

# **Next Generation Higher National Grading Pack**

# **Higher National Diploma in Social Sciences**

Qualification code: GV23 48

Valid from: session 2024 to 2025

# Prototype grading pack for use in pilot delivery only (version 0.1) June 2024

This grading pack provides information about the process of grading the Higher National Diploma (HND). It is for lecturers and assessors and contains all the mandatory information you need to grade the HND.

You must read it alongside the Educator Guide.

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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 HND. 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're 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: HND qualifications are at SCQF level 8. Learners who complete a NextGen: HND can:

- convey an insightful understanding of the subject's core theories, concepts and principles, along with its scope and defining features
- apply skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject in relevant practical and professional contexts, showing some specialist knowledge and using a range of relevant techniques and materials
- describe and explain significant topical issues and specific areas of interest
- exercise autonomy and initiative in carrying out activities, and have developed their professional practice and behaviours relevant to the context of the qualification
- formulate and critically evaluate evidence-based responses to issues in the context of the subject area, appropriately applying research and academic processes

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 institutions (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.

# 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're 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's 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.



## **Grading matrix**

Criterion 1	Achieved	Merit	Distinction	
Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science topics, themes, or debates.	The learner's project and assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the project or assessment briefs and meet the criteria as being of a satisfactory standard.	The learner's project and assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the project or assessment briefs and meet the criteria as being of a high standard.	The learner's project and assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the project or assessment briefs and meet the criteria as being of an excellent standard.	
	They give acceptable argument, showing some links between discussions and conclusions.	They give <b>strong argument</b> , showing <b>good links</b> between discussions and conclusions.	They give convincing argument, showing clear links between discussions and conclusions.	

#### Guidance

Practitioners should make this judgement using evidence of submitted work, which includes projects and assessment activities. You should also consider information supplied by lecturers of learners' participation in in-class activities and engagement with the subject materials. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory Social Sciences: Social Policy unit, and three further named social sciences units.

Criterion 2	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Critical reflection and	The learner applies and uses	The learner applies and uses	The learner applies and uses <b>in-</b>
in-depth knowledge of	acceptable knowledge of social	sound knowledge of social	depth knowledge of social
competing	science topics in specific	sciences in specific assessment	science topics in specific
perspectives,	assessment activity.	activity.	assessment activity.
theories, viewpoints,	-	-	-
and evidence.	They provide <b>some evidence</b> of possible alternative approaches and arguments, demonstrating a <b>good grasp</b> of key course concepts and principles.	They provide <b>good evidence</b> of possible alternative approaches and arguments, demonstrating a <b>very good grasp</b> of key course concepts and principles.	They provide comprehensive evidence of possible alternative approaches and arguments, demonstrating an excellent grasp of key course concepts and principles.
	They demonstrate <b>some</b> critical	They typically demonstrate	
	thinking and evaluative skills and abilities in responses to assessments.	effective critical thinking and evaluative skills and abilities in responses to assessments.	They consistently demonstrate excellent critical thinking and evaluative skills and abilities in responses to assessments.

#### Guidance

Practitioners should make this judgement using evidence of submitted work for assessment activities. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory Social Sciences: Social Policy unit, and three further named social sciences units.

Criterion 3	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Demonstrating professional practice and behaviours in a social science context.	The learner demonstrates the ability to <b>satisfactorily</b> manage workload to meet agreed key deadlines.	The learner demonstrates the ability to <b>effectively</b> manage workload to meet agreed key deadlines.	The learner demonstrates the ability to confidently and effectively manage their workload to consistently meet agreed key deadlines.
GOTTO ACI	They maintain a professional approach almost all of the time when working with others to achieve a shared goal and can work independently to a satisfactory standard on most tasks.	They <b>consistently</b> maintain a professional approach when working with others to achieve a shared goal and can work independently to a <b>high standard</b> on most tasks.	They always maintain a professional approach when working with others to achieve a shared goal and can work independently to a very high standard on most tasks.

