

Next Generation Higher National Educator Guide

Higher National Certificate in Social Services

Qualification code GT6N 47

Valid from session 2024 to 2025

Prototype for pilot delivery only

This guide provides detailed information about the qualification to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This guide is for assessors and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver and assess the qualification.

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Qualification overview

Purpose of the qualification

Individuals working in the social services sector must register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as a condition of employment. Completing a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Social Services fulfils the qualification requirements for most parts of the register. Studying this qualification gives learners the opportunity to gain skills they can apply and adapt to work effectively in a range of social service settings with individuals who have a range of conditions. The central ethos of the qualification is that learners gain an understanding of the values and principles of social care, and learn how to integrate those values with the necessary skills and knowledge.

We have incorporated significant changes in government policy in the development of the NextGen HNC, changes that equip learners to meet future needs and help them continue to adapt to the changing world of social care.

The HNC sits within a suite of Social Service qualifications at various levels on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Learners who complete it can progress to further study or employment.

This HNC shares a minimum of four common core units (two Higher National Units and two or three SVQ Units) with HNC Childhood Practice, allowing credits to be transferred.

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Structure

HNCs are designed at SCQF level 7 and consist of 120 SCQF credit points. HNCs must incorporate at least 80 credit points (10 credits) at SCQF level 7.

HNCs contain 15 credits that can be used flexibly to increase opportunities for learners returning to education. Refer to the 'Meta-skills' section of this guide for more information.

HNC Social Services is designed at SCQF level 7 and is made up of 120 SCQF credit points. HNCs must incorporate at least 80 credit points (10 credits) at SCQF level 7..

Framework

The HNC Social Services is made up of the following mandatory units and optional units. Learners must complete all core units (12 SQA credits) as well as one optional HN Unit and one optional SVQ Unit from the list below.

Mandatory units

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	3	24	7
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights*	3	24	7
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice*	3	24	7
H5RY 04 or H5LC 04	Promote Effective Communication or Promote Effective Communication	1 1	9 9	7 7
H5LD 04	Promote Health, Safety and Security in the Work Setting	1	10	7
H5LE 04	Develop your Practice through Reflection and Learning	1	9	7

* Common core units across HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice.

Optional units

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	2	16	7
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	2	16	7
J7DC 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	2	16	7
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	2	16	7
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	2	16	7

Optional SVQ Units

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
H5SS 04	Support Individuals with Specific Communication Needs (Recommended for integration with J6EJ 47 Supporting People: Autism)	1	10	7
H5N0 04	Work with Children and Young People with Additional Requirements to Address their Development Needs (Recommended for J6EJ 47 Supporting People: Autism)	1	10	7
H5M3 04	Support Children and Young People Through Major Transitions (Recommended for J6EL 47 Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change)	1	9	7
H5S5 04	Promote Individuals' Positive Self-esteem and Sense of Identity (Recommended for J6EL 47 Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change)	1	10	7
H5N6 04	Contribute to Childcare Practice in Group Living (Recommended for J7DC 47 Supporting Individuals in Group Living)	1	9	7
H5T9 04	Promote Participation in Agreed Therapeutic Group Activities (Recommended for J7DC 47 Supporting Individuals in Group Living)	1	10	7
H5ME 04	Promote Positive Behaviour (Recommended for J7DA 47 Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies)	1	10	8

Unit code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
H5N8 04	Promote the Development of Positive Behaviour in Children and Young People (Recommended for J7DA 47 Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies)	1	10	8
H5S1 04	Contribute to the Planning Process with Individuals (Recommended for J7DB 47 Person-centred Approaches)	1	8	7
H5MM 04	Contribute to the Assessment and Planning Process with Children and Young People (Recommended for J7DB 47 Person-centred Approaches)	1	10	7

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Aims of the qualification

General aims

During their studies, learners develop the following knowledge and skills:

- 1 Transferable skills, such as Core Skills and meta-skills
- 2 Critical and evaluative thinking
- 3 Problem solving
- 4 Communication and collaboration
- 5 Self-reflection
- 6 Empathy and understanding
- 7 Effective care practice
- 8 Safe practice and safeguarding

The broad aims of the qualification are to help learners develop skills that enable them to become competent social service practitioners, plan their careers, consider their employment prospects and/or progress to further education.

Specific aims

To allow learners to gain the values, knowledge and skills required to become competent care practitioners, we have developed specific aims.

The specific aims are to:

- 1 enable learners to demonstrate an understanding of the values that underpin work in social service settings
- 2 enable learners to understand how practice and service standards should inform their practice
- 3 enable learners to integrate values, skills and knowledge effectively in a variety of social service settings
- 4 enable learners to develop skills appropriate for working with individuals in a range of social service settings
- 5 enable learners to have a person-centred focus in their practice
- 6 assist learners to practice in an anti-discriminatory and inclusive manner
- 7 prepare learners for employment in a social services setting
- 8 enable learners to become reflective practitioners
- 9 enable learners to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy, procedures and practice methods
- 10 enable learners to engage in continuing professional learning
- 11 facilitate progression (for those who want) to further study

Qualification structure

This qualification consists of a common core of 67 SCQF credit points. The common core allows for some transition between employment sectors as well as Recognised Prior Learning between HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice settings. There are 33 sector-specific SCQF credit points and a minimum of 24 industry-specific SCQF credit points.

