



Courses & Application Process

When engaging with potential students, it is important to be able to clearly explain the differences between the various types of courses and what qualifications can be achieved. Most courses, both full and part time, lead to a qualification; however, evening and short courses may be exceptions. It is essential to explain to the potential students that they don't always need specific qualifications to enter courses, but they can simply enter at the level which suits their ability and experience. Courses in most subjects are offered at different levels, both at Further and Higher Education. If they already have qualifications, they may be able to do a more advanced course. However, if they had a break from learning, they may prefer to start with an Introductory or Access course. In addition, depending on the institution and choice of programme, they may be able to study on a full-time or part-time basis during the day or in the evening, or their selected programme may be available in a Flexible or Open Learning format. They may even be able to access learning material on the internet via their home PC, in a Learning Centre or local library. These notes describe the various types of courses, including:

1. Short or Evening Courses
2. Access Courses
3. Further Education (FE) Courses
4. Higher Education (HE) Courses
5. Open and Distance Learning

1. SHORT OR EVENING COURSES

Short or evening courses include courses in a number of areas over a short period. These courses are offered at various levels and can be arranged to suit individual needs.

This type of course is usually held locally, but the type of venue can vary. Some Universities may run short courses, but the

majority will be run at Colleges, Community Learning Centres, Libraries, Community Education Centres and Schools. To enrol, students can contact the course provider directly to book a place for these courses.

IN YOUR AREA....

- What short or evening courses are available?
- How do students apply?

2. ACCESS COURSES

Access courses refer to courses that can help students prepare for studying at further or higher education level. Such courses may be run by universities or colleges on their campuses or within the community.

There is a wide range of access courses available throughout the North of Scotland. Some focus on a range of study skills and IT skills, as preparation for study at a higher level. Others are tailored towards specific subject areas, including both academic and vocational courses. Some of these courses and the qualifications awarded may link into the entrance requirements for specific courses. To apply for these courses, students can contact the course provider directly.

IN YOUR AREA....

- What access courses are available?
- How do students apply?

3. FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) COURSES

Applications to a Further Education (FE) course are usually done directly through the chosen college.



These can include:

- 3.1 National Qualifications
- 3.2 Scottish Vocational Qualifications
- 3.3 Higher National Certificates & Diplomas

3.1 National qualifications

National Qualifications are non-advanced qualifications, which include National Certificates (NC), National Courses, Scottish group awards (SGA) and Scottish Progression Awards (SPA). Study is vocationally orientated and covers training related to employment. These may be particularly useful for adult learners who have been out of full time education for a period of time. Some are built unit by unit to allow the student to work at their own pace. There are also opportunities for credit transfer from other qualifications such as Standard Grade or SVQ units. The student's experience outside education may also help achieve a qualification. After completion, students can enter employment or continue their education at a more advanced level using their National Qualification as a stepping stone. This is the system of courses and qualifications for everyone studying beyond standard grade. It has 5 levels: Access, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher.

National Units

Units are designed to take 40 hours of teaching time to complete and candidates are expected to do some additional work on their own. These units can be taken at schools, colleges or training centres. National Units can be built up into National Courses, Scottish Progression Awards (SPA), Scottish Group Awards (SGA) and National Certificates (NC). They can be offered at 7 levels – Access 1-3 (level 1-3), Intermediate 1 and 2 (level 4 and 5), Higher (level 6) and Advanced Higher (level 7).

National Certificates

A group of related national units makes up a National Certificate (NC) which usually takes 1 year full-time to complete. There are no exams for modules and work is assessed

during the course. Students can be awarded a qualification for each unit, so they can complete a range of qualifications without having to go to college for a year.

National Courses

National Courses are available from Access 2 to Advanced Higher. With the exception of Access 2 and 3, these courses are made up of three National Units plus an external assessment, usually an examination. Access 2 and 3 candidates must also pass all three units to complete the course, but no external examination is required.

Skills for work

Skills for work courses are National Courses that encourage school students to become familiar with work. These courses are assessed by the teacher or lecturer and there is no final exam.

Access 1-3

These are programmes of study at three levels (1, 2 or 3) which are unit-based but don't involve national examinations. They can be taken to help progress towards Intermediate level qualifications. Some further education (FE) colleges have 'articulation' arrangements for entry to later years of specified degree courses (at specified institutions with which the college has formal arrangements), from specified Access programmes.

Access 1

Access 1 Units are designed to be used in programmes of learning designed for learners with very basic needs. Many of these Units are designed to articulate with the outcomes of Access 2 Units, offering progression.

Access 2

Access 2 (level 2) Courses are usually made up of three Units, with no external assessment. In some cases learners may count Access 3 Units (level 3) towards the Cluster. These Clusters are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.



