

Developing Scottish Qualification Products for Approval:

A Guide for Standard Setting Organisations

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1 Introduction

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

We approve qualification products for use by our approved awarding bodies. This guidance describes our expectations and gives recommendations on how you should develop and review your qualification products. It also explains our qualification product approval process.

Throughout the document we have adopted the term 'standard setting organisation' to include sector skills councils, sector 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.

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

- ◆ Tel: 0345 213 5249
- ◆ E-mail: accreditation@sqa.org.uk

1.1 What are qualification products?

The term 'qualification products' is used to describe the documents developed by an SSO that define a qualification. These documents must be approved by us before we can accredit a qualification. Qualification products are:

- 1 a **qualification structure** that includes the qualification title, and the number and combination of units required to achieve it
- 2 an **assessment strategy** that gives guidance to those who will deliver, assess and quality assure the qualification — sometimes referred to as the assessment principles
- 3 an **SCQF credit rating** statement showing the SCQF level and credit value for the qualification and component units — this is added to the qualification structure
- 4 a **Core Skills signposting** document indicating opportunities for assessment of Workplace Core Skills in the assessment of the qualification

1.2 What qualification products do you need to develop?

For all qualifications:

- ◆ you must develop items 1 and 2 (a qualification structure and an assessment strategy) in the Qualification Products list (section 1.1)
- ◆ we encourage you to develop items 3 and 4 (SCQF credit rating, and a Core Skills signposting document)

For Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs):

- ◆ you must develop items 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Qualification Products list

1.3 Engage with your Accreditation Manager

We must approve your final qualification product documents before an awarding body can seek accreditation to offer the qualification in Scotland. 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.

Unexpected issues at this final stage can lead to a significant delay in the approval of your qualification products. This can have major implications, for example, for project funding, subsequent awarding body accreditation, and Modern Apprenticeship Framework approval. To avoid any major issues being identified it is essential to involve your AM at all stages of your project.

You should involve your AM by:

- ◆ providing regular project updates
- ◆ inviting them to meetings, including: workshops; credit rating activity; consultation events; and key stakeholder group meetings
- ◆ copying in to minutes of meetings
- ◆ submitting draft documents for feedback
- ◆ sharing your consultation methodology and questions prior to circulation
- ◆ sharing your analysis of consultation responses
- ◆ discussing SCQF credit rating methodology and any necessary 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 smooth sign-off of the project outputs.

2 Planning qualification product development for Scotland

The activities covered in this section of the guide should all be considered before qualification product development. They will help to inform any business case you need to develop within your organisation or externally for funding purposes.

2.1 Establish the purpose for qualification development or review

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

Considering the following will help you define this:

- ◆ The roles the qualification is aimed at.
- ◆ The functions the candidate will cover in the qualification.
- ◆ Whether the qualification will confirm knowledge, skills or a combination of both.
- ◆ What broad areas of knowledge and/or skills the qualification will develop.
- ◆ Current provision of qualifications and any gaps.
- ◆ Whether the qualification is intended to be used within a Modern Apprenticeship or for a regulatory or licensing scheme.

This will help you to decide whether it is appropriate to develop qualification products or find a different solution. You might decide that it is more appropriate to revise or amend an existing qualification, create a new version or add a new pathway.

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.

2.2 Support the need for the development or review of qualifications

Information on the market for your qualification is essential for confirming the need for and purpose of your qualification. The information you gather must be specific to Scotland, and must reflect both national and local requirements in relation to the qualification. It is likely to vary according to whether the development is for a new or revised qualification.

You should consider:

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

Data can be obtained from Skills Development Scotland, the Scottish Government, and the Office for National Statistics. For information on the take-up of existing qualifications and units you can contact the awarding bodies.

2.3 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
- ◆ 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 deliver and implement any qualification that is proposed. We do not have a minimum requirement for candidate numbers, but awarding bodies may make business decisions on the viability of a qualification based on potential candidate numbers.