Each NextGen: HNC contains at least one project unit which, in turn, contains a meta-skills outcome. For this HNC Social Services, the project unit is Developing Reflective Practice.

The qualification aims are integrated throughout the units, as described in the 'Mapping Qualification to Aims' table.

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Who is this qualification for?

This qualification is suitable for college-based learners, as well as employees within social services, with different modes of entry, full, part-time or distance learning.

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this qualification is at the discretion of your centre.</p> <p>Learners would benefit from having attained the skills, knowledge, and understanding required by one or more of the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ previous study in a related subject at SCQF level 6 or above <p>Previous experience of work or volunteering within a social services setting is essential to meet the requirements of the programme.</p>	<p>Learner who complete the HNC can progress to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ other qualifications in social services or related areas◆ further study, employment and/or job roles <p>Learners who achieve the qualification meet the requirements for registration with the SSSC for most social service roles. This may allow for progression in employment.</p> <p>Achievement of the qualification with Merit or Distinction may also allow learners accelerated entry into degree-level courses at higher education institutions.</p>

Recognising prior learning

SQA recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills through formal, non-formal, and informal learning contexts.

It is unlikely that a learner would have the appropriate prior learning and experience to meet all the requirements of a full qualification.

You can find more information and guidance about the recognition of prior learning on [SQA's website](#).

Articulation and progression

See above. A number of higher education institutions (HEIs) have articulation arrangements in place.

Professional recognition

Learners who achieve the HNC meet the requirements for registration with the SSSC for most social service roles.

Credit transfer arrangements

Centres can make decisions about transferring credits. They can transfer credits if the subject-related content of the units is broadly equivalent. Centres should consider the currency of a learner's achievement before transferring credit.

Recommended Core Skills entry profile

The Core Skills entry profile provides a summary of the assessment activities that demonstrate the SCQF level of this qualification. This information can help identify learners who need additional support or those who should take an alternative level or learning programme.

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities
Communication	5	Learners produce: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ reflective practice evaluation◆ project evaluation◆ assignments◆ products from their practice
Numeracy	5	Learners produce: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ assignments◆ products
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	5	Learners produce: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ reflective practice evaluation◆ project evaluation◆ assignments◆ products
Problem Solving	5	Learners produce: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ reflective practice evaluation◆ project evaluation◆ assignments◆ products

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities
Working with Others	5	Learners produce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ reflective practice evaluation ◆ project evaluation ◆ assignments ◆ products

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How the qualification meets employer and higher education institution needs

This qualification is designed in collaboration with employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), practitioners and professional bodies to meet the sector need.

The following tables show how the qualification can benefit employers and HEIs by equipping learners with the necessary skill set:

- ◆ Table 1 shows how units map to the aims of the qualification.
- ◆ Table 2 shows how the units map to National Occupational Standards (NOS).
- ◆ Table 3 shows the assessment strategy for the qualification.

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Table 1: mapping qualification aims to units**General aims**

Key: aim is directly relevant to unit (X), aim is optional in this unit (O), aim is not applicable to this unit (N/A)

Unit code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6	Aim 7	Aim 8
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	O
J7CD 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O

Specific aims

Key: aim is directly relevant to unit (X), aim is optional in this unit (O), aim is not applicable to this unit (N/A)

Unit code	Unit title	Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3	Aim 4	Aim 5	Aim 6	Aim 7	Aim 8	Aim 9	Aim 10	Aim 11
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	O	O
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	X	X	X	X	N/A	X	X	X	X	X	O
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O
J7CD 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O
J7DB 47	Person-Centred Approaches	O	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O

Table 2: mapping National Occupational Standards (NOS) requirements to units

Unit code	Unit title	NOS codes
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5S1 04, H5MM 04
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5S1 04, H5MM 04
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5SS 04, H5N0 04
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals During Transition, Loss and Change	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5M3 04, H5S5 04
J7CD 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5N6 04, H5T9 04
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5ME 04, H5N8 04
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	H5RY 04, H5LC 04, H5LD 04, H5LE 04, H5LF 04, H5S0 04, H5S1 04, H5MM 04

The assessment evidence produced by learners can be mapped to underpinning knowledge and practice evidence in any further SVQ Units where the activities meet the scope of the unit. This benefits those who require a full SVQ Qualification as well as the HNC Social Services for registration.