Understanding further & higher education



Access 2 – Scottish Group Awards

These SGAs are made up of National Courses or coherent groupings of National Units at two levels. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Access 2 (level 2) or above is required. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.

Access 3

Access 3 (level 3) Courses are usually made up of three Units, with no external assessment. In some cases learners may count Intermediate 1 Units (level 4) towards the Cluster. These Clusters are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.

Access 3 – Scottish Group Awards

These SGAs are made up of National Courses or coherent groupings of National Units at two levels. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Access 3 (level 3) or above is required. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.

Intermediate 1 and 2

These are programmes of study at two levels (1 and 2) which are unit-based and involve national examinations. These are usually taken in 5th or 6th year, although some schools now offer them in earlier years. They can help with progress towards higher level qualifications.

Intermediate 1

Intermediate 1 (level 4) Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment — an examination or a project. In some cases learners may count Intermediate 2 Units (level 5) towards the Course. These Courses are typically used for entry to further education.

Intermediate 1 – Scottish Group Awards

These SGAs are made up of National Courses at level 4 (Intermediate 1) and National Units at level 3 (Access 3) or above. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Access 3 or above is

required. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.

Intermediate 2

Intermediate 2 (level 5) Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment — an examination or a project. In some cases learners may count Higher Units (level 6) towards the Course. These Courses are typically used for entry to further education, training and employment.

Intermediate 2 – Scottish Group Awards

These SGAs are made up of National Courses at level 5 (Intermediate 2) and National Units at level 4 (Intermediate 1) or above. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Intermediate 1 or 2 is required. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. These qualifications are designed to prepare people for entry to further education, training or employment.

Higher

These are subjects that students can study in S5 or S6 and form the traditional entry route to higher education (HE). They're generally taught in school over 1 year. It is also possible to study for Highers at college where part time study or open/flexible learning may be an option. Grades for Highers run from A to D with A being the highest, and grades A to C are considered passes. Higher Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment - an examination or a project.

Higher – Scottish Group Awards

These SGAs are made up of National Courses at level 6 (Higher) and National Units at level 5 (Intermediate 2) or above. Achievement of all five Core Skills at Intermediate 2 or higher is required. They give credit for Standard Grades and SVQs. These qualifications are designed to prepare people for entry to further and higher education, training or employment.



Understanding further & higher education

Advanced Higher

These are usually taken in year 6 or at college and extends the knowledge gained at Higher level. Advanced Higher Courses are usually made up of three Units and an external assessment — an examination or a project. These Courses are typically used for entry to higher education and employment.

Advanced Higher – Scottish Group Awards

SGAs are made up of National Courses and Units at two levels and achievement of all Core Skills is required, three at Higher (level 6) and two at Intermediate 2 (level 5). This qualification is designed to prepare people for entry to further and higher education, training or employment.

Scottish Progression Awards

Scottish Progression Awards (SPAs) have been designed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) as a good way to get students started on the road to getting a qualification that recognises the skills and knowledge which they use in their work, or which you will gain during work placement or work experience. Students can study to build up the knowledge and understanding at a college, school, or a training centre towards achieving a full SVQ. Assessments can be tailored to the student's own personal time constraints. Can contain SVQ, National or Higher National Qualification Units or a combination of these.

Professional Development Awards

PDA's are qualifications for people already in a career who wish to develop an aspect of their existing skills, develop new ones or change direction. They will assess progression in a defined set of specialist occupational skills and can comprise National and workplace assessed units. PDA's can have either mandatory and optional Units or all mandatory Units or all optional Units. The choice of structure must reflect the title and aim of the award and this will be checked at validation. There are four kinds of PDA: Advanced Diploma, Diploma, Advanced Certificate, and Certificate.

3.2 Scottish Vocational Qualifications

Equivalent to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the rest of the UK, Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) were introduced to improve the skills of the nation's workforce. Available for a wide range of occupations, SVQs are offered at levels 1 to 5 and provide an excellent route for those wishing to enhance career development. SVQs are primarily designed for the workplace, but may also be studied in house or a mix. Assessment may take the form of written or practical work. In essence they teach everything the student needs to know to do their chosen job effectively. These are assessed mainly through the workplace, and are now available for around 88% of occupations. They can be taken over a flexible period of time and they're particularly useful for school and college students who have a work placement or part-time job and also for people in full time employment. For info visit <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/2.html>.

Scottish Vocational Qualification

Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are generally taken at work although they're becoming increasingly available at colleges. They recognise the student's ability to do a particular job. There are 5 SVQ levels ranging from introductory (SVQ1) to very advanced (SVQ5). SVQs are based on the National Occupational Standards originally developed by National Training Organisations and now falling within the remit of Sector Skills Councils. Some SVQs or SVQ Units are incorporated into other awards or programmes including HNCs, Scottish Progression Awards and Modern Apprenticeships. SVQs combine work-based competences and underpinning knowledge.

