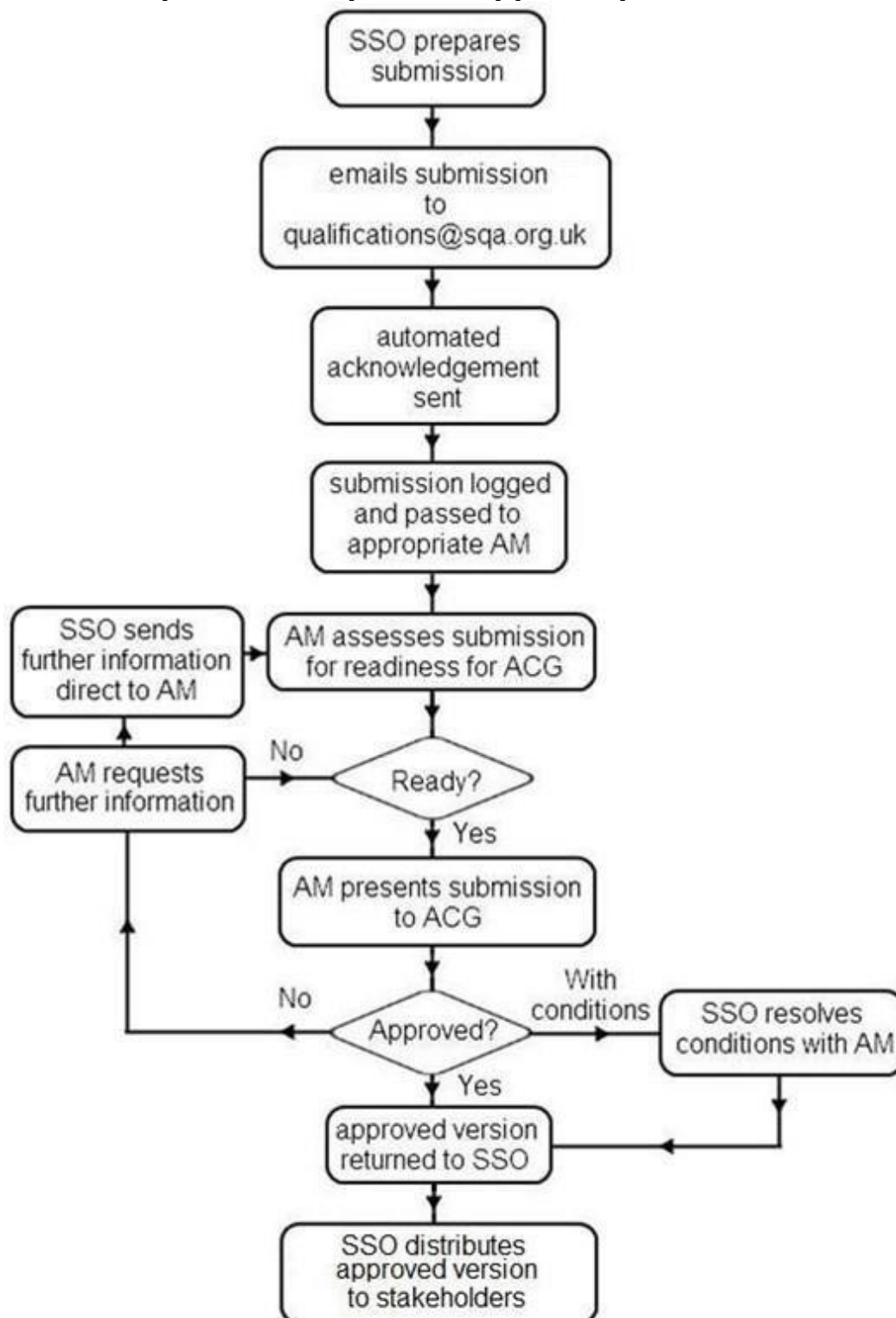♦ Have you included evidence of awarding body support?

**5. SCQF credit rating:**
♦ for new or revised credit rating, a Credit Rating Form for each unit
♦ for reviewed credit rating that remains the same, confirmation that existing values are still appropriate

**6. Core Skills signposting (See 3.5 and link):**
♦ Have you used the template?
♦ Have you signposted each unit in the qualification?

## 5.2  The qualification product approval process



SSO prepares submission

emails submission to qualifications@sqa.org.uk

automated acknowledgement sent

submission logged and passed to appropriate AM

SSO sends further information direct to AM

AM assesses submission for readiness for ACG

AM requests further information — No — Ready?

Yes

AM presents submission to ACG

No — Approved? — With conditions — SSO resolves conditions with AM

Yes

approved version returned to SSO

SSO distributes approved version to stakeholders

## 5.3  Approval decisions

ACG will consider the qualification products and the AM's report and recommendations, and will make one of the following decisions:

- approve
- approve with conditions
- defer

We will notify you of the decision, including any conditions or any reasons for deferral.

*The Appeals Process: Information for awarding bodies / Sector Skills Councils / Standards Setting Organisations* explains how you can make an appeal if you are dissatisfied with an ACG decision (see Link appendix).

## 5.4  Post-approval

We will issue you with approved versions, as appropriate, of:

- qualification structures, including SCQF credit rating
- assessment strategy
- Core Skills signposting

Please note, final documents will have a footer showing the ACG approved date and version number.

We will notify the SCQF Partnership of the approved level and credit of each qualification and will make this information available on our website.

You must provide relevant awarding bodies with the approved qualification products to enable them to develop the qualification and seek accreditation.

# Link appendix

SQA Accreditation Assessment Strategy Template

Regulatory Principles Directive RPDIR – 4 Titling conventions for SCQF credit rated qualifications

Assessor and Verifier Competence

SQA Accreditation Core Skills Signposting Template

Qualification Structure Grid

Qualifications Requirements (November 2020)

Credit Rating of SQA Accredited Qualifications for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Guidance for Sector Skills Councils, Standard Setting Organisations, Awarding Bodies and Participants (April 2014)

The Appeals Process: Information for awarding bodies / Sector Skills Councils / Standards Setting Organisations