#### Guidance

Practitioners should make this judgement using evidence of learners meeting key deadlines, confirmed in the assessment process and by lecturers. You should use reports from lecturers, and evidence from project activity and assessment responses when you judge how constructively learners worked with others. They should also review how much supervision learners needed for projects and other assessment activities. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory Social Sciences: Social Policy unit, and three further named social sciences units.

Criterion 4	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Gathering, interpreting, and using evidence to evaluate arguments of others.	The learner demonstrates a satisfactory range of investigation and research skills, showing appropriate knowledge in project activity.	The learner demonstrates a broad range of investigation and research skills, showing a broad range of knowledge in project activity.	The learner demonstrates a wide range of investigation and research skills, showing excellent knowledge in project activity.

#### Guidance

Practitioners make this judgement using learners' evidence across all project activity and submitted work. This should include the mandatory Social Sciences: Social Policy unit, and any other named social sciences unit in which learners are assessed using a project or investigation. You should focus on learners' investigation and research skills.

Criterion 5	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills.	The learner maintains their meta-skills portfolio to an acceptable standard, showing adequate engagement with the development of their meta-skills.	The learner maintains their meta-skills portfolio to a high standard, showing clear commitment to the development of their meta-skills.	The learner maintains their meta-skills portfolio to a very high standard, showing strong commitment to the development of their meta-skills.

#### Guidance

Practitioners must make this judgement alongside the separate meta-skills assessment guidance.

This guidance details how learners should engage with the process of developing meta-skills, and how they should do this in the context of their particular qualification.

You are not judging a learner's competence in a particular meta-skill — for example, the quality of a learner's feeling or creativity. Rather, you make your assessment based on learners' evidence of the development process they go through, in terms of planning, developing, and reflecting.

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

Criterion 6	Achieved	Merit	Distinction
Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on	The learner shows satisfactory communication skills, applied in assessment responses.	The learner shows <b>good communication skills</b> , applied in assessment responses.	The learner shows <b>excellent communication skills</b> , applied in assessment responses.
feedback).	The learner's assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the assessment briefs and meet the criteria to a satisfactory standard.	The learner's assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the assessment briefs and meet the criteria to a high standard.	The learner's assessment activities are in line with the criteria set out in the assessment briefs and meet the criteria to an excellent standard.
	They offer appropriate responses that convey understanding and demonstrate use of correct terminology.  They understand and act on lecturers' feedback.	They offer appropriate responses that are logically structured and that clearly convey understanding and demonstrate use of correct terminology.	They offer appropriate responses that are well-structured and that coherently convey understanding and demonstrate use of correct terminology.
		They understand and improve work based on lecturers' feedback.	They understand and improve work based on lecturers' feedback, applying the feedback to other assessment tasks.

#### Guidance

Practitioners make this judgement using learners' evidence of submitted work and project activity, including any remediation or reassessments, submitted to agreed criteria. You should assess learners' evidence from the mandatory Social Sciences: Social Policy unit, and three further named social sciences units.

# Additional grading guidance

## **Grading model**

You can only grade learners when they have successfully completed the full 15 credits.

The grading model enables course teams to holistically judge the performance of each learner across the key aspects of the qualification, and to decide on an overall qualification grade.

Grades are based on learners' performance across the 3 credits of the common core project unit, Social Sciences: Social Policy, plus 9 credits of the named social sciences subjects:

- Economics
- Criminology
- History
- Politics
- Psychology
- Social Anthropology
- Sociology

## How does the qualification grading model work?

Course teams make qualification grading judgements using a detailed criteria matrix that covers the range of knowledge and skills, and professional behaviours required.