2.4 Plan project timelines

When planning your project, you should outline timelines for its key stages:

- ◆ occupational mapping/functional mapping (see 3.2)
- ◆ first draft of qualification products (structure and assessment strategy/principles)
- ◆ consultation activity
- ◆ outcome and analysis of consultation
- ◆ final draft of qualification products (structure and assessment strategy/principles)
- ◆ SCQF credit rating (if appropriate)
- ◆ Core Skills signposting (if appropriate)
- ◆ submission to SQA Accreditation for approval
- ◆ submission to Modern Apprenticeship Group (MAG) for approval (if appropriate)

When planning your timelines for key stages of your project you need to be aware of our processing times for NOS and qualification product approval, and of any funding contract deadlines for approval of the project outputs.

Lead times will be longer if your project is related to a Scottish Modern Apprenticeship Framework. You will need to factor in awarding body accreditation for the qualification and the MAG approval process. MAG expects qualifications to be accredited by an awarding body prior to a Modern Apprenticeship submission being made. You should consult Skills Development Scotland to confirm MAG submission timelines.

Our processing timelines can be found in our Customer Charter on the SQA Accreditation website.

2.5 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 number of methods of engagement that can be used. These include:

- ◆ consultation events
- ◆ face-to-face meetings and telephone discussions
- ◆ questionnaires
- ◆ articles in trade press

- ◆ web-based surveys
- ◆ focus groups

You have to be mindful of the make-up of your sector and choose the most appropriate method of consultation to reach it. A combination of these methods may be suitable to maximise involvement from the sector.

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, our expectation is that you consider using a more suitable method. For example, a low response to a questionnaire could be followed up by telephone interviews.

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

2.6 Qualifications for Modern Apprenticeships

Where demand indicates that the qualification(s) could be included in a Modern Apprenticeship (MA), 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 be aware that the Modern Apprenticeship Group (MAG) would expect more than one Scottish employer to be interested in the qualification before it considers approving a Modern Apprenticeship Framework. You should refer to MAG's guidance for further details on their requirements.

3 Developing qualification products

This section is about the methodology and process of developing qualification products. It will cover detailed guidance on:

- ◆ methodology
- ◆ qualification structures
- ◆ assessment strategy
- ◆ SCQF credit rating
- ◆ Core Skills signposting
- ◆ consultation

3.1 Methodology for qualification product development

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

- ◆ A **project manager** is appointed who oversees and manages the project. They will be responsible for quality assuring project outputs and submitting final qualification products to us.
- ◆ A **steering group** is established comprising industry and educational representatives who will guide the project, making recommendations for, and amending the outputs of, working groups.
- ◆ One or more **working groups** comprising experts with specialist knowledge of the qualification area are set up to determine the detailed content of units and suggest structures and pathways.
- ◆ A **consultation exercise**, agreed by the steering group, is used to open the discussion to a wider audience of practitioners and industry representatives and for confirmation or suggestions for 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.

Having identified the wider range of stakeholders, you should invite key individuals to participate in a steering group to oversee the project and make key decisions. In some projects, the group may decide to create sub-groups, often known as working groups, to undertake any specific tasks. The steering group should consider any work undertaken by sub-groups and sign off draft products before and after consultation.

We expect you to have a representation of Scottish employers on your groups to highlight any specific Scottish issues that may arise. It is not acceptable to assume UK-wide employers are able to comment on behalf of each nation. If individuals do not have sufficient knowledge to do this, they are expected to

consult with colleagues who have sufficient knowledge of the Scottish market so that they have an opportunity to highlight any issues.

We recommend, where possible, offering to pay the expenses of those involved to encourage participation.

We also expect you to engage with awarding bodies at an early stage of the project. You may want to invite them to participate to ensure that your proposals can be delivered.

3.2 Develop qualification structures

You will need to develop a draft qualification structure, identifying recommended mandatory and optional units.

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*, which you can find on the gov.uk website. It can be used in different kinds of developments and is not exclusive to NOS and SVQs. This will assist you in identifying gaps in existing NOS/unit coverage and where you may need to develop new ones.

When developing a qualification structure, check that you have:

- ◆ included all the essential functions
- ◆ included appropriate mandatory and optional units
- ◆ not created any barriers to achievement
- ◆ SCQF credit rated where necessary

3.2.1 Identify potential content

Once you know the functions and occupations related to the qualification, you should check whether you can use any existing NOS or units to avoid developing unnecessary duplicates.

