

# SCQF HOW TO:

USE THE SCQF IN RECRUITMENT  
AND STAFF SELECTION



**scqf**<sup>®</sup>

scottish credit and  
qualifications framework

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## INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland's national qualifications framework. The SCQF provides a national vocabulary for describing learning programmes and qualifications, so making the relationships between them clearer. The SCQF can also help employers to understand the level of knowledge and skills required to perform a particular role or range of functions within their organisation.

This short guide – the first of two - aims to support employers in using the SCQF and explains how it can help them **understand and describe the skills they need** - by enabling them to write effective **person specifications**, so they can recruit the right team with the right skills for the job. The next guide, *How To: Use the SCQF for workforce development*, builds on this guide and looks at how it is possible to undertake a skills audit and identify any skills gaps using the SCQF as a tool to support the selection of learning and development interventions, where these are required.

This guide should be used alongside the accompanying support pack, which can be downloaded from the SCQF website. This guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the SCQF Employer Levelling Tool, which is part of the support pack, and where needed the SCQF Level Descriptors. All are available from the SCQF website: [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	SVQs/MAs
12	Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-2016. See <a href="http://www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner">www.sqa.org.uk/readyreckoner</a>		↑	Professional Apprenticeship
11			↑	Professional Apprenticeship SVQ 5
10			↑	Professional Apprenticeship
9			Professional Development Award	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4
8	Higher National Diploma	↑	Technical Apprenticeship SVQ 4	
7	Advanced Higher Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	↑	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
6	Higher	↑	↓	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 3
5	National 5 Intermediate 2	↑	↓	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ 2
4	National 4 Intermediate 1	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ 1
3	National 3 Access 3	↑	↓	
2	National 2 Access 2	↑	↓	
1	National 1 Access 1	↑	↓	

*The SCQF diagram showing mainstream qualifications in Scotland and how they relate to one another. Underpinning SCQF levels are a set of descriptors which explain the level of knowledge, skills and competence relevant at each level of the Framework.*

## MORE EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT – THE RIGHT SKILLS

When recruiting a new employee, or moving or promoting an existing employee into a new position, it is important to clearly define the role with a job description and to outline the knowledge and skills required through a person specification. How you specify the level and extent of the skills and competences that you need applicants to have is important; if you are not careful and methodical about how you do this you can send out the wrong messages. If you receive applications which are inappropriate it can add to your costs, while at the same time reducing rather than increasing the pool of suitable applicants from which to select. In fact, even if you aren't thinking about any of the above, clearly defining job roles and the skills requirements for them is good practice and can be used for a number of reasons. For example, identifying any need for training and staff development.



### HOW CAN THE SCQF HELP?

Developing a person specification using the SCQF levels can help an employer to be clear about the level and extent of the knowledge and skills required for the role and gives employers a way of describing those skills to potential employees. Having a clear person specification also helps to ensure high quality applications are received and helps in the interviewing and selection process.

This guide aims to give you some tools which will help you to think clearly about the type and level of competence that you really need and will give you a clearer way of describing the level of knowledge and skills required for a role. The SCQF isn't just about qualifications but can provide you with the right kind of language to describe skills and knowledge acquired through experience. Also, by using an SCQF level rather than a specific qualification (unless this is a requirement) in advertising, you may attract candidates with other formal qualifications or with the relevant experience you need.

ALASTAIR SMEATON, HEAD OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, ABERLOUR CHILD CARE TRUST SAID:

**“We have found the SCQF Framework invaluable in implementing our job evaluation exercise. Our job descriptions and recruitment ads now refer to qualifications at particular SCQF levels, allowing us scope to recognise a variety of relevant qualifications and skills, which would otherwise have been difficult to detail in a meaningful, easy to understand way. It has also helped us understand how different qualifications, for example, HNC, SVQ, relate to each other, and to include all professional qualifications within our own framework.”**

## WHAT ARE THE SCQF LEVELS AND HOW CAN THEY HELP IN RECRUITMENT?

The SCQF has 12 levels which describe the level of knowledge and/or skills which underpin qualifications or competence.

Each level of the Framework has a set of 'descriptors' or competencies to help employers and others understand the level and range of skills somebody might demonstrate at a particular point on the Framework. At each level of the Framework the descriptors do this by setting out levels of competence across five 'characteristics', or skill areas.