Table 3: assessment strategy for the qualification

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ integrated project assignment with outcome-focused assessment
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a folder of evidence gathered holistically including reflective practice evaluation for outcomes 1, 2, 3 ◆ product evidence for outcomes 5 and 6 ◆ product evidence for meta-skills development for outcome 7; this must include evidence of self-assessment, planning, development and self-reflection of meta-skills
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a folder of evidence gathered holistically; outcomes 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 can be met through a knowledge-based assignment, research project or reflection on real work activities ◆ evidence for outcomes 3 and 4 should be gathered from real work activities and could form part of a larger project with Approaches to Assessment in Social Services

Unit code	Unit title	Assessment method
H5RY 04 or H5LC 04	Promote Effective Communication or Promote Effective Communication	◆ SVQ portfolio including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities
H5LD 04	Promote Health, Safety and Security in the Work Setting	◆ SVQ portfolio including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities
H5LE 04	Develop your Practice Through Reflection and Learning	◆ SVQ portfolio including mapping from HN Unit assessments and activities

Optional HN Units with optional SVQ Unit

You can fully integrate the optional units into the core units if learners are taking them as part of HNC Social Services. We expect you to integrate the majority of evidence for the optional units with the Approaches to Assessment in Social Services unit, gathered through one project

Meta-skills

Meta-skills are higher-order skills that support the development of other skills and promote success in any context. They enable learners to respond to professional challenges and opportunities by reflecting on, developing, applying and adapting industry skills and sector knowledge.

Our new Higher National Qualifications are developed with meta-skills at their core. Meta-skills complement the industry and sector-specific content of the qualifications. They provide a framework for learners to complete personal development aligned to professional practices.

Throughout the qualifications, learners develop meta-skills while studying industry- and sector-specific content. You can integrate meta-skills into contextualised teaching activities and include them in integrated and holistic assessment approaches.

The 21st century skills and meta-skills learning, teaching and assessment model focuses on how we can use skills to respond to societal, economic and industry drivers and change. Meta-skills frameworks vary, but they share an approach that emphasises individualistic, context-based skills development with reflective practice and localised definitions.

Skills Development Scotland developed a model of meta-skills in response to the concept of Industry 4.0 (or the 'fourth industrial revolution'). In this model, they identify 12 meta-skills that help learners adapt to changes to industry, job roles and society expected as a result of technological advances and global trends. Developing these meta-skills supports learners as they prepare for a constantly evolving future.

The 12 meta-skills are grouped into three categories: self-management, social intelligence, and innovation.

Self-management	Social intelligence	Innovation
Focusing	Communicating	Curiosity
Integrity	Feeling	Creativity
Adapting	Collaborating	Sense-making
Initiative	Leading	Critical thinking

This is adapted from: [Skills 4.0: a skills model to drive Scotland's future](#), Centre for Work-based Learning in Scotland, (2018). You can find this on Skills Development Scotland's website.

You should:

- ◆ make learners aware that meta-skills are generic and transferable across many different contexts

- ◆ support learners to focus on the meta-skills that they find most relevant by encouraging an individualised, active learning approach that relates to the industry and sector contexts of the qualification
- ◆ help learners to understand key meta-skills for their industry or sector and any other personally important meta-skills, and set development goals for these
- ◆ encourage learners to focus on reflective practice

None of the meta-skills is mandatory.

Learning and teaching

You can introduce meta-skills to learners as tools they can use in response to real-world challenges and opportunities. At SCQF level 7 or 8, you should use terminology from the Skills 4.0 model, but it is important that you develop a shared understanding with learners about meta-skills and what they mean to them, both individually and in the context of coursework, projects and sectors.

You should embed meta-skills in learning and project tasks as a context for planning, practice, and reflection. You should encourage learners to be self-aware, set active goals and monitor their progress.

The process of developing meta-skills is not linear and you should make learners active participants in their learning. At the start of the process, you should introduce meta-skills to learners and explore the concept of self-assessment with them. You should set goals and make development and evaluation plans together. The process should become cyclical, with reflective practice informing new self-awareness, goal setting and review.

Many traditional learning and teaching activities used to develop industry or sector-specific skills, knowledge and understanding also support the development of meta-skills. You can map these in course materials and resources and during learning.

The HNC Social Services contains the project unit Developing Reflective Practice with a specific outcome on meta-skills. However, all unit specifications have examples of where opportunities to evidence meta-skills can be found, mapped to the activities required to complete the unit. The SVQ Unit Develop your Practice through Reflection and Learning also introduces learners to the fundamentals of reflective practice.

Meta-skills are central to successfully engaging with and completing assignments and projects. You should encourage learners to plan how they will use and develop meta-skills in their coursework and to reflect on their success and future goals.

Learners could indicate a preference to develop the meta-skill of focusing, for example. There are plenty of opportunities to develop this through study and guided research. They may want to focus on the skill of collaboration, which they can evidence through working with multi-disciplinary teams within the workplace or placement.

The role of the coach, mentor or facilitator is key to help learners understand, develop and reflect on their own meta-skills and those central to course activities, assessment projects and their target industry or sector. You and any employer partners or guest speakers could guide learners by taking on a coaching and mentoring role.