NOS directly inform SVQ units and normally 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 units are already available, you should be able to identify any gaps that will require new NOS or units to be developed.

You will also need to consider whether existing NOS or units need to be updated, the ownership of the NOS or units, and the process for formally revising them. If you are using any units from another national framework, you will need to ensure they are appropriately contextualised to Scotland.

For any NOS or units included in your qualification structure that have not been developed by you, please ensure you discuss and agree 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.

When undertaking a review of a qualification, you must work with awarding bodies to analyse the performance of the existing qualification, to check 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.

3.2.2 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, a qualification in Management at SCQF level 8 and a qualification in Management at SCQF level 10 may not clearly indicate differences between content and complexity, whereas qualifications in Management at SCQF level 8 and Strategic Management at SCQF level 10 may.

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 normally 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.*

3.2.3 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 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. 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 need to also decide how many units within each section need to be achieved to attain the qualification.

Occasionally structures may consist of mandatory units only. This should be the exception rather than the rule, because we encourage flexibility and choice. If there are no optional units, the SSO rationale for the qualification should explain why.

Some SVQ structures include additional units, but these do not contribute to achievement of the SVQ.

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 includes pathways on 'Highway Maintenance', 'Building and Civil Engineering' and 'Residential Development'.

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

Flexibility and progression

Where possible, you should try to ensure that learners:

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

Overlap

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

3.3 Develop an assessment strategy

The assessment strategy describes how qualifications must be assessed. This is sometimes referred to as the assessment principles. You are responsible for developing an assessment strategy for the qualification that is appropriate for your sector and can be implemented by awarding bodies.

You will need to complete the *SQA Accreditation Assessment Strategy Template* (see appendix 3) when submitting your document for approval.

An assessment strategy is a mandatory qualification product. Its purpose is to provide prospective awarding bodies with a consistent approach to assessment. 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, to establish clear and agreed guidance on:

External Quality Control: This outlines the minimum requirements for awarding bodies for checking the quality of assessment.

Workplace Assessment: Workplace assessment should be the norm for vocational qualifications. You need to identify which aspects must always be assessed through performance in the workplace.

Realistic Work Environment and Simulation: SVQs can't be totally simulated because they need to demonstrate that an individual can perform consistently in the workplace over a period of time. You need to identify the extent to which a realistic work environment and simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence. There may be situations that are dangerous, emergency-related, costly, very rare etc, and which need to be covered by simulation.

Occupational Expertise of Quality Assurers: You need to define the occupational expertise requirements for those involved in the assessment and internal and external quality assurance of the qualification.

An assessment strategy 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.

When reviewing an assessment strategy, you should consider:

- ◆ Are there aspects of the strategy that have been a barrier to completion of the qualification?

- ◆ Are there any barriers for centres? For example, are the assessor and internal verifier occupational expertise requirements causing difficulties in recruiting personnel?
- ◆ Do awarding bodies have any issues with any aspect of the strategy?
- ◆ Is it considered robust enough by the sector?

This information can be provided by awarding bodies and centres that offer the qualification.

To ensure that Assessment Strategies remain current, we are providing recommended text/phrases to be used wherever possible. We ask that when revising your Assessment Strategies the following phrases/references are adopted, or suitable alternatives agreed with your Accreditation Manager.

References to SQA Accreditation regulatory requirements

We would suggest you use the following wording in relation to SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements

These principles are in addition to the regulatory requirements that awarding bodies must meet as specified by SQA Accreditation.

or

This strategy supersedes and replaces all previous Assessment Strategies and supplementary guidance. This strategy includes the requirements that awarding bodies must meet for the delivery of SVQs, as required by SQA Accreditation's current regulatory requirements and guidance.

References to assessor and verifier qualifications

Given the increasing number of predecessor and the introduction of new qualifications for assessors and verifiers 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.

Internal Verifiers must hold or be working towards an appropriate Internal Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator. Internal

Verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are verifying to the current standards.