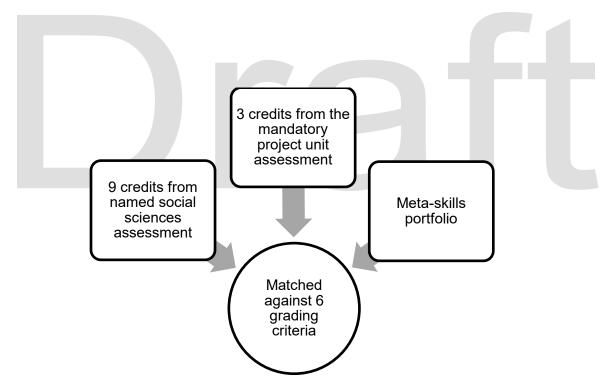
Learners receive a whole-qualification grade based on evidence they produce for the common core unit and the named social sciences units of the qualification. The grading model is designed to support a qualification with a framework and a common mandatory unit, but with different units making up the whole award that can lead to different occupations.

## **Grading criteria**

We have produced a set of criteria for grading that covers the assessment evidence and performance in class activities and engagement. You should use this to determine the overall grade for the qualification. The criteria are:

- 1 Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science subjects and topics.
- 2 Critical reflection and in-depth knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints, and evidence.
- 3 Demonstrating professional practice and behaviours in a social science context.
- 4 Gathering, interpreting, and using evidence to evaluate arguments of others.
- 5 Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills.
- 6 Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback).

### **Grading model diagram**



## Worked example of grading model

The following worked examples show how judgements could be made. Each one gives a different selection of named social sciences units studied. The course team should look at all named social sciences units and the common core unit (Social Sciences: Social Policy), and choose 12 credits' worth of the strongest to make decisions on (3 credits from the common core unit and 9 credits from other named Social Sciences units).

#### Learner 1 — Achieved

The learner in this example meets a satisfactory standard overall. You can see that the learner is stronger in one subject, but the standard of the rest is similar to a satisfactory level, and more in keeping with an Achieved grade. It is acceptable for a learner to be stronger or weaker in parts of a subject for some criteria in the programme, as long as the majority of the work for 12 credits is at the Achieved standard and not at a higher standard. You should award the learner the overall grade that matches closest with the majority judgement holistically across the 12 chosen credits.

In the following example, you would choose the four strongest subjects. History is the strongest subject, so you would choose that alongside the common core unit and any two social sciences subjects, as they are at a similar level. In this instance, you would disregard the Politics unit, as it is a weaker named social science, so you would not use it for grading. This learner shows evidence in more areas that are compatible with the grade of Achieved. Some areas show evidence for Achieved with Merit and a couple of areas show evidence for Achieved with Distinction.

This learner demonstrated a **good standard** of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. Working independently to a **satisfactory standard**, they demonstrated **some** critical thinking and a **good** grasp of course concepts and principles. They showed **adequate engagement** with the development of their meta-skills and worked **collaboratively** with colleagues and peers.

Learner 1	Social Sciences: Social Policy	History	Politics — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner	Psychology	Sociology
Criterion 1:	Satisfactory	Strong evidence	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Developing a questioning	standard in	in assessment	standard in	standard in	standard in
and evidence-based	assessment	responses and	assessment .	assessment	assessment
approach to social science	responses and	class activities.	responses and	responses and	responses and
topics, themes, or	class activities.		class activities.	class activities.	class activities.
debates.					
Criterion 2:	Sound knowledge	In-depth	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate
Critical reflection and	shown. Effective	knowledge	knowledge	knowledge	knowledge
in-depth knowledge of	critical thinking.	shown. Excellent	shown. Some	shown. Some	shown. Some
competing perspectives,		critical thinking.	critical thinking.	critical thinking.	critical thinking.
theories, viewpoints, and					
evidence.					