In this role, you should introduce learners to the fundamentals of reflective practice. You could use several models of reflective practice. You do not need to use a theoretical perspective. Any reference to these models should support learners' understanding of the nature and value of reflective practice in self-understanding and making change.

Introducing reflective practice can support your learners' personal development and goal setting. Frequent formative peer-to-peer, assessor, client (if appropriate) and group reflection activity can support learners through reflective practice.

Learners can focus on any meta-skills appropriate to them and their context. However, learning and teaching should also facilitate individual development. Learners have individual strengths and areas for development and they do not have to reach a particular level in relation to meta-skills. Coursework and projects provide the context for development appropriate to the SCQF level. Within these contexts, the **process** of development is important. You should create a clear learning plan with each learner to provide evidence of their development.

You can create descriptions of abilities and skills that relate to meta-skills with your learners. These can come from self-profiling, exploring the industry and sector, and discussion with peers and employers. You should consider the meta-skills needed to complete coursework and meet personal goals to set a context for reflection.

Exploring learning and working styles, personality traits and preferences, personal profiling and self-assessment tools can help learners to develop an understanding of their strengths and areas for development.

You can use case studies and scenario-based activities to demonstrate the value of meta-skills and how they can be applied. You can provide opportunities for peer reflection. A group of learners could share experiences and reflections about how to apply meta-skills in the context of their coursework. You could adopt the role of facilitator to draw learners' attention to situations where meta-skills were or could have been applied.

Reflective discussions can focus on how and where meta-skills are being developed. Your discussions with learners could include positive recognition and guidance on future development based on previous performance. As learners progress, you could introduce industry content that requires skills like problem recognition and problem solving, both of which combine multiple meta-skills.

You can deliver the knowledge and skills for practical aspects of projects in sequence. However, learners benefit from learning and teaching that integrates meta-skills with project planning and development. This approach supports learners to engage in reflective practice throughout the project and develops their self-awareness and an appreciation for continuous learning. It also maximises your opportunities to support, coach and mentor learners through their projects.

Learning for Sustainability

Context

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UK in 2015, has shaped the development of internal and national sustainability policy. It sets out the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), which are central to the Scottish Government's [National Performance Framework](#). Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is a commitment to embedding the SDGs in Scottish education and meeting the requirements of 'Target 2030: A Movement for People, Planet and Prosperity; Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023–2030'.

In line with this, SQA is committed to incorporating the skills, knowledge, understanding and values of LfS within all new and revised qualifications.

LfS combines:

- ◆ education for sustainable development (ESD)
- ◆ global citizenship
- ◆ outdoor learning

ESD is the internationally used term for sustainability education. LfS has a broader remit; however, the terms are largely interchangeable. ESD tends to be used by colleges and universities, while LfS is usually used in schools. Both focus on a broad range of social, economic and environmental themes and approaches across all levels of education. SQA uses LfS as an umbrella term.

LfS is designed to nurture a generation of learners who know the value of the natural world and are committed to the principles of social justice, human rights, global citizenship, democratic participation and living within the ecological limits of the planet. It aims to respond to global challenges by developing learners' skills, knowledge, understanding and values relating to sustainability so they can interact with the world in a socially responsible way.

LfS is more than the sum of its parts; it is about building learners' capacity to deal with the unpredictable challenges facing our rapidly changing world. It encourages transformational change through learning, by which learners are able to critically analyse, communicate and collaborate on complex social, environmental and economic challenges. This gives learners increased confidence, opportunities to develop a range of meta-skills, and enhanced motivation and readiness to learn.

Learning for Sustainability in Next Generation Higher National Qualifications

Next Generation Higher National (NextGen: HN) qualifications have been developed with sustainability as a core component.

All NextGen: HN learners should exit their qualification with:

- ◆ a general understanding of sustainability and the SDGs
- ◆ an understanding of subject-specific sustainability issues, how these relate to the SDGs, and potential improvements
- ◆ the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills in the next stage of their lives

Central to these aims is a need for familiarity with both the SDGs and the concept of sustainability (which is the need to ensure a balance between economic growth, environmental stewardship and social wellbeing). Knowledge and understanding of current industry practices and behaviours, and consideration of how these could be made more sustainable and contribute towards the SDGs, are integral in developing young people to be responsible and empowered citizens who are able to contribute to building a socially just, sustainable and equitable society.

With this in mind, sustainability is embedded as an outcome in the Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights Unit (J6E3 47).

By completing this outcome, learners develop skills, including the abilities to:

- ◆ assess their own knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the SDGs
- ◆ review unit content against the SDGs to identify a sustainability-related issue
- ◆ apply knowledge and understanding of sustainability and the SDGs to propose improvements

Any of the SDGs can be covered; there are none that is mandatory. Learners are expected to have a general understanding of the SDGs and the three pillars of sustainability. Learners will also be required to apply two SDGs to policy or procedures in Social Services. More information can be found in the unit guidance for Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights (J6E3 47).