External Verifiers must hold or be working towards an appropriate External Verifier qualification as identified by SQA Accreditation the qualification regulator. External Verifiers holding older qualifications must be able to demonstrate that they are verifying to the current standards.

Assessor and verifier competence

We have produced a revised listing of current and predecessor qualifications for assessors and verifiers to support your Assessment Strategies. This can be found in appendix 1.

Please note: these qualifications and statements only relate to competence in assessment and verification. In all situations it is imperative that the assessors and verifiers meet the occupational competence requirements, and these should be clearly stated in the Assessment Strategies.

Additional guidance and support can be sought from your Accreditation Manager.

3.4 SCQF Credit Rating

Credit rating SVQs for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is an integral 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.

If you are reviewing the credit rating of a current qualification, you should consider your approach. For example, it may not be necessary to undertake a full credit rating exercise. It may be more effective to consult with providers and candidates on whether the credit rating values appropriately reflect the time taken to complete a unit and whether the level is accurate. 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.

3.5 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 covering each SVQ unit. You are not required to develop Core Skills signposting for other types of qualification, but we encourage it. The signposting document should also acknowledge where there are no opportunities to develop Core Skills. This signposting can be used by centres and assessors to plan the development and assessment of Core Skills. You will need to complete the *SQA Accreditation Core Skills Signposting Template* (see appendix 4) 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.

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 required by the Modern Apprenticeship Group for MA frameworks. Mapping is a more detailed description of where Core Skills will definitely be achieved by candidates completing the qualification. The details of mapping requirements should be confirmed with Skills Development Scotland.

3.6 Consultation

Section 2.5 highlights some appropriate methods of planning your consultation.

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

- ◆ industry representatives are satisfied that the qualification structure and content are fit for purpose
- ◆ awarding bodies can implement the proposed qualification

3.6.1 Involve your Accreditation Manager

You should share information on your consultation and draft questions with your AM. They may be able to 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 will not necessarily participate in the consultation, they may be able to advise on whether the questions will elicit meaningful responses and whether you can infer any direction from the responses.

By sharing 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:

◆ **Industry bodies and employers:**

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 centres:**

It is critical to confirm the awarding body can deliver and certificate the proposed qualifications. Awarding body personnel, external verifiers and assessors from centres can comment on assessment strategies and whether the proposed qualifications can be delivered and assessed. They may have experience of

offering similar qualifications, which can give them experience of what has worked well and what has not.

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 will expect you to respond to low or poor consultation responses by reviewing your consultation methodology. If it is apparent that the methodology you are using is not providing you with the quantitative or qualitative responses required, you must discuss this 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 a better approach may be to initiate follow-up discussions to elicit more detailed responses.

Once your consultation is complete, we expect you to formally analyse the results of the consultation. The analysis must be sufficiently broken down to show feedback from Scottish stakeholders. In the analysis, you should determine whether the consultation was appropriate and gained a sufficient rate and quality of response.

Any results from the Scottish consultation and how you addressed the feedback must be reflected in your qualification products and detailed in your final report.

4 Preparing final products for submission

The material you submit will be assessed by your AM on 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 Key stakeholder group sign-off

It is important that you discuss and confirm changes brought about by your consultation with your key stakeholder group. Depending on the scale of the changes you may require a meeting of the group, or you may be able to confirm sign-off electronically.

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 Appendix 5 to ensure you include all the appropriate information.

4.3 Document your 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 we require to be submitted when you are seeking approval.

4.3.1 Report

You must prepare a report summarising the qualification products development process and explain why you think the qualification products are fit for approval.

This must include:

- ◆ 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 market demand for the qualification(s) in Scotland, including support from Scottish employers, stakeholders 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 2.2
 - ◆ An explanation of your SCQF credit rating process. You can choose to 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 structures must be submitted on the Qualification Grid shown below, supplied by SQA Accreditation. This will also be used in the approval of your SCQF credit rating and, eventually, in the qualification accreditation process. For guidance on completing the Qualification Grid, please see Appendix 2.

