

# The SCQF and Learning Outcomes

**THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK**

The Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk) to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12			Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11			Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10			Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9			Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma	Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher			Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3			
2	National 2, Awards			
1	National 1, Awards			

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 SCQF Partnership  
 PLA on Learning Outcomes  
 Vienna, Austria April 2023

- The history and development of the SCQF and the role of Learning Outcomes
- The key features of the SCQF
- How SCQF level and credit is allocated - The role of Learning Outcomes
- How SCQFP works with our Credit Rating Bodies in a devolved system
- Quality Assurance and ensuring consistency

Population 5,479,900 (June 2021)

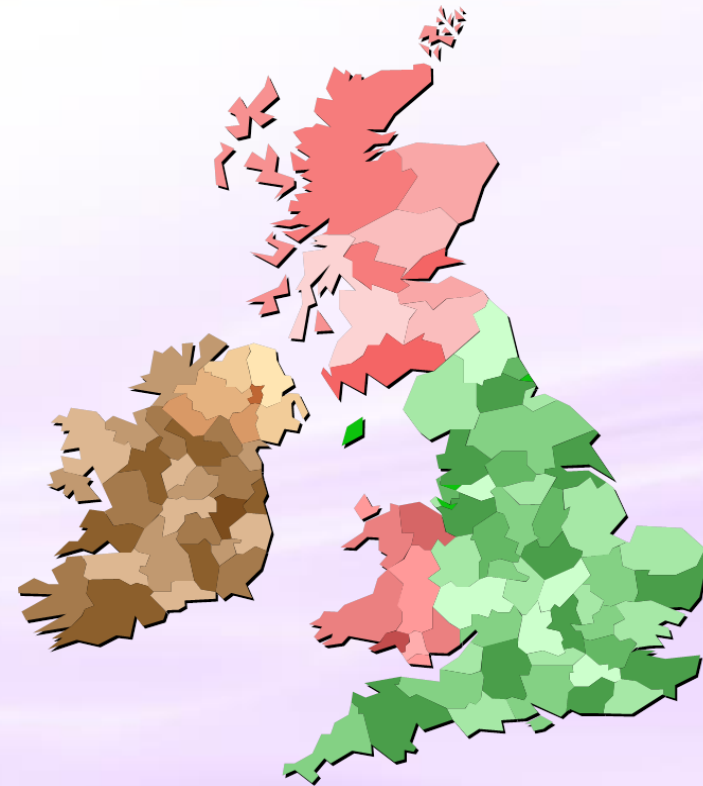
- 17% under age 16
- 64% working age
- 20% pensioners

Employment rate 75.5% (Apr 2022)

Unemployment rate 3.2% (Apr 2022)

Number of institutions

- HEIs 19 (approx. 282,800 students) (Jan 2022)
- Colleges 26 – in 13 regions (approx. 213,000 students) (2022)
- Secondary Schools 357 (approx. 306,800 pupils) (Dec 2021)



# What is the SCQF and what does it do?

The SCQF is Scotland's national qualifications framework and it

- helps people **understand** qualifications
- helps people **plan their learning**
- provides **recognition** for learning
- promotes **equality** between vocational and academic qualifications
- supports **recruitment** and **workforce development**



# SCQF in context

- 22 years old
- A lifelong learning framework
- NOT a regulated framework – no legislation
- Inclusion is voluntary
- NOT owned by Government or any single sector or stakeholder
- Based on a long history of outcome based, unit based qualifications in Scotland
- 12 levels
- Brings together the main Scottish academic and vocational qualification systems into a single, unified framework
- Doesn't force convergence between sectors
- Programmes/qualifications are not government owned

# SCQF in context

- Managed and promoted by the SCQF Partnership (*a registered charity with 12 staff members*)
- Ability to recognise both formal and non formal learning
- The tool that enables the Recognition of Prior Learning
- Used to underpin a range of initiatives
- Provides guidance for schools, colleges, universities, employers, parents and carers and many others
- Based on a set on 25 high level principles and 4 criteria for credit rating