The inclusion of the outcome on sustainability in Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights (J6E3 47) allows for integration with other related outcomes within the unit. Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights asks learners to evidence their understanding of the impact of health inequalities: poverty, good health and wellbeing, quality education, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, and reduced inequalities. Similarly, the Developing Reflective Practice Unit J6E4 47 asks learners to reflect on methods they use to support their own physical and mental wellbeing. This can relate to the sustainable goals of good health and wellbeing and quality education

Mapping of Units to UN SDGs

Unit code	Unit title	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
J6EH 47	Approaches to Assessment in Social Services			X	X	X			X		X	X					X	X
J6E3 47	Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
J6E4 47	Developing Reflective Practice			X	X	X			X	X	X						X	
J6EJ 47	Supporting People: Autism			X	X	X			X	X	X	X					X	X
J6EL 47	Supporting Individuals during Transition, Loss and Change	X	X	X	X	X			X		X						X	X
J7CD 47	Supporting Individuals in Group Living	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X					X	X
J7DA 47	Supporting People: Positive Support Strategies			X	X	X			X		X	X					X	X

Unit code	Unit title	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
J7DB 47	Person-centred Approaches	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X					X	X

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Grading

Please see the grading pack for this qualification for more information on grading.

Learners who pass NextGen: HN qualifications receive one of the following grade outcomes for the qualification as a whole:

- ◆ Achieved with Distinction
- ◆ Achieved with Merit
- ◆ Achieved

You assess and judge each learner's performance across the key aspects of the qualification to determine their whole qualification grade. You must align judgements with the whole qualification grade descriptors, which are:

Achieved with Distinction

This candidate consistently demonstrates outstanding knowledge, understanding and application of skills. Thinking and working independently to an exceptional standard, they apply excellent judgement and creative problem-solving skills. They achieve or exceed agreed aims by confidently applying an extensive range of meta-skills and working very effectively with colleagues and peers.

Achieved with Merit

This candidate demonstrates an excellent level of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. Thinking and working independently to a high standard, they demonstrate good judgement and effective problem-solving skills. They achieve agreed aims by applying a broad range of meta-skills and working effectively with colleagues and peers.

Achieved

This candidate demonstrates thorough knowledge, understanding and application of skills. They think and work independently and use their judgement to find solutions to problems. They achieve agreed aims by applying a range of meta-skills and working well with colleagues and peers.

Successful learners receive their grade, along with the grade descriptor text, on their commemorative certificate.

In addition, you assess individual units on a pass or fail basis. Each unit has evidence requirements that learners must achieve before you can consider them for whole qualification grading.

You make judgements about learners' quality of assessment evidence using a grading matrix based on important criteria in the qualification.

To achieve the qualification, learners must pass all criteria within the grading model.

To be awarded Achieved with Merit, learners need to meet seven out of the ten assessment criteria at Merit level or above, with the remaining criteria at Achieved level or above.

To be awarded Achieved with Distinction, learners need to meet a minimum of seven assessment criteria at Distinction level plus three more at Achieved or Merit level.

The purpose of the grading model is to:

- ◆ ensure a holistic approach to grading of the learner's performance across the qualification, rather than in just one unit
- ◆ highlight a learner's strengths in the values, knowledge and skills required for social services
- ◆ motivate the learner throughout the duration of the academic session
- ◆ differentiate candidates' levels of achievement for employers and entry to higher education
- ◆ ensure consistency of grades across centres

Quality assurance

Centres complete a grading template for each learner at three stages during the qualification. The stages take account of all work completed to that point. Centres should summarise how they came to the decision about the grade awarded for each criterion, indicating where evidence for their decision can be found. This provides sufficient information for the external quality assurer to verify assessors' judgements on grading.

Grading and meta-skills

Meta-skills are a key part of the NextGen: HN qualifications and learners develop them throughout the qualification. Competence in individual meta-skills is not assessed or graded. For example, the qualification does not judge the quality of learners' feeling or creativity, or their specific progress in any given meta-skill. Rather, it is the process of development the learner goes through that contributes to the whole qualification judgement. This means learners should provide evidence of planning, developing and reflecting on their meta-skills. The grading matrix includes criteria on meta-skills, which you should use to support this judgement. See the NextGen: HN Meta-skills, Outcome and Assessment Guidance document for support with assessing meta-skills.

Approaches to delivery and assessment

Learners can study this qualification on a full-time or part-time basis, or through distance learning. The HNC can be delivered successfully on a part-time or day release basis, where learners are already working in a social service setting. Much of the content requires evidence from practice in day-to-day activities and, along with an appropriate teaching framework, can lead to successful achievement of the qualification. Learners within these settings will already have practice experience and the mandatory training relating to their role, which will form the basis for their learning journey. Direct entry learners (those coming straight into the course without work experience) who wish to complete the course through a part-time or distance learning route, may benefit from more time to complete the course, for example completing the course over two years. In these situations, it would be beneficial for learners to start their placement early to support them to gather the evidence required. The practice experience is fundamental to the qualification and learners cannot achieve units without reflection on their work practice. The learner must participate in and reflect on practical activities, while supporting at least one individual within a social service. Preferably, they would focus on more than one individual; however, we recognise that, with the increasing amount of home support roles, this may not always be possible.