Qualification Structure and SCQF Credit Rating							
Qualification Title				Awarding Body			
Qualification Developer				Group Award Code			
Date Structure ACG Approved				Qualification Version			
Structure Version Number				Date Accredited From			
SCQF Overall Level				Accreditation End Date			
SCQF Overall Credit				Certification End Date			
Credit Rating Body							
Structure Information (including how many Units are to be selected)							
Accred Code	Developer Code	Mandatory/Optional/Additional Unit	Unit Title	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit	Date of SCQF Approval	Imported From (Developer Name)

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

Additional Information	
Qualification Title	0
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 eg based on the mandatory Units or a more detailed explanation where this is not obvious.	

4.3.3 Units/NOS

You will need to provide copies of the units or NOS contained in the qualification structure.

Providing links to documents that are available online will be acceptable. For SVQs, supplying the current unique reference number (URN) for the NOS will be acceptable. Please remember, if you are using units that have originated from a different framework, you must ensure they are appropriately contextualised for use in Scotland.

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 3.3 contains information on how to develop your assessment strategy. This needs to be submitted on the *SQA Accreditation Assessment Strategy Template* (see Appendix 3). 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 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
- ◆ a Credit Rating Form for each unit, Part 1 recommending the SCQF level and Part 2 the SCQF credit points

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 Appendix 4.

Qualification or Suite Title 1						
URN	Unit title	Communication	ICT	Numeracy	Problem Solving	Working with Others
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

- 1 Add the exact title of the qualification or NOS suite
- 2 Add the unique reference number (URN) of the unit or NOS being signposted
- 3 Add the exact title of the unit or NOS being signposted
- 4–8 Enter 'SCQF level x' or 'SCQF x' of core skills signposted for the unit. If a particular core skills is not relevant to the unit, leave blank.

Example

SVQ in Qualification Development at SCQF level 6						
URN	Unit title	Communication	ICT	Numeracy	Problem Solving	Working with Others
Ex001	Establish market demand for qualification development	SCQF level 4	SCQF level 4	SCQF level 3	SCQF level 3	SCQF level 4
Ex002	Develop an assessment strategy	SCQF level 4			SCQF level 3	SCQF level 3

5 Approval of qualification products

SQA Accreditation approves qualification products for use in qualifications developed and accredited for use in Scotland. 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, lacking the requisite information and clarity, will take longer to process.

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

- ◆ report
- ◆ qualification structures
- ◆ units or NOS that make up the qualification
- ◆ 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 in Appendix 5 to help you ensure that you send us all the necessary information.

