

# Next Generation Higher National Grading Pack

## Higher National Certificate in Social Services

Qualification code    GT6N 47  
Valid from              session 2024 to 2025

### **Prototype for pilot delivery only**

This grading pack provides information about the process of grading the Higher National Certificate (HNC) Social Services. It is for lecturers and assessors, and contains all the mandatory information you need to grade the HNC.

You must read it alongside the Educator Guide.

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# Contents

Approach to grading	1
Whole-qualification grade outcomes	1
Whole-qualification grade descriptors	1
What the whole-qualification grade descriptors do and how they are used	2
Using the grading matrix	4
Meta-skills	5
Learning for Sustainability	5
Grading matrix	6
Additional grading guidance	16
Grading model	16
Worked example of grading model	19
Administrative information	23
History of changes	23

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## **Approach to grading**

Grading in Next Generation: Higher National (NextGen: HN) Qualifications produces a valid and reliable record of a learner's level of achievement across the breadth of the qualification content.

As well as grading the whole qualification, 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.

## **Whole-qualification grade outcomes**

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

To determine a learner's whole-qualification grade, you use the grading matrix to assess and judge their performance across the key aspects of the HNC. You must align your judgements with the following whole-qualification grade descriptors.

## **Whole-qualification grade descriptors**

### **Achieved with Distinction**

The learner has achieved an excellent standard across the course content, going significantly beyond meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and consistently used them to apply skills to complete high-quality work. They engaged significantly with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

### **Achieved with Merit**

The learner has achieved a very good standard across the course content, going beyond meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a very good knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and consistently used them to apply skills to complete work of a standard above that expected for an Achieved

grade. They actively engaged with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

### **Achieved**

The learner has achieved a good standard across the course content, credibly meeting the qualification requirements. They showed a good knowledge and understanding of course concepts and principles, and used them to apply skills to complete work of the required standard. They engaged with the process of developing their meta-skills in the context of their HN Qualification.

### **What the whole-qualification grade descriptors do and how they are used**

The whole-qualification grade descriptors outline the skills, knowledge and understanding a learner needs to show across the whole qualification to achieve that specific grade. They align with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level descriptors.

NextGen: HNC qualifications are at SCQF level 7. Learners who complete a NextGen: HNC can:

- convey knowledge of the subject's main theories, concepts and principles
- apply skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject in relevant practical and professional contexts
- use a broad range of approaches to address problems and issues in the context of the subject area
- exercise initiative and independence in carrying out activities, and have started to develop their professional practice and behaviours relevant to the context of the qualification
- differentiate between and appropriately apply the knowledge gained through practice, research and other sources

Please use this information, as well as the whole-qualification grade descriptors, to help you understand the standard at which learners should be assessed and graded.

Higher education institutes (HEIs) can use the grade descriptors to set admissions requirements, and employers can use them to help make decisions during a recruitment process.

SQA's quality assurance teams use the grade descriptors and the grading matrix to ensure that grades awarded in a particular NextGen: HN Qualification are at a consistent national standard, regardless of the setting in which they are achieved.

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

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## Using the grading matrix

You must use the grading matrix to judge the learner's whole-qualification grade. You can use the grading matrix at any time, but you only make a whole-qualification grading judgement when you are confident the learner has met all the evidence requirements of all the required units.

The criteria in the grading matrix reflect the knowledge, skills and qualities HEIs and employers can expect of a learner who has completed the qualification. These criteria align with the overall purpose of the qualification, and remain the same for its duration.

Each criterion has sector-specific descriptors of a typical learner's performance standard, aligned to the whole-qualification grade outcomes of Achieved, Achieved with Merit and Achieved with Distinction. These descriptors describe the standard a learner of that whole-qualification grade is expected to show.

The guidance accompanying each criterion can include, but is not limited to, information on:

- relevant types of assessment that may produce useful or meaningful evidence for judging that criterion
- mapping to content that is particularly relevant to that criterion
- mapping to meta-skills

This guidance may be updated over time.

When you make your final grading judgement, you must use a 'best fit' approach based on the learner's achievement across the grading matrix. This may be straightforward — for example, if the learner's evidence shows a consistent standard across the grading matrix criteria. If it is not straightforward, you must make a 'best fit' judgement — for example, if a learner shows a mix of standards across the grading matrix criteria, with no clear pattern. The criteria may not always have equal value. You can decide some are more important to the final grade than others.