The HNC contains three mandatory core units (3 SQA credits each) and three mandatory SVQ Units. In the optional section of the framework, learners can choose one HN Unit of 2 SQA credits with one SVQ Unit. The SVQ Unit they choose should reflect where the learner is placed in a children or adult's social service. For example, if a learner is placed or works in a residential childcare service, they require HNC Social Services with units from SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 7. SVQ and HN delivery teams should work together to plan evidence gathering and timetables to avoid over-assessing.

Fewer, larger units support a holistic and integrated approach to both delivery and assessment. Each HN Unit has very specific evidence requirements and assessment guidance. Where overlaps between units occur, however, you should deem an assessment from one unit to meet some or all of the evidence requirements from other linked units. Otherwise, learners will be over-assessed.

The design principles of the NextGen: HN format require learners to complete at least one project unit with a meta-skills outcome. Although a number of units require a project, the unit Developing Reflective Practice contains the relevant meta-skills outcome. We expect this outcome to contain evidence from various stages of the qualification, as learners assess, develop and then evaluate their meta-skills. The process of developing meta-skills should be evidenced across the qualification. The evidence must include a self-assessment and plan in the initial stages, evidence of activities to develop meta-skills, then reflection on their development of meta-skills towards the end of delivery.

The HNC contains a sustainability outcome which supports SQA's commitment to identifying opportunities for developing the skills, knowledge and understanding, and values of Learning for Sustainability while working towards the Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity; Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023–2030. There are opportunities for this outcome to be integrated alongside other outcomes from Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights (J6E3 47), and possibly Developing Reflective Practice (J6E4 47). For example, outcomes 1 and 2 of Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights ask for evidence that the learner understands people's rights and equalities, as well as factors

that influence health. Setting an assessment regarding legislation about rights, health inequalities and government frameworks around welfare, alongside outcome 7 on sustainability, will reduce the overall assessment load for learners.

You must collate a folder containing all assessment evidence from the HN Units for grading purposes. You can map the assessment evidence to the SVQ through an SVQ portfolio. The learner should keep the SVQ portfolio, as they will need it if they want to progress to the full SVQ.

Given the holistic nature of the qualification, all assessment evidence should be annotated to ensure learners meet all evidence requirements, and to help external quality assurers locate the evidence. Annotations may therefore include cross-referencing of evidence requirements to assessments and page numbers, and clear identification of SVQ performance criteria or knowledge. Annotation should be completed by the learner with the support of the assessor who makes the final judgement.

Sequencing or integrating units

We have designed this HNC Social Services to allow for full integration of delivery and assessment.

Centres should determine their own delivery and assessment timetable. We suggest, however, that you introduce learners to self-reflection early in the programme, through a baseline meta-skills assessment and a skills development plan. You could start by encouraging them to reflect on their values and principles with regard to practice and service standards. Learners will find some of the underpinning knowledge from the unit Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights beneficial early on in the programme, before they do any projects. Once learners are established in their placement, or when they have a good understanding of what is required to support a specific individual, they could start an integrated project between the unit Approaches to Assessment in Social Services and an optional unit. Finally, the learner could complete reflective tasks, such as their meta-skills evaluation integrated with the relevant evidence requirements from the unit Developing Reflective Practice.

We recommend that you deliver the SVQ Units alongside the HN Units. There are plenty of opportunities to map the SVQ Units to the projects and assessments of the HN component, with any remaining gaps in evidence being claimed through observation, professional discussion or reflective accounts. We recommend that you consider where SVQ evidence can be mapped to HN Unit evidence requirements early in the delivery process. In this way, you can start gathering SVQ evidence early without the risk of repetition and over-assessment.

There is no set word count for HNC Social Services assessments or evidence requirements. We recognised the need for flexibility where integrated assessments, or a range of products used as evidence are involved. Centres can provide guidance on the word count for each of their assessments, and can allow learners to add more information to assessment evidence to claim SVQ Unit criteria, where required. There is guidance within the units on suggested wordcount.

Additional guidance on integrated or holistic assessment

Holistic or integrated assessment focuses on assessing a number of outcomes in a unit together, or in some cases the whole unit, rather than specific outcomes. When assessing a unit of competence holistically, the assessment activities integrate a number of aspects of the competence. Holistic or integrated assessment can reduce the time spent on assessment and can promote greater equity in the assessment process.

When developing or revising a Higher National Qualification, SQA works with a development team to devise an appropriate assessment strategy that accommodates holistic or integrated assessment. However, the practice of integrating units for the purposes of learning and teaching is a centre-led activity.