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

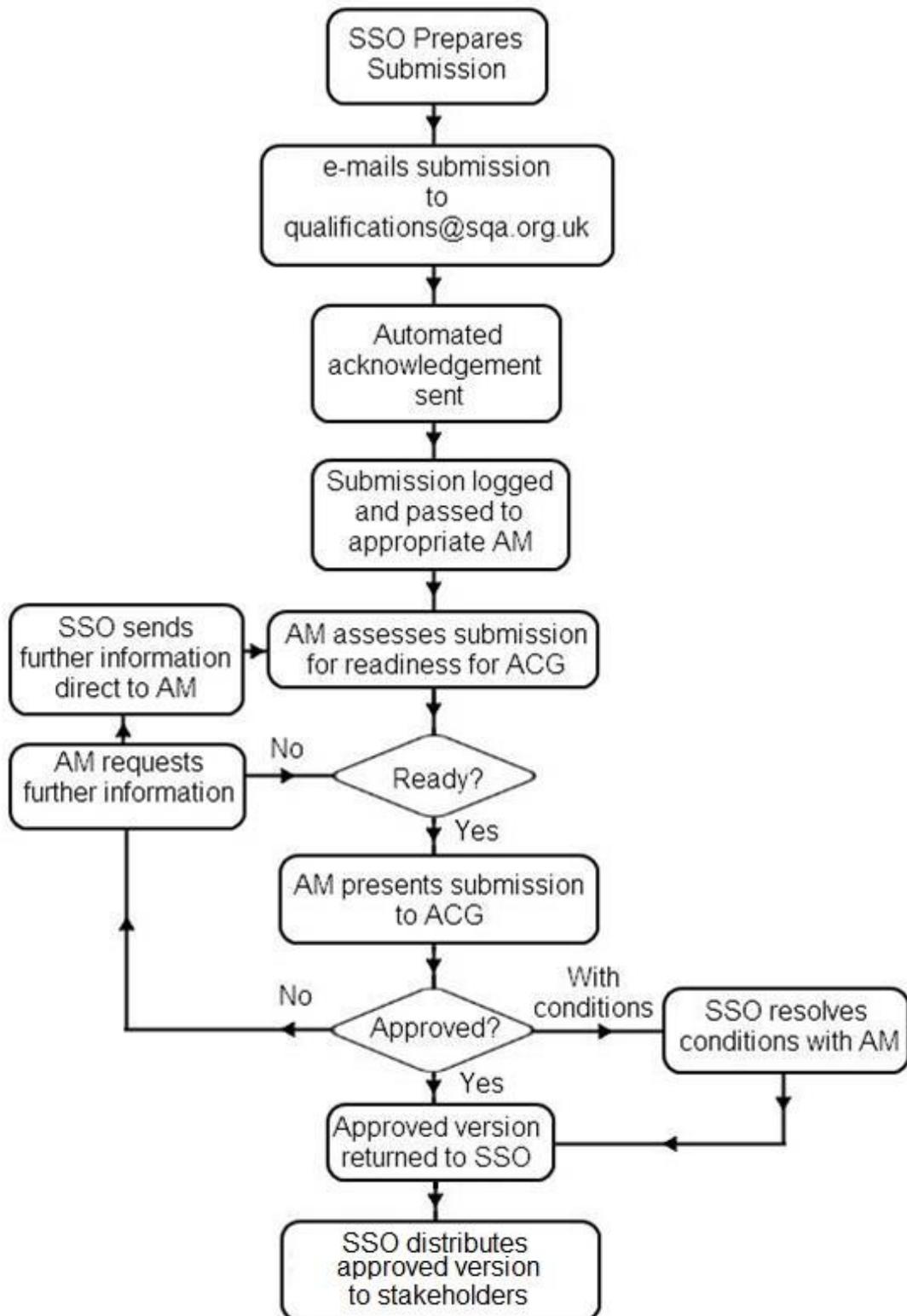
The AM will assess the submission and will liaise directly with you for any clarification or further information. When your AM has agreed your submission is ready, they will produce a report which they will present at ACG, our decision-making committee.

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.

5.2 The qualification product approval process



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 about an ACG decision. It can be downloaded from our website.

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.

Appendix 1: Assessor and Verifier Competence

Assessor and Verifier Competence (September 2013)

SQA Accreditation is issuing this communication to provide clarification and guidance relating to the qualification requirements for the assessment and verification of Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). In addition the following clarification and guidance may also be used for assessing other types of qualifications that may be supported by assessment strategies and/or assessment principles.

Learning and Development (L & D) SVQs and Units, which are based on the current National Occupational Standards (NOS), were approved by ACG in October 2010.

Assessors and verifiers who currently hold D or A and V Units are still considered to be qualified assessors and internal verifiers/external verifiers and are not required to undertake the new Units. However, they must be working to the current NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development. **Any new assessors and verifiers, who do not currently hold any of these qualifications, should undertake the qualifications based on the current Learning and Development (L & D) NOS.**

The relationship between the current L & D Units and previous Assessor and Verifier qualifications can be found on the attached tables.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list and assessment and verification of SVQs must always be in line with the current L & D NOS and in accordance with the specific assessment strategies dependant on the requirements of the sector.

Awarding Bodies must recognise that where an assessor or verifier has achieved a relevant qualification then there is no stipulation for them to repeat with the most current version.

If you require any clarification please contact your designated Accreditation Manager.