Learner 1	Social Sciences: Social Policy	History	Politics — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner	Psychology	Sociology
Criterion 3: Demonstrating professional practice and behaviours in a social science context.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.	Consistently maintained a professional approach.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.
	Effectively managed workload to meet deadlines.	Confidently managed workload and consistently met deadlines.	Satisfactorily managed workloads to meet key deadlines.	Satisfactorily managed workloads to meet key deadlines.	Effectively managed workload to meet deadlines.
Criterion 4: Gathering, interpreting, and using evidence to evaluate arguments of others.	Satisfactory range of skills shown.	Wide range of skills shown.	Satisfactory range of skills shown.	Satisfactory range of skills shown.	Satisfactory range of skills shown.
Criterion 5: Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.

Learner 1	Social Sciences: Social Policy	History	Politics — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner	Psychology	Sociology
Criterion 6:	Satisfactory	High standard.	Satisfactory	High standard.	Satisfactory
Quality of assessment	standard.	Logically	standard.	Logically	standard.
submissions (including	Acceptable	structured.	Acceptable	structured.	Acceptable
reflecting and acting on	structure.		structure.		structure.
feedback).					

Overall grade for Learner 1 — Achieved.

#### Learner 2 — Achieved with Merit

The learner in this example meets a high standard overall. You can see that they are strong across three subjects and the common core unit. It is acceptable to be weaker in some parts of a subject or for some criteria for a subject, as long as the majority of the work is at the higher standard. Although exceptional in one subject, the weight of evidence is at the standard for Achieved with Merit.

In the example below, you would choose the strongest social sciences subjects. You would disregard Sociology as the weakest named social sciences subject. You would use the other three subjects and the common core unit for grading. This learner shows evidence in more areas that are compatible with the grade of Achieved with Merit. Some areas show evidence for Achieved with Distinction.

This learner demonstrated **a very good standard** of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. Working independently to a **high standard**, they demonstrated **effective** critical thinking and a **very good** grasp of key course concepts and principles. They showed a **clear commitment** to the development of their meta-skills and worked **effectively** with colleagues and peers.

Learner 2	Social Sciences: Social Policy	History	Politics	Psychology	Sociology — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner
Criterion 1:	High standard of	High standard of	High standard of	High standard of	Satisfactory
Developing a questioning and evidence-based	evidence in assessment	evidence in assessment	evidence in assessment	evidence in assessment	standard in assessment
approach to social	responses and in	responses and in	responses and in	responses and in	responses and
science topics, themes, or debates.	class activities.	class activities.	class activities.	class activities.	class activities.
Criterion 2:	Sound	Sound	Sound	Sound knowledge.	Adequate
Critical reflection and in- depth knowledge of	knowledge. Effective critical	knowledge. Effective critical	knowledge. Effective critical	Effective critical thinking.	knowledge shown. Some
competing perspectives,	thinking.	thinking.	thinking.	uniking.	critical thinking.
theories, viewpoints, and					
evidence.					

Learner 2	Social Sciences: Social Policy	History	Politics	Psychology	Sociology — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner
Criterion 3: Demonstrating professional practice and behaviours in a social science context	Consistently maintained a professional approach.	Consistently maintained a professional approach.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.	Consistently maintained a professional approach.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.
	Effectively managed workload to agreed key deadlines.	Effectively managed workload to agreed key deadlines.	Satisfactorily managed workload to agreed key deadlines.	Effectively managed workload to agreed key deadlines.	Satisfactorily managed workloads to meet key deadlines.
Criterion 4: Gathering, interpreting, and using evidence to evaluate arguments of others.	Broad range of skills shown.	Broad range of skills shown.	Satisfactory range of skills shown.	Broad range of skills shown.	Broad range of skills shown.
Criterion 5: Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.	Acceptable standard with sufficient reflection.

Learner 2	Social Sciences: Social Policy	History	Politics	Psychology	Sociology — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner
Criterion 6: Quality of assessment submissions (including reflecting and acting on feedback).	Acceptably structured submission.	Acceptably structured submission, acting on feedback in logical way.	Acceptably structured submission.	Logically structured submission, conveying understanding.	High standard. Logically structured.