Units are designed to facilitate holistic or integrated assessment approaches that prevent large, unwieldy instruments of assessment, or over-assessment by a unit or outcome-based approach.

There are many opportunities for integration across the units in this HNC Social Services, and one project can produce evidence for outcomes or evidence requirements in several units. For example, where a learner completes an outcomes-focused assessment for an individual in the unit Approaches to Assessment in Social Services, there may be some element of risk assessment as in the unit Health, Safeguarding, Welfare and Rights. Additionally, the process of assessment in the unit Approaches to Assessment in Social Services can inform the strategies to be implemented in the unit Supporting People: Autism. A similar process applies for SVQ Units and therefore planning is important early on in the delivery to avoid over-assessment.

Sometimes more than one piece of evidence is needed for a unit. For example, if a unit is about building a wall, a learner would need to produce evidence of performance (following the correct procedures and processes when building the wall) and product (a completed wall).

Evidence requirements must do what they say: specify requirements for evidence of learner competence in the unit(s). The evidence must be of sufficient quality for an assessor or verifier to judge that the learner has achieved the unit(s). Centres should be cognisant of the type of evidence required for the unit; evidence requirements which ask for practice evidence should include some aspect of evidence from the learner's placement or workplace.

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If you want to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

Support materials

There are currently no support materials available for this HNC Social Services. Centres can adapt their existing materials or refer to a list of existing assessment support packs (ASPs) on [SQA's website](#), to adhere to the integrated nature of the NextGen: HNC Social Services.

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Remediation and re-assessment in Next Generation Higher National Qualifications

Remediation

Remediation allows an assessor to clarify learners' responses, either by requiring a written amendment or by oral questioning, where there is a minor shortfall or omission in evidence requirements. In either case, the assessor must formally note such instances, in writing or as a recording, and make them available to the internal and external verifier.

Remediation is not permitted for closed-book assessments.

The size and structure of the larger NextGen: HN units should mean that the assessor or lecturer is close enough to ongoing assessment activity in project-based units to identify the need for remediation as it happens.

Re-assessment

You must give learners who fail the unit a re-assessment opportunity or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Where we have introduced larger units to the framework, we expect instances of re-assessment to be minimal, due to the approach to assessment and remediation. Where re-assessment is required in a project-based unit, you must use a substantially different project.

Resource requirements

NextGen: HN qualifications are digital by design and therefore require learners and delivery staff to have easy access to digital devices.

Learners must carry out guided research as part of their studies, which means they need access to web resources, libraries and workplace or placement resources.

Learners who are not already employed in a social service setting must attend a relevant work placement or work setting for 60 days during the qualification. In exceptional circumstances, where the 60 days cannot be achieved, this placement requirement can be reduced, as long as both the placement and an assessor can confirm that the learner is sufficiently competent. Assessors can take previous work experience at the same level in the sector to decide on a learner's competency.

Learners should do their placements in a relevant social service setting. Centres should refer to current guidance on placements.

Delivery staff should have some understanding and experience of social services and be qualified to at least SCQF level 8 in a related subject. Where staff are involved in delivering National Occupational Standards, they should have achieved relevant assessing and verification qualifications, and meet the assessment strategies for the qualifications.

Information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The units in this qualification are designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible, with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods, or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the [assessment arrangements](#) web page.

Values

You should emphasise to learners the importance of adhering to codes of practice or conduct applicable to their role, and the principles and values that underpin their work setting, including the rights of children, young people and adults. These include the rights:

- ◆ to be treated as an individual
- ◆ to be treated equally and not be discriminated against
- ◆ to be respected
- ◆ to have privacy
- ◆ to be treated in a dignified way
- ◆ to be protected from danger and harm
- ◆ to be supported and cared for in a way that meets their needs, takes account of their choices and also protects them
- ◆ to communicate using their preferred methods of communication and language
- ◆ to access information about themselves

Internal and external verification

All assessments used in HNC Social Services should be internally verified according to your centre's policies and SQA's guidelines.

SQA carries out external verification to ensure that internal assessment meets the national guidelines for this qualification.

In the current quality assurance model for NextGen: HN Qualifications, external quality assurers (EQAs) visit centres early in the delivery process, and can provide support where required.

EQAs still have responsibilities to ensure the quality assurance criteria are met. This involves sampling judgements for both evidence requirements and grading decisions. Given the integrated nature of the qualification, it is particularly important to ensure that evidence is auditable and traceable. This may involve some mapping of the evidence requirements to each assessment, annotating the evidence requirements within learner evidence, and/or indicating page numbers where evidence requirements are met. SVQ claims must also be traceable.

EQAs also sample grading decisions. Within the grading model, centres should summarise how they came to the decision about the grade awarded for each criterion, indicating which assessments evidence this. This provides sufficient information for the EQA to verify assessors' judgements on grading.

Not all criteria are likely to be evidenced in the first or possibly second stage of grading. EQAs can verify grading decisions on criteria completed at the time of verification.