## **Meta-skills**

Meta-skills are a key part of NextGen: HN Qualifications and learners can develop them throughout the qualification. A learner's engagement with developing their own meta-skills contributes to their qualification grade. You do not assess or grade competence or progress in individual meta-skills — for example, by judging the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Instead, you look at the process of development learners go through. This means learners need to provide evidence of planning, developing and reflecting on their meta-skills.

If qualification content also contributes to meta-skills development, it contributes to a learner's whole-qualification grading through the grading matrix approach.

## **Learning for Sustainability**

Learning for Sustainability does not contribute to a learner's qualification grade.

If qualification content is also Learning for Sustainability content, it does contribute to a learner's whole-qualification grade through the grading matrix approach.

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## Grading matrix

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
<b>Personal values and principles</b>	<p>The learner has detailed their own personal values and principles.</p> <p>There is evidence of values and principles embedded in the learner's work with an individual.</p>	<p>The learner has given a very good level of detail on their own personal values and principles.</p> <p>They have effectively applied values and principles within their work with an individual.</p>	<p>The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of their own values and principles.</p> <p>They have worked to an excellent standard in applying their own values and principles to their work with an individual.</p>

### Guidance

For this criterion, you should base grading on learners' recognition and description of their own personal values and principles and how they apply these in a social services setting. Learners who produce work at a high standard provide detail on how they have applied these values in practice.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- J6E4 47 outcomes 1 and 2
- J6EH 47 outcomes 5 and 6
- J7DA 47 outcome 5
- J7DC 47 outcome 2



<b>Criterion 2</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	The learner has evidenced knowledge and understanding relevant to the award and applied this to their work role.	The learner has demonstrated very good knowledge and provided detailed examples of application to their work role.	The learner has demonstrated excellent knowledge and provided a broad range of detailed examples of application to their work role.

### **Guidance**

Evidence for this criterion should apply to how well learners have covered the knowledge section of each unit. Learners should be aware of common theories, legislation and knowledge applicable to their work setting. They should apply this knowledge to a child or young person's situation and their work with individuals. Grading is based on the depth and the quality of their knowledge. Knowledge may be in relation to the learning programme. However, when grading, you can consider any further research beyond what is taught, as long as this is relevant to the evidence requirements.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the breadth of the units, including the optional HN units.

<b>Criterion 3</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>The skills required for effective care</b>	The learner has demonstrated a good understanding of the skills required and applied these in practice.	The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the skills required and effectively applied these in practice.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the skills required and applied these highly effectively in practice.

### Guidance

You should validate learners' application of skills by witness testimony.

You can take evidence for this from the skills section of the units. Learners should understand the practice standards for their role and demonstrate this through their work with an individual.

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
<b>Interpretation of written tasks (this should relate to assignment briefs, and the amount of remediation required)</b>	The learner has demonstrated an understanding of the written task and applied their learning in their response.	The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the written task and effectively applied their learning in their response.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the written task and applied their learning extensively in their response.

### Guidance

This criterion is about learners understanding the assessment brief in relation to their learning. You should consider how the learner met each evidence requirement and if there was a need for remediation. You should note that if the majority or all learners have remediation for the same evidence requirements, then you should include more clarity in the brief and in delivery.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the breadth of the units, including the optional HN units.

<b>Criterion 5</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>Evidence requirements of the unit</b>	The learner has provided sufficient quantitative and qualitative evidence to meet the evidence requirements.	The learner has provided a broad range of quantitative and qualitative evidence to meet the evidence requirements.	The learner has provided an extensive range of quantitative and qualitative evidence to meet the evidence requirements.

### **Guidance**

This criterion is about learners' depth of response in meeting the evidence requirements. You should consider quality and quantity of response content within the word count.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the units, including the optional HN units.