Table 1: Assessors

Title	Abbreviation	Replaced by	Comments	Additional Comments
Assess workplace competence using direct methods	L & D 9D	Current Unit	This is the current accredited L & D Unit. QCF qualifications based on the current L & D NOS are equally acceptable.	NB. In all situations it is imperative that Assessors meet the occupational competency requirements specified in the specific Assessment Strategy/Principles that support individual qualifications
Assess workplace competences using direct and indirect methods	L & D 9DI	Current Unit	This is the current accredited L & D Unit. QCF qualifications based on the current L & D NOS are equally acceptable.	
Assess candidates using a range of methods	A1	L & D 9DI	The L & D Units replaced these in May 2011.	
Assess candidates' performance through observation	A2	L & D 9D	Assessors who hold these Units (A1/A2) are still considered to be qualified assessors and are not required to undertake the new Units. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development. Any new assessors should undertake the Learning and Development Units which are based on most recent National Occupational Standards (NOS).	
Assess candidate performance	D32	A2	The A Units replaced these in 2008.	
Assess candidates using differing sources of evidence	D33	A1	Assessors who hold these Units (D32/D33) are still considered to be qualified assessors and are not required to undertake the new Units. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development. Any new assessors should undertake the Learning and Development Units which are based on most recent National Occupational Standards (NOS).	
Teacher Qualification (Further Education)	TQFE		This was an accepted exemption for the D Units. Assessors who hold this qualification (TQFE) are still considered to be qualified assessors and are not required to undertake the new Units. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development.	

Table 2: Internal Verifiers

Title	Abbreviation	Replaced by	Comments	Additional Comments
Internal Quality Assurance	L & D 11	Current Unit	This is the current accredited L & D Unit. QCF qualifications based on the current L & D NOS are equally acceptable.	<p style="text-align: center;">NB. In all situations it is imperative that Verifiers meet the occupational competency requirements specified in the specific Assessment Strategy/Principles that support individual qualifications</p>
Conduct internal quality assurance of the assessment process	V1	L & D 11	<p>The L & D Units replaced this in May 2011</p> <p>Internal Verifiers who hold this Unit (V1) are still considered to be qualified verifiers and are not required to undertake the new Unit. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development.</p> <p>Any new internal verifiers should undertake the Learning and Development Units which are based on most recent National Occupational Standards (NOS).</p>	
Internally verify the assessment process	D34	V 1	<p>The V Unit superseded this qualification in 2008.</p> <p>Internal Verifiers who hold this Unit (D34) are still considered to be qualified verifiers and are not required to undertake the new Unit. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development.</p> <p>Any new internal verifiers should undertake the Learning and Development Units which are based on most recent National Occupational Standards (NOS).</p>	

Table 3: External Verifiers

Title	Abbreviation	Replaced by	Comments	Additional Comments
External Quality Assurance	L & D 12	Current Unit	This is the current accredited L & D Unit. QCF qualifications based on the current L & D NOS are equally acceptable.	NB. In all situations it is imperative that Verifiers meet the occupational competency requirements specified in the specific Assessment Strategy/Principles that support individual qualifications
Conduct external quality assurance of the assessment process	V2	L & D 12	<p>The L & D Units replaced this in May 2011</p> <p>External Verifiers who hold this Unit (V2) are still considered to be qualified verifiers and are not required to undertake the new Unit. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development.</p> <p>Any new external verifiers should undertake the Learning and Development Units which are based on most recent National Occupational Standards (NOS).</p>	
Externally verify the assessment process	D35	V2	<p>The V Unit superseded this qualification in 2008.</p> <p>External Verifiers who hold this Unit (D35) are still considered to be qualified verifiers and are not required to undertake the new Unit. However, they must be working to the current L & D NOS and undertaking appropriate continuous professional development.</p> <p>Any new external verifiers should undertake the Learning and Development Units which are based on most recent National Occupational Standards (NOS).</p>	

Appendix 2: Completing the Qualification Grid

Qualification Structure and SCQF Credit Rating							
Qualification Title		1					
Qualification Developer		2			Awarding Body		8
Date Structure ACG Approved		3			Group Award Code		8
Structure Version Number		4			Qualification Version		8
SCQF Overall Level		5			Date Accredited From		8
SCQF Overall Credit		6			Accreditation End Date		8
Credit Rating Body		7			Certification End Date		8
Structure Information (including how many Units are to be selected) 9							
Accred Code 10	Developer Code 11	Mandatory/Optional/Additional Unit 12	Unit Title 13	SCQF Level 14	SCQF Credit 15	Date of SCQF Approval 16	Imported From (Developer Name) 17
18							
19							