Overall grade for Learner 2 — Achieved with Merit.

#### Learner 3 — Achieved with Distinction

The learner in this example shows a very high standard overall. They have studied the common core unit plus four subject disciplines. Course teams should consider the best 9 credits from the subject disciplines plus the 3 credits from the common core unit. You can see that the learner is stronger in the common core unit and three of the subjects. It is acceptable for a learner to be weaker in parts of a subject in the programme, as long as the majority of the work for 12 credits (in this instance the 9 credits of the named social sciences plus the mandatory project common core unit) is at the higher standard. You do not need to have every box for a subject noting 'very high standard' or 'comprehensive'. You should make a holistic judgement across the 12 credits worth of units you choose for grading.

In the example below, you would disregard Psychology as the weakest named social science. You would use the other three subjects plus the common core unit for grading. This learner shows evidence in more areas that are compatible with the grade of Achieved with Distinction. Fewer areas show evidence that is compatible with the grade of Achieved with Merit. A few areas show evidence that is compatible with the grade of Achieved.

This learner consistently demonstrated an **excellent standard** of knowledge, understanding and application of skills. Working **independently** to a **very high** standard, they demonstrated **excellent** critical thinking and a **comprehensive** grasp of key course concepts and principles. They showed a **strong commitment** to the development of their meta-skills and worked **very effectively** with colleagues and peers.

Learner 3	Core unit	History	Politics	Psychology — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner	Sociology
Criterion 1: Developing a questioning and evidence-based approach to social science topics, themes, or debates.	Strong evidence in assessment responses and in class activities.	High standard of evidence in assessment responses and in class activities.	Strong evidence in assessment responses and in class activities.	Satisfactory standard for assessment responses and in class activities.	Strong evidence in assessment responses and in class activities.
Criterion 2: Critical reflection and in-depth knowledge of competing perspectives, theories, viewpoints, and evidence.	In-depth knowledge shown. Excellent critical thinking.	Sound knowledge shown. Effective critical thinking.	In-depth knowledge shown. Excellent critical thinking.	Adequate knowledge shown. Some critical thinking.	Sound knowledge. Effective critical thinking.

Learner 3	Core unit	History	Politics	Psychology — not chosen to count towards grading for this learner	Sociology
Criterion 3: Demonstrating professional practice and behaviours in a social science context.	Always maintained a professional approach.  Confidently managed workload and consistently meets deadlines.	Always maintained a professional approach.  Confidently managed workload and consistently meets deadlines.	Consistently maintained a professional approach.  Effectively managed workload to meet deadlines.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.  Satisfactorily managed workload to meet key deadlines.	Maintained a professional approach almost all of the time.  Satisfactorily managed workload to meet key deadlines.
Criterion 4: Gathering, interpreting, and using evidence to evaluate arguments of others.	Wide range of skills shown.	Wide range of skills shown.	Wide range of skills shown.	Satisfactory range of skills shown.	A range of skills shown.
Criterion 5: Engagement in the process of developing meta-skills.	High standard with good reflection.	High standard with good reflection.	High standard with good reflection.	High standard with good reflection.	High standard with good reflection.

Criterion 6:	Well-structured and	Well-structured and	High standard.	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of	coherent	coherent submission.	Logically	standard.	standard.
assessment	submission.		structured.	Acceptable	Acceptable
submissions				structure.	structure.
(including					
reflecting and					Acted on feedback
acting on					given coherently.
feedback).					

Overall grade for Learner 3 — Achieved with Distinction.



## **Administrative information**

**Published:** June 2024 (version 0.1)

## **History of changes**

Version	Description of change	Date

Please check <u>SQA's website</u> to ensure you're using the most up-to-date version of this information, and check SQA's APS Navigator to ensure you're 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 more information on NextGen: HN Qualifications please email <a href="mailto:nextgen@sqa.org.uk">nextgen@sqa.org.uk</a>.

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