<b>Criterion 6</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>Standard of presentation</b>	<p>The learner has a good standard of written and oral presentation. the structure and presentation allows ideas to be presented, even if there are some areas for improvement or clarification.</p> <p>References are used, but may be very basic, and the assessment is in the correct format as set in the assessment brief.</p>	<p>The learner has a high standard of written and oral presentation. The learner has effectively conveyed their ideas with a clear structure.</p> <p>References are correctly used, and the assessment is in the correct format as set in the assessment brief.</p>	<p>The learner has an excellent standard of written and oral presentation. There is evidence of a well-developed and planned approach that conveys their ideas with a methodical and clear structure.</p> <p>References are correctly used, and the assessment is in the correct format as set in the assessment brief.</p>

## Guidance

This criterion is about the evidence provided by learners and how it is structured and set out according to the assessment brief. You should consider the academic requirements of the SCQF level and learners' use of referencing.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities from across the units, including the optional HN units. You should consider both written and oral presentation of work for grading.

Criterion 7	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
<b>Engagement with individuals and others</b>	The learner has collaborated effectively, but on a limited basis, with a range of others, and has demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the importance of collaboration.	The learner has effectively collaborated with a range of others.  The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the importance of collaboration.	The learner has highly effectively collaborated with a range of others.  The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the importance of collaboration.

## Guidance

Collaboration should be with individuals, professionals and groups across functions — but you should consider other forms of collaboration that may be legitimate.

Collaboration should be validated in witness testimonies from the workplace.

Evidence can come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- J6E4 47 outcome 6
- J6E3 47 outcomes 3 and 4
- J6EH 47 outcome 4
- J6EL 47 outcomes 3 and 4
- J6EJ 47 outcomes 3 and 4
- J7DA 47 outcomes 3 and 4
- J7DB 47 outcomes 3 and 4
- J7DC 47 outcomes 1 and 3

Criterion 8	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
<b>Impact on an individual's wellbeing or outcomes</b>	The learner has reflected on the impact of their role and has worked to some extent to improve the wellbeing and/or outcomes for an individual.	The learner has demonstrated a very good understanding of the impact of their role and has worked with endeavour to improve the wellbeing and/or outcomes for an individual.	The learner has demonstrated an excellent understanding of the impact of their role and has consistently endeavoured to improve the wellbeing and/or outcomes for an individual.

### Guidance

You should check that there is validation of the impact on the individual's wellbeing and/or outcomes in the witness testimonies from the workplace.

Learners should have provided examples of their reflection of their role.

Evidence can come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- J6E4 47 outcome 7
- J6EH 47 outcomes 3, 4, 5 and 6
- J6EL 47 outcome 4
- J6EJ 47 outcome 4
- J7DA 47 outcome 5
- J7DB 47 outcome 5
- J7DC 47 outcome 5

<b>Criterion 9</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Distinction</b>
<b>Reflection on the impact of their practice</b>	The learner has independently reflected on the impact on their practice.	The learner has independently reflected on their practice, across a broad range of practice areas, and understood the benefits of reflection.	The learner has independently reflected on their practice, across an extensive range of practice areas, and there is evidence of the benefits of their reflection in their practice.

### **Guidance**

This criterion relates to how well learners have reflected on the impact of their practice. The overall impact of their practice may be affected by the opportunities offered by their work situation or placement; however, this criterion relates to the depth of reflection, rather than overall impact.

Evidence can come from assessment tasks and activities related to the following units:

- J6E4 47 outcome 7
- J6E3 47 outcome 3
- J6EH 47 outcomes 5 and 6
- J6EL 47 outcome 4
- J6EJ 47 outcome 4
- J7DA 47 outcome 5
- J7DB 47 outcome 5
- J7DC 47 outcome 5

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Criterion 10	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
<p><b>Meta-skills development</b></p>	<p>The learner adequately engages with the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving reasons for ratings or judgements made</li> <li>• setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories</li> <li>• using reflective practice strategies to track progress and analyse the links between course activities, experiences and meta-skills development</li> </ul>	<p>The learner demonstrates a clear commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving some insightful reasons for ratings or judgements made</li> <li>• setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories</li> <li>• using reflective practice strategies to track progress and demonstrate some insight into the impact of their course activities and experiences on their meta-skills development</li> </ul>	<p>The learner demonstrates a strong commitment to the process of meta-skills development in the context of the qualification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carrying out self-assessment of meta-skills, giving some insightful reasons for ratings or judgements made</li> <li>• setting clear and measurable goals plus action strategies to develop meta-skills in all three categories, and updating these as required</li> <li>• using reflective practice strategies very effectively to track progress and demonstrate insight into the impact of their course activities and experiences on their meta-skills development</li> </ul>



## **Guidance**

You must read this guidance alongside the [Meta-skills: Assessment and Grading advice](#). This guidance details the expectations of learners' engagement with meta-skills, and how they must do this in the context of their particular qualification.