# Role of Learning Outcomes

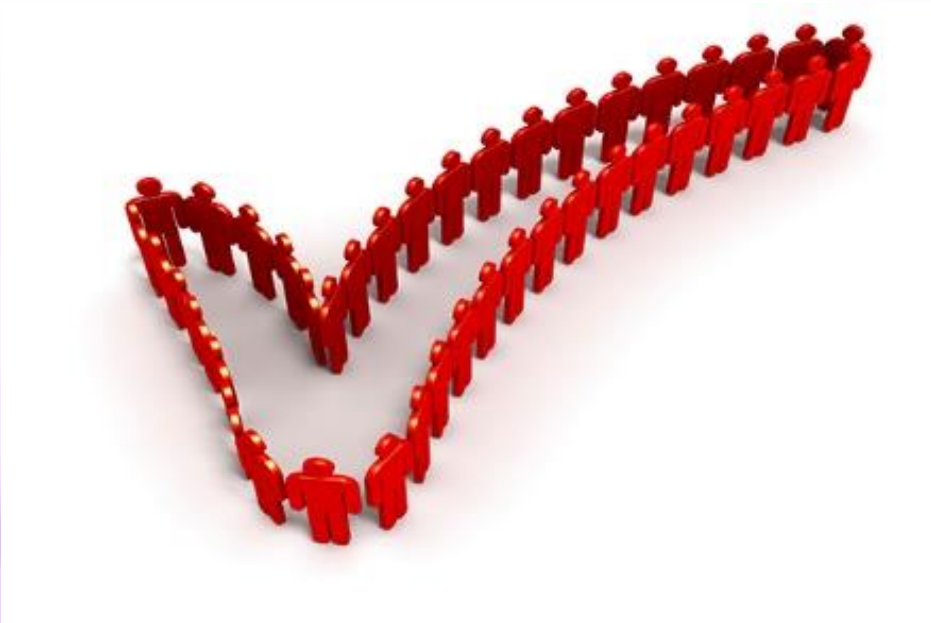
- The concept of learning outcomes is a long standing and established one in Scotland
- Firmly embedded in the SCQF principles
- Part of the process of the allocation of level and credit
- SCQF Partnership provides guidance and builds capacity for those developing writing programmes and learning outcomes
- No specific rules or regulations relating to the format, number or content of learning outcomes in relation to the SCQF
- The way in which learning outcomes are designed, developed and quality assured is entrusted to others

- SCOTCAT system for Universities late 1980s/early 90s
- Unitisation agenda of the 1980s
- School education reform of the 1990s
- SCQF created and named in 2001
  - *‘The importance of these concepts and aims and the various processes which the SCQF will facilitate must not be allowed to become secondary to issues concerning the bureaucracy of the framework itself’* [Joint Advisory Committee June 2000)
- SCQF Partnership formed in 2006



# What can go into the Framework?

SCQF principle 2 – all qualifications/earning programmes credit rated on to the SCQF must meet the four criteria for credit rating



- At least 10 notional learning hours
- **Based on learning outcomes**
- Formally assessed
- Internally and externally quality assured

**irrespective of type of learning**

# How does learning get on the SCQF?

## Process of Credit Rating:

- A consistent process
- One set of guidance used by all Credit Rating Bodies

## What do they credit rate?

Their own provision offered in schools, colleges and universities , within their own organisations and training centres

Some can also credit rate:

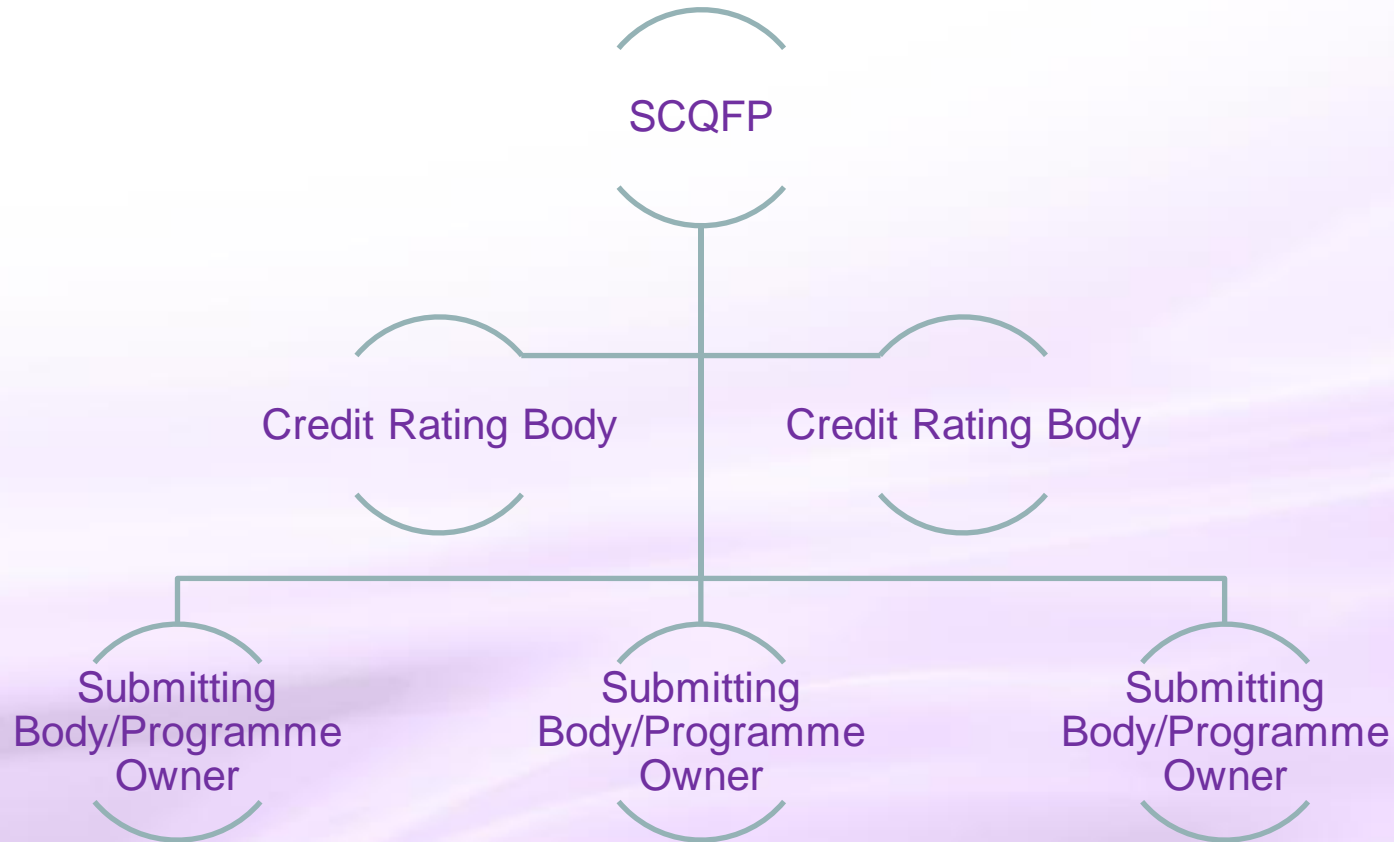
“Third party” provision owned, developed and awarded by others e.g employers; certificating bodies; professional bodies; voluntary and community organisations