3.3 Higher National Certificates & Diplomas

Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND) are widely



respected qualifications, which are highly valued by employers and recognised by many professional and technical bodies. Some HNCs and HNDs are linked directly to degree courses and may be able to give the student direct entry into a second or third year course. These qualifications can be gained either in full time or over a longer period by attending on a part time or on a blended learning basis. To apply for this type of course students need to submit an application form to the relevant institution.

Higher National Certificate

Normally a one-year course at college and students will normally need at least one Higher Grade to do this. A Higher National Certificate (HNC) in a relevant subject may give entry to a degree, usually to year one. Some further education (FE) colleges have 'articulation' arrangements for entry to later years of specified degree courses from specified HNC programmes. HNCs are normally offered through the equivalent of one year's full-time higher education. They can give entry to HNDs and degree programmes at level 7 or 8 depending on articulation agreements.

Higher National Diploma

Normally a two year course at college and students will usually need 1 or 2 Higher Grades to do this, or an HNC to go straight into year 2. Some further education (FE) colleges have 'articulation' arrangements for entry to later years of specified degree courses from specified Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes. HNDs are normally offered through the equivalent of two years' full-time higher education. They can give entry to degree programmes at either level 8 or 9, depending on articulation agreements.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) COURSES

Applications to a Higher Education (HE) course are done directly through UCAS. These include degree level study (honours

and ordinary degree, Dip HE, Cert HE), and postgraduate study including masters and doctorate.

Certificate in Higher Education

Normally a 1 year course at college or university, which can lead on to year 2 of a degree. Students normally need 1-2 Higher Grades to do this. The Certificate in Higher Education (Cert HE) is typically offered as an exit award after the equivalent of one year of full-time higher education in Scotland. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

Graduate Diploma in Higher Education

Normally a 2 year course at college or university, which can lead on to year 3 of a degree. Students normally need 2-3 Higher Grades to do this. The Diploma of Higher Education (Dip HE) is typically offered after the equivalent of the first two years of full-time higher education in Scotland. The precise focus and outcomes will be identified in the relevant programme specifications.

Ordinary Degree

The Ordinary Degree is typically offered through the equivalent of three years' full-time higher education. The Ordinary Degree is recognised as the normal entry to a number of professions across the UK. They're usually full-time although part-time and open/flexible learning opportunities are increasing. Normal entry requirements are a minimum of 3-4 Highers; however there are alternative entry routes including:

- Access courses are an alternative entry route for adults. They sometimes guarantee a place on a degree course but more often now provide the minimum entry requirements;
- An HNC in a relevant subject may give entry to a degree, usually to year 1;
- An appropriate HND may give entry to year 2 or even year 3.

Honours Degree

In Scotland, an Honours Degree is usually a four-year course in which the student specialises in one or two subjects after the



first two years. The Honours Degree is recognised as the normal entry to postgraduate study.

Masters Degree

Masters Degrees (MSc, MBA, etc) are available through several different routes. It can be a programme for graduates, the equivalent of at least one year of full-time study after their degree or as a programme of five years of full-time study that integrates undergraduate study with the Masters Degree.

Doctorate

Doctorates (PhD) are normally awarded following the successful completion of a thesis requiring the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study to complete. Professional Doctorates also require the equivalent of three years' full-time research and study, and will frequently involve work-based as well as HEI-based research and study.

5. OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Colleges and universities offer courses that are specially designed for people who do not wish to attend regularly or may be prevented from attending because of distance. These open and distance learning courses are open to all age groups. They include opportunities for people working from home and those in business and industry who wish to gain qualifications in their place of work.

With online study, students can study at their own choice of time and place, saving on travel and accommodation costs and fitting in with other commitments. Students may be looking to broaden skills, update expertise in a particular field or get a competitive edge on a job.

It is important that staff are aware that online training might be the best option to fit their needs, giving the students the freedom to plan their studies around their lifestyle or work commitments. Furthermore, students use the Internet for learning, to access course information, to communicate with others, and to transmit completed assignments for marking, so it is important that staff are aware of computer needs and minimum IT skills required to start an online course. Applications are usually done through the chosen college or university.

IN YOUR AREA....

- What open and distance learning courses are available?
- How can students apply?
- What are the requirements to enrol?

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Local information
- North Forum members
- [Course You Can](#)
- [Diverse Routes](#)
- [National Recognition Information Centre](#)
- [Scottish Qualifications Authority](#)
- [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)
- [HERO](#)
- [UCAS](#)
- [PlanIt Plus](#)