It is important to remember that competence in individual meta-skills is not being judged here, for example the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Rather, it is the process of development the learner goes through, including planning, developing and reflecting, that should be evidenced and assessed.

Although there is a meta-skills outcome in one unit, evidence of meta-skills development can be gathered from any activity at any time during the course. For meaningful reflection to take place, the process of meta-skills development should happen continually throughout the course. The range of contexts in which this can happen is very wide, and dependent on the sector, as well as individual preferences. Each unit signposts opportunities for meta-skills development.

Evidence should come from assessment tasks and activities related to unit J6E4 47, outcome 7.

## **Additional grading guidance**

### **Grading model**

You can complete the model to grade each learner holistically across the HNC Social Services Qualification, and to decide on an overall qualification grade. You should make grading judgements using the grading matrix, which covers industry-specific knowledge and skills, and professional behaviours. The grading model allows you to assess holistically the performance of each learner to produce an overall qualification grade. You should use evidence from the Higher National Units of the qualification.

HNC Social Services is worth 120 SCQF credit points (equivalent to 15 SQA credits) and comprises both mandatory and optional units. Learners must achieve all units and perform satisfactorily during their placement before you award a grade. Each unit has evidence requirements that are assessed through a series of projects or other means of gathering evidence. You should result units as pass or fail. Learners can observe and monitor their developing grading profiles, including strengths and challenges that have been identified throughout the course.

Critical to a successful outcome for the learner is their ability to work in partnership with individuals and their families. To achieve a Merit or Distinction, learners must demonstrate the ability to link theory to practice. They must have their practice backed up with detailed witness testimony from workplace-based supervisors.

Learners maintain a portfolio, or e-portfolio, of evidence, using a range of sources, including projects, other assessment evidence and reflective practice evaluations. This portfolio or e-portfolio also contains evidence of meta-skills development, including a plan, progress record and self-reflection. At the end of the course, the learner's qualification grade is based on the contents of their folder. Subject teams can meet at intervals during the qualification to provide interim feedback, but they must meet at the end of the qualification to review the learner's folder and reach a collective judgement on the learner's overall performance and grade. Subject teams take account of the size and complexity of different projects. In their judgements, they consider at what point in the qualification projects are completed, given that a learner's performance is likely to improve over the course of the qualification. Interim feedback of grades can show progression or regression across the duration of the

qualification. Not all criteria may be covered during the first, or possibly second, interim feedback, due to assessment or placement schedules.

The purpose of the grading model is to:

- ensure a holistic approach to grading of the learner's performance across the award, rather than 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 HE
- ensure consistency of grades across centres

You should calculate overall grades from the final grades for each criterion. You should note that:

- to achieve the qualification, learners must pass all criteria within the grading matrix
- to achieve an award of Merit, learners need to meet 7 out of the 10 assessment criteria at Merit level or above, with the remaining criteria at Achieved level or above
- to achieve an award of Distinction, learners need to meet a minimum of 7 assessment criteria at Distinction level plus 3 more at Achieved or Merit level

You can complete the grading model to grade each learner holistically across the HNC Social Services qualification, using the learner's portfolio or e-portfolio of evidence. Markers should grade each question with either Achieved, Achieved with Merit or Achieved with Distinction and provide an example or explanation. Learners should have an indication of the grades they are expected to achieve throughout the duration of the qualification.

The grading model should look like this:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Interim feedback 1</b>	<b>Interim feedback 2</b>	<b>Final grade</b>
<b>1: Personal values and principles</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>2: Knowledge</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>3: The skills required for effective care</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>4: Interpretation of written tasks</b> (This is expected to relate to assignment briefs, and the amount of remediation required.)	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>5: Evidence requirements of the unit</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>6: Standard of presentation</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>7: Engagement with individuals and others</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>8: Impact on an individual's wellbeing or outcomes</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>9: Reflection on the impact of their practice</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]
<b>10: Meta-skills development</b>	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]	[Insert feedback]