## Credit Rating Bodies:

- Higher Education Institutions
- Further Education Colleges
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland
- Scottish Police College - Tulliallan
- City and Guilds
- ICAS (Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland)
- Scottish Fire & Rescue Service - TED
- Scottish Prison Service College
- Opito (oil and gas sector)
- ASET International Energy Training Academy
- **NOT** the SCQF Partnership



Devolved  
System



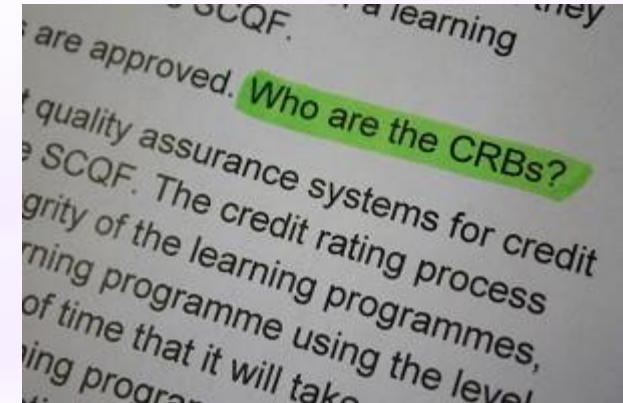
Working in partnership  
with other key quality  
assurance partners and  
sector bodies



*A Credit Rating Body can also be a  
submitting body/programme owner*

# Why Credit Rating Bodies?

- Carry out credit rating of programmes
- Ensure the quality of the programmes on the Framework
- Support other organisations looking to place their programmes on the Framework
- Maintain the quality and integrity of the Framework
- Act as ambassadors for the Framework



**A Shared  
Responsibility**



## The CRBs are responsible for:

- Maintaining the quality and integrity of the Framework through their credit rating processes and decisions
- Examining aims, objectives, **learning outcomes**, assessments and assessment arrangements, **quality assurance** processes, certification processes for qualifications/programmes
- Allocating levels and credit points to programmes
- Making the **final** decisions on credit rating
- Entering credit rating provision **directly** onto the SCQF database
- **Quality assurance** of the delivery of credit rated programmes and of their credit rating processes

## The SCQF Partnership is responsible for:

- Maintaining the quality and integrity of the Framework through the approval and monitoring of Credit Rating Bodies
- The maintenance of the SCQF Database
- Working with key Quality Assurance Bodies in Scottish Education
- The monitoring of websites and publications

# How do we ensure consistency?

- SCQF Handbook setting out common principles and criteria
- One set of level descriptors
- Ensuring opportunities for CRB “sharing” to improve and where appropriate standardise
- Production of a wide range of more technical support material and delivery of building capacity workshops **including writing learning outcomes**
- Quality Assurance Monitoring of CRBs through a range of methods and in partnership with other key quality bodies



# The SCQF Handbook

The SCQF Handbook outlines 25 cross-cutting principles summarising key information for users.