- **Knowledge and understanding**

What will a candidate for the job need to know and how complex is the knowledge required? Do they need to have an understanding of basic facts or does the role require an expert in the field, with research skills and a critical understanding of the industry?

- **Practice (applied knowledge and understanding)**

What level of professional practice will the role require? Will the candidate need to apply their knowledge in a consistent way or will the job require them to respond to a changing environment and think on their feet whilst applying their expertise?

- **Generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis**

Will the candidate be required to solve problems, be creative, respond to change or implement improvements? Skills that enable us to do these things are referred to in the SCQF as generic cognitive skills and exist at varying levels. People sometimes refer to cognitive skills as transferable skills.



- **Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills**

These skills now underpin success in many roles. How will the candidate need to communicate to others internally and externally, in what format and to what level? And what level of IT or numeracy skills will be required, if any?

- **Autonomy, accountability and working with others**

Will the candidate be working alone or with a team? Will he/she be working under supervision or taking on a supervisory role within a team? Or is this a management role? This characteristic is about working relationships, levels of responsibility for self and others and managing change. It focuses on the ways in which individuals are expected to work, and the impact of this on their job and on other individuals.



## THE EMPLOYER LEVELLING TOOL

The SCQF Partnership has developed a levelling tool for employers that can be used to allocate an SCQF Level to a job role and develop an appropriate person specification for that job. It contextualises the SCQF levels for the workplace.

The SCQF Employer Levelling Tool describes the types of responsibilities and tasks which may be present in roles at particular SCQF levels, to provide you with a quick and accessible way of allocating a level to job roles. It also gives examples of the level of knowledge, skills and performance which might be required to meet the demands of a job at that particular level.

By using the SCQF Employer Levelling Tool you will be able to describe more clearly the level and nature of the skills required to perform in a particular role. This will be useful whether you are recruiting from within your organisation, or advertising externally, allowing you to look for candidates with the right skills even if they don't have, or need to have, a particular qualification. In many ways the SCQF could be seen as a national competency framework, which is particularly useful for employers.

Once you have identified the level and demands of the job role, using the SCQF, you can go on to describe the skills and/or knowledge required using the SCQF levels and describe the type of candidate you are looking for in a clear person specification. You can also use this information to perform a skills audit which can help you to understand the development needs of any existing staff and, more widely, what skills are available within and across your organisation – this is the focus of the next guide.

There will be occasions when employers have to recruit a person with a particular qualification as there may be a statutory requirement or license to practice which stipulates that qualification. However, in most cases, other qualifications, or the equivalent skills and experience, will be equally relevant. The SCQF provides an ideal tool to clearly explain your needs in this respect when recruiting.



## USING THE SCQF TO LEVEL A JOB AND BUILD A STRONG PERSON SPECIFICATION

There are 3 key steps to using the SCQF to allocate a level to a job role and write a strong person specification. These steps have been designed to offer you an overview of the process, but you may feel that other approaches would suit your business better, which is fine too.

### 1. DEVELOP:

Develop a job description which highlights the CORE duties and tasks that are critical for success in the role. The focus should not be on listing every small task to be performed in the role but on key functions and, importantly, outcomes. What will the person need to do and achieve? How much support will the person get or how much independence or leadership will the person be expected to exercise? Sum this up by deciding what the level of the job role is when comparing the role to the Levelling Tool.

### 2. EXPLORE:

Explore the Levelling Tool at the selected level and make a note of the type and level of knowledge and skills which will ensure that the candidate/job holder can perform the key tasks. Are there any particular areas of knowledge that will be required, such as good communication or ICT skills? What level of knowledge and/or skills is required to perform the duties and tasks associated with the role? In answering these questions, remember that some of the knowledge and/or skills required may be at a higher or lower level than the overall level of the job role, whilst some skills won't be required.

### 3. EXPAND:

Use the statements in the Levelling Tool, and for more detail the SCQF Level Descriptors, to help you develop a person specification which explains the level of knowledge and skills required. Ensure that these statements are adapted to suit the context of the job and that language is adjusted to reflect that context. This is where you can provide specific requirements and add the detail required which is specific to the needs of your organisation. Remember to use the SCQF levels in your recruitment advertising to widen the pool of potential candidates.