- 1 Add the title of the qualification (see section 2).
- 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 Insert the version number of the structure. This should be based on ACG accredited versions and not development version numbers, therefore if you submit a new structure it will be version 1 and if you subsequently amend it then it becomes version 2.
- 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 identifier code for the unit.
- 12 Indicate if the unit is mandatory, optional or additional.
- 13 Insert the unit title.
- 14 The SCQF level must match the recommended level on the unit form. If the unit has already been credit rated, the approved level must be inserted. If the unit is imported, the originating body should supply any approved level.
- 15 As 12, but for SCQF credit points.
- 16 There are various circumstances that affect what you will enter in the date-approved box:
 - (a) If the credit rating is being submitted for approval, leave blank and the date will be completed by SQA Accreditation.
 - (b) If the unit and credit rating have been reviewed. leave blank, even if the review results in no change to the existing credit rating.
 - (c) If the unit has been credit rated already, insert the date when it was approved.
 - (d) 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.

Appendix 3: Assessment Strategy Template

Assessment Strategy	
Sector	
Qualification Title(s)	
Developed by	
Approved by ACG	
Version	

Introduction:

The purpose of an assessment strategy is to provide awarding bodies with a consistent approach to assessment that complies with SQA Accreditation's regulatory requirements.

The key areas this assessment strategy will cover are:

- how external quality control of assessment will be achieved
- which aspects must always be assessed through performance in the workplace
- the extent to which a realistic work environment and simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence
- the occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers

Awarding bodies must use the assessment strategy as the basis for developing and defining the evidence requirements and assessment methods their providers will use. This includes specifying how the qualification will be internally and externally quality assured.

SSO may insert additional introductory text to contextualise the assessment strategy to their sector

External quality control

This outlines the minimal requirements for awarding bodies to check the quality of assessment

[Insert text here](#)

Workplace assessment

This outlines which aspects must always be assessed through performance in the workplace – delete if your qualifications do not require evidence of performance in the workplace

[Insert text here](#)

Realistic work environment and simulation

This outlines the extent to which a realistic work environment and simulated working conditions may be used to assess competence

[Insert text here](#)

Occupational expertise of quality assurers

This outlines the occupational expertise requirements for assessors and verifiers

[Insert text here](#)

Additional Information

This outlines any other relevant guidance or information necessary to give awarding bodies clear and consistent approach.

[Insert text here](#)

Appendix 4: SQA Accreditation Core Skills Signposting Template

Core Skills Signposting	
Sector	
Qualification Title(s)	
Developed by	
Approved by ACG	
Version	

Introduction

Core Skills signposting indicates if there are opportunities within units to develop Core Skills in the workplace to a specified SCQF level. 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.

The five Core Skills are:

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

SSO may insert additional introductory text to contextualise the core skills signposting to their sector

Core Skills Signposting

Qualification or Suite Title						
URN	Unit title	Communication	ICT	Numeracy	Problem Solving	Working with Others

Appendix 5: Quality checklist

Evidence for qualification products	Y/N
<p>Please use this checklist to quality check your submission before sending it to us. Have you included the following?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report (see 4.3.1): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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 ◆ Your SCQF credit rating process 2. Qualification structure (see 4.3.2 and Appendix 2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have you used the template? ◆ A completed qualification grid for each qualification ◆ Recommended SCQF credit rating values, where appropriate 3. Units (see 4.3.3): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Copies of or links to each unit 4. Assessment strategy (see 3.3 and Appendix 3): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have you used the template? ◆ Have you included evidence of awarding body support? 5. SCQF credit rating (see 4.3.5 and please note, you can choose to combine this with your overall qualification development report) — have you included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A summary of the credit rating, methodology and process ◆ A note of the participants and their suitability to credit rate ◆ The average learner profile ◆ A rationale for your overall qualification level and credit ◆ Credit rating forms for each unit 6. Core Skills signposting (See 3.5 and Appendix 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Have you used the template? ◆ Core Skills signposting covering the whole qualification? 	