Further information on internal and external verification is available in SQA's [Guide to Assessment](#).

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Glossary

SQA credit value: the credit value allocated to a unit gives an indication of the contribution the unit makes to an SQA qualification. An SQA credit value of 1 represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching, and assessment.

SCQF: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) provides the national common framework for describing programmes of learning and qualifications in Scotland. SCQF terminology is used throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF, visit the [SCQF](#) website.

SCQF credit points: SCQF credit points provide a way of describing and comparing the amount of learning required to complete a qualification at a given level of the framework. 1 National Unit credit is equivalent to 6 SCQF credit points. 1 National Unit credit at Advanced Higher and 1 SQA Advanced unit credit (irrespective of level) is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels: the level a qualification is assigned in the framework is an indication of how hard it is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. SQA Advanced Certificates and SQA Advanced Diplomas are available at SCQF levels 7 and 8, respectively. SQA Advanced units are usually at levels 6 to 9 and graded units at level 7 and 8. National Qualification Qualifications are available at SCQF levels 2 to 6 and are usually made up of National Units, which are available from SCQF levels 2 to 7.

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Information for learners

Next Generation Higher National Certificate in Social Services

This information explains:

- ◆ what the qualification is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you will need to do during the qualification
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Qualification information

The Next Generation Higher National Certificate (NextGen: HNC) in Social Services helps you to develop the necessary knowledge skills and practice experience to equip you to work in a range of different social service settings.

The specific aims are to:

- 1 enable learners to demonstrate an understanding of the values that underpin work in social service settings
- 2 enable learners to understand how practice and service standards should inform their practice
- 3 enable learners to integrate values, skills and knowledge effectively in a variety of social service settings
- 4 enable learners to develop skills appropriate for working with individuals in a range of social service settings
- 5 enable learners to have a person-centred focus in their practice
- 6 assist learners to practice in an anti-discriminatory and inclusive manner
- 7 prepare learners for employment in a social services setting
- 8 enable learners to become reflective practitioners
- 9 enable learners to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy, procedures and practice methods
- 10 enable learners to engage in continuing professional learning
- 11 facilitate progression (for those who want) to further study

Before you enrol on the HNC programme, we recommend that you have previous experience of work or volunteering within a social services setting to meet the requirements of the programme. You should understand the values and communication skills that are essential in the delivery of care. You can demonstrate your communication skills through the achievement of: certificated courses, Core Skills Communication at Higher level, Higher English or other communication units at SCQF level 5 or 6.

Alternatively, applicants may be deemed to be at the appropriate level with a reference, preferably from an employers, and/or through verbal and/or written evidence at interview.

The HNC programme is made up of academic units (HN Units) and vocational units (SVQ Units). You need to pass all units to achieve the award. The NextGen: HN format reduces the amount of assessment by having fewer, larger units, which can be integrated. You therefore work on more than one unit at a time, and your assessments may cover more than one unit.

As well as completing the prescribed units, you must complete a placement in a social service setting, if you are not already employed in a social service. In this way, you can generate evidence at the required level, while working on projects.

You reflect on your own practice, knowledge and skills, with a focus on meta-skills. Meta-skills are higher-order skills that support the development of other skills and promote success in any context. They enable learners to respond to professional challenges and opportunities by reflecting on, developing, applying and adapting industry skills and sector knowledge. Throughout your qualification, including the time you spend working in a social service, you develop knowledge and skills that provide evidence of meeting meta-skills, which you then record and evaluate.

The 12 meta-skills are grouped into three categories: self-management, social intelligence, and innovation.

Self-management	Social intelligence	Innovation
Focusing	Communicating	Curiosity
Integrity	Feeling	Creativity
Adapting	Collaborating	Sense-making
Initiative	Leading	Critical thinking

Note: Adapted from: *Skills 4.0: a skills model to drive Scotland's future*, Centre for Work-based Learning in Scotland, (2018). You can find this on Skills Development Scotland's website.

You also carry out a series of projects and assessments to cover the unit evidence requirements. You collate all the evidence you produce into a folder which is graded as either Achieved, Achieved with Merit or Achieved with Distinction. Your assigned tutor and/or assessor will keep you informed of your progress and let you know which grade you are likely to achieve if you maintain the same standard of work.

Learners who achieve the award can meet the requirements for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) for most social service roles. Achieving the qualification can also help learners gain accelerated entry into a degree-level course at a higher education institution (HEI), and a number of HEIs have articulation arrangements in place with certain centres.

Administrative information

Published: November 2024 (version 0.1)

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this guide, and check SQA's APS Navigator to ensure you are using the most up-to-date qualification structure.

If a unit is revised:

- ◆ no new centres can be approved to offer the previous version of the unit
- ◆ centres should only enter learners for the previous version of the unit if they can complete it before its finish date

For further information on SQA's Next Generation Higher National Qualifications please contact nextgen@sqa.org.uk.