**Overall grade:**

## Worked example of grading model

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
<b>1: Personal values and principles</b>	<b>Not yet assessed</b>	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  AB has reflected on their values and principles and effectively analysed these in assessment 2.	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  In assessment 3, AB worked in a sensitive manner with a child, and it was evident that their values were embedded in their work.
<b>2: Knowledge</b>	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  In assessment 1, AB provided detailed links to relevant legislation and theory and was able to link these effectively to their work practice.	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  AB continues to provide excellent examples of knowledge, particularly with regards to theory relevant to their client group.	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  AB continues to demonstrate excellent knowledge. In assessment 3, they implemented this knowledge while working with a child to effectively assess their needs.
<b>3: The skills required for effective care</b>	<b>Not yet assessed</b>	<b>Achieved</b>  In assessment 2, AB demonstrated a thorough understanding of the skills required while completing their risk assessment.	<b>Achieved</b>  AB continues to show a thorough understanding of the skills required. In assessment 3, they applied these while supporting a child.

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Interim feedback 1</b>	<b>Interim feedback 2</b>	<b>Final grade</b>
<p><b>4: Interpretation of written tasks</b></p> <p>(This is expected to relate to assignment briefs, and the amount of remediation required.)</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>AB has been able to interpret the assignment and produce a good response.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>In assessment 2, AB understood what was required with some initial prompts and produced their risk assessment.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>AB continues to understand the assessment question after initial prompting.</p>
<p><b>5: Evidence requirements of the unit</b></p>	<p><b>Achieved with Distinction</b></p> <p>AB provided several examples to meet the evidence requirements for assessment 1. The examples given were outstanding and very detailed.</p>	<p><b>Achieved with Merit</b></p> <p>In assessment 2, AB provided very detailed responses to cover the evidence requirements.</p>	<p><b>Achieved with Merit</b></p> <p>AB continues to thoroughly meet the evidence requirements to a high standard, particularly with knowledge evidence.</p>
<p><b>6: Standard of presentation</b></p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>AB has a good standard of writing and has used appropriate references and formatting, after some initial guidance.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>In assessment 2, AB has grown more confident with their writing skills and with referencing and has made a good start to compiling their evidence portfolio.</p>	<p><b>Achieved</b></p> <p>AB continues to have a good standard of written work. They presented oral evidence in a methodical manner for assessment 3 and their evidence portfolio is presented to a good standard.</p>

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
<b>7: Engagement with individuals and others</b>	<b>Not yet assessed</b>	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  According to the witness authentication, family members commented to the placement supervisor how helpful AB was. They were always prepared to provide help and they took the initiative to find information on a local support group they could contact.	<b>Achieved with Merit</b>  AB continues to evidence collaboration with a range of professionals, children and young people, and family members. Feedback from the placement supervisor continues to be positive and AB has provided excellent evidence as to why this is important.
<b>8: Impact on an individual's wellbeing or outcomes</b>	<b>Not yet assessed</b>	<b>Achieved</b>  Included in their portfolio were examples of where AB was challenged verbally and physically by a child. They were able to deal with the situation and understand the circumstances the child had experienced. While not excusing the behaviour, they were able to retain a positive relationship and redirect the child to look at alternative activities to distract them.	<b>Achieved</b>  AB has reflected further on the positive impact they have had with a child. This was evidenced thoroughly through evaluation for assessment 3.

Criterion	Interim feedback 1	Interim feedback 2	Final grade
<b>9: Reflection on the impact of their practice</b>	<b>Not yet assessed</b>	<b>Achieved</b>  As in the example above, when these conflicts occurred, AB was able to resolve them. AB then reflected on how these skills could be used further, in various situations.	<b>Achieved</b>  AB continues to reflect on the outcomes from their work, with some good practice examples.
<b>10: Meta-skills development</b>	<b>Achieved</b>  AB carried out a thorough baseline assessment of their meta-skills. They have identified which skills they would like to develop throughout the duration of the award.	<b>Achieved</b>  AB has kept their record of meta-skills up to date and reflected on the importance of this.	<b>Achieved</b>  AB continues to engage with their meta-skills development. They have developed meta-skills throughout and made progress with 'collaboration', which is the skill they chose to focus on. AB has thoroughly evaluated the process they have carried out to develop this skill.

**Overall grade: Achieved**



# Administrative information

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## 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](mailto:nextgen@sqa.org.uk).