## EXAMPLE: USING THE SCQF TO DEVELOP A PERSON SPECIFICATION

Looking at the example overleaf it can be seen how using some of the language of the SCQF to expand on the knowledge and skills required will enable candidates to demonstrate these through the application process and at interview. You will see there is a clear difference between the job description, which focuses on the performance of tasks, the holding of responsibility and the achievement of targets, and the person specification. The function of the person specification is to outline the skills and competences relating to the proper performance of the tasks and responsibilities associated with the job. This ensures that you have a clearer measure of what you are looking for in potential candidates and gives you something to use when making decisions about recruitment or training. The language is adapted from the broad statements set out in the SCQF Employer Levelling Tool, with some further detail taken from the SCQF Level Descriptors.

Many organisations will recognise that job roles will change over time in response to business needs. This is especially the case with small to medium sized businesses where the skills available can have an influence over the direction of the business. Jobs change in response to a number of influences which affect the skills and knowledge required and it is therefore good practice to ensure that you periodically review existing roles to ensure that they are still in line with the plans and needs of the business. This process can be done by implementing an approach which uses SCQF tools.



Example of how the SCQF can support the development of clear person specification:

## Job Description:

**Description:** Account Development Manager

**Account Development Manager Job Purpose:** Develops new business by analysing account potential; initiating, developing, and closing sales; recommending new applications and sales strategies.

**Account Development Manager Job Duties:**

- Identifies development potential in accounts by studying current business; interviewing key customer personnel and company personnel who have worked with customer; identifying and evaluating additional needs; analysing opportunities.
- Initiates sales process by building relationships; qualifying potential; scheduling appointments.
- Develops sales by making initial presentation; explaining product and service enhancements and additions; introducing new products and services.
- Develops new applications by preparing specifications; conferring with product engineering.
- Closes sales by overcoming objections; preparing contracts.
- Contributes information to sales strategies by evaluating current product results; identifying needs to be met; monitoring competitive products; analysing and relaying customer reactions.
- Updates job knowledge by participating in educational opportunities; reading professional publications; maintaining personal networks; participating in professional organisations.
- Enhances department and organisation reputation by accepting ownership for accomplishing new and different requests; exploring opportunities to add value to job accomplishments.

## Person Specification:

The applicant should be able to demonstrate competence and/or qualifications at SCQF Level 9 ([www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk))

**Qualifications:** Relevant vocational, professional or academic qualifications at SCQF Level 9

**Knowledge and skills:**

- Can identify and evaluate relevant information from a range of sources to identify opportunities for account development and new account opportunities.
- Possesses a broad and integrated knowledge and understanding of the scope, main areas and boundaries of the sales market.
- Possesses a sound understanding of a selection of the principal theories, principles, concepts and terminology surrounding the engineering of our products and their use by our clients.
- Is able to work effectively with a range of professionals in the marketplace and workplace, demonstrating leadership ability to foster effective sales team approaches, sales planning and customer satisfaction.
- Uses excellent written and oral communication skills to establish relationships quickly in professional level contexts.
- Demonstrates a willingness to exercise autonomy and initiative whilst displaying a drive to achieve targets, emphasising excellence in standards and approaches.
- Demonstrates ability to respond flexibly to changing or unpredictable sales environments.
- Can lever ICT to drive efficiency on a daily basis and has a working knowledge of ANother Software and standard office software.
- Proactively updates knowledge and understanding of forefront developments in both sales practice and the technical aspects of the role and our products; subsequently is able to analyse and make a contribution to quality and improvement.

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## MAKING A COMPARISON BETWEEN AN EXISTING JOB AND THE SCQF LEVELS

If you are already happy with your job descriptions and person specifications and feel that they provide the right type and quantity of information, then you may simply wish to allocate an SCQF level to the job role. If this is the case then all you need do is to compare your existing job descriptions and person specifications to the SCQF Employer Levelling Tool, before coming to an informed decision on which level most accurately fits with the role. This is the level which you would use in recruitment advertising.

For more information on how the SCQF can help employers, call the SCQF Partnership Executive Team on 0845 270 7371.