## SCQF principle 2

All qualifications credit rated on the SCQF must meet the four criteria for credit rating

*There must be a clearly defined set of learning outcomes for each qualification/learning programme including a clear statement of the level of demand of outcomes in relation to the overall aims of the qualification/learning programme with reference to the SCQF Level Descriptors*

SCQF Handbook



*Assessment ensures that the qualifications are awarded only to those students who meet specified learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are specified for each course, which are consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks' descriptors, and assessment determines whether each student has achieved them.*



QAA Code of Practice Advice and Guidance –  
Assessment

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code>



*When writing outcomes, it is useful to ask yourself, 'What is the learner to do? What is the purpose of this activity? Would any learners have difficulty carrying out this activity?' This will help you to ensure that each outcome is clear and precise. Each outcome must begin with an active verb which is appropriate to the SCQF level of the unit.*

SQA Handbook for writing Higher National Units and Higher National Graded Units

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64147.html>

**Handbook for writing Higher National Units  
and Higher National Graded Units**

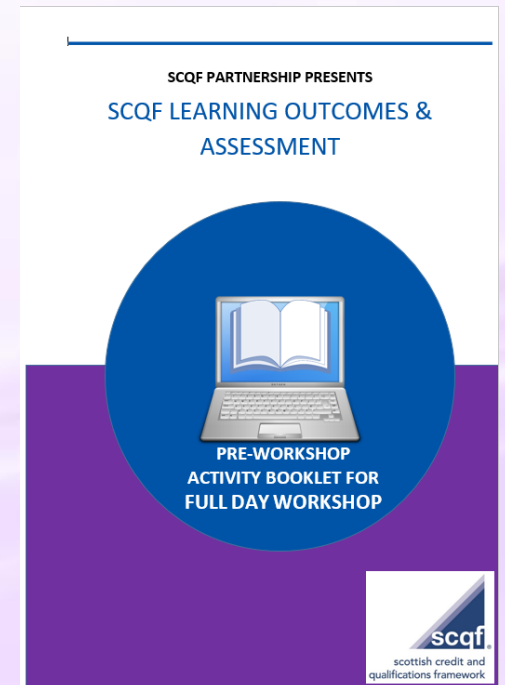
Publication Date: March 2019

Publication Code: CA8008

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority

# SCQFP Writing Learning Outcomes and Assessment Workshop

- Full day workshop to help staff in Credit Rating Bodies develop skills in relation to writing learning outcomes and designing assessment. (delivered online)
- Delivered by an external facilitator with experience in this area
- Attendees draft learning outcomes for a new course and explore assessment for those learning outcomes
- Designed to reflect an iterative and collaborative process that is effective for developing good learning outcomes and good assessment.



# Extracts from SCQF Workshop

## Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are descriptions of the specific and measurable knowledge or/and skills expected to be developed by the learner during a course of learning.

Good learning outcomes are...

- clear and concise descriptions of what learners should be able to do to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- achievable by all learners working at a particular level and given the time allocated
- assessable, using one or more of many methods of formal assessment

www.scqf.org.uk

## Learning Outcomes

1. start with an action verb (just one action verb per LO),
2. followed by the object of the verb,
3. embedded in a statement conveying the depth/breadth of learning to be demonstrated and an indication of the context.

For example...

1. Explain...
2. ...the key differences...
3. ...between the two main coffee species used to make espresso commercially.

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## Learning Outcomes

In your 'breakout room' groups for the next 10 minutes:

- Discuss the knowledge and skills you would expect learners to have at the end of our new course.
- Which characteristics at SCQF Level 5 are relevant to this course, and how can those descriptors help our thinking?



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# Thinking Points

- The responsibility for quality and integrity is seen as a shared responsibility
- The SCQF is built on the flexibility and opportunities inherent within each of the sectors
- So learning outcomes are required for the SCQF but there is flexibility as to what those look like (no centrally set rules)
- Working in partnership with key quality assurance bodies and awarding organisations is key to getting buy-in
- The SCQF needs to be able to flex so it can embrace sector differences to allow it to be inclusive



# Challenge Questions

- Does your NQF promote the use of learning outcomes?
- What barriers/challenges are there to using learning outcomes?
- Could your NQF be used as a tool to promote good practice in using/writing learning outcomes?
- Who would you need to engage with to make that happen?
- Could a flexible, devolved approach work for you?

# Challenge Questions

- How does your HEI work with LO ? Which structures do you have?
- Do you use the Duplin Descriptors as well the LO descriptors from your NQF?
- Do your LE refer to the NQF?

# Discussion





Keep in touch...

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