

SCQF HOW TO:

USE THE SCQF FOR WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT



scottish credit and
qualifications framework

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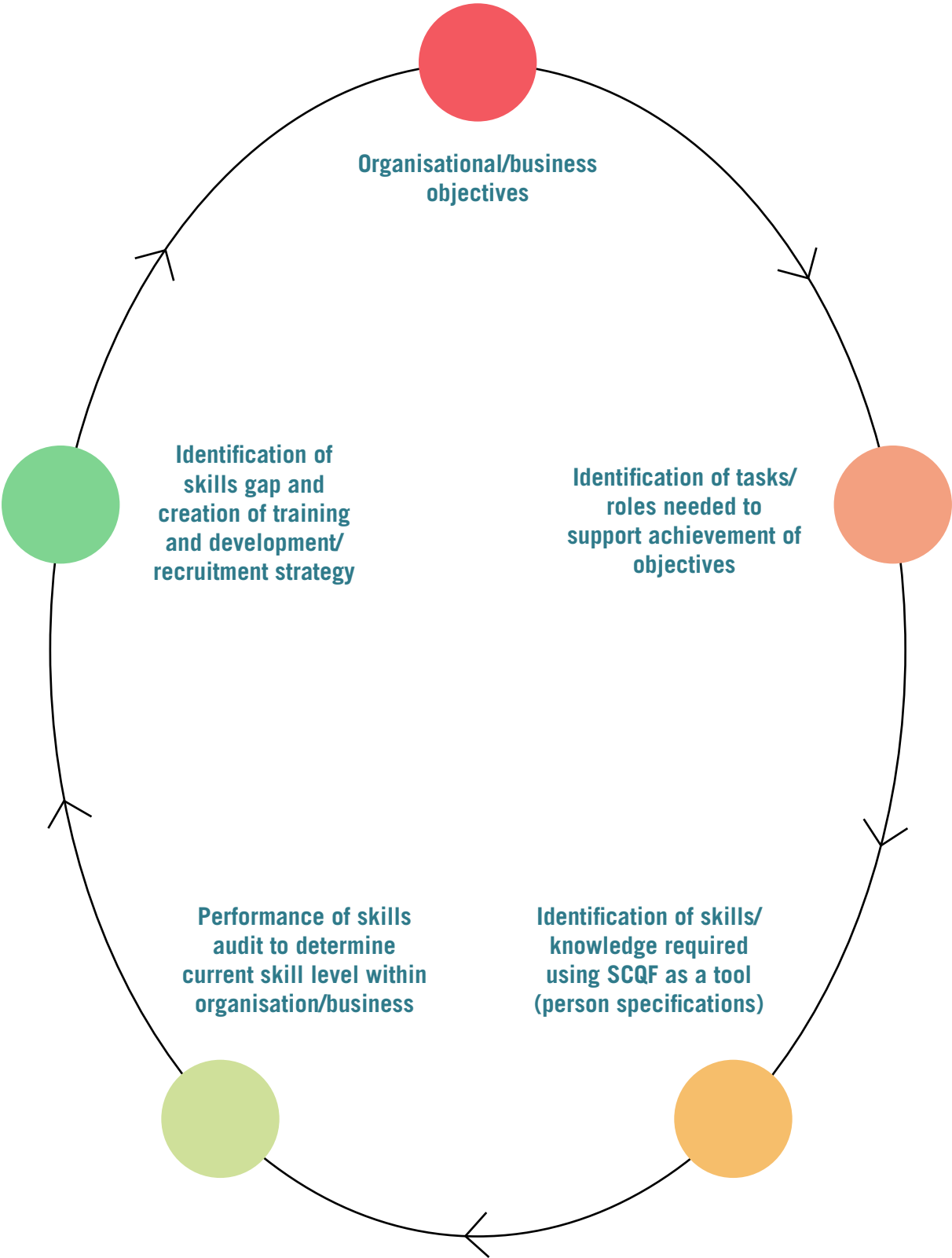
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THE SCQF AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A key aim of the SCQF is to help people access appropriate education and training, so that they can fulfil their potential. This includes training and education which takes place as part of learning on the job or through learning and development activities led or supported by an employer. This guide aims to support employers in understanding how the right skills can support organisational objectives, how the SCQF can help them to measure what skills their staff already have and how the SCQF can act as a guide towards the right interventions and training to address any skills gaps. It is written as part of our *How To* series for employers and follows on from the preceding guide (*Using the SCQF in recruitment and staff selection*).

Once an employer has used the SCQF to explore and specify the level and nature of the skills they require for a particular role (see previous guide), the SCQF can then be used to ensure that any training and development opportunities provided for staff are at the right level to support both their effectiveness in their current role and their future development. In turn, this ensures that the learning undertaken by staff impacts positively on organisational objectives. Supporting staff in their development as individual employees is vitally important to ensuring maximum effectiveness, but it is also important to ensure that at an organisational level there is an understanding of skills across the business and that any skills gaps are addressed. This guide gives advice on how these next steps may be implemented and how the SCQF might provide a useful tool.





An effective way to assess workforce development needs is to undertake a skills audit. Employers need to know what skills and knowledge their organisation has at its disposal; a skills audit is a review of your existing skills against the skills you need as an organisation both now and in the future.

A skills audit can result in:

- An understanding of the skills required and any gaps your organisation currently has;
- A targeted analysis of development needs;
- A listing of people who might need development.

This information is critical because:

- It determines whether the organisation can in fact plan realistically to meet its aims, objectives or targets;
- Without this detailed information your organisation does not know how, or what, it needs to improve;
- Once collected and collated your training and development can be better focused and targeted;
- Utilising this intelligence will mean your recruitment needs (where they exist) are better defined and therefore you improve your chances of finding the right candidates, whether externally or from within your organisation.

In the previous *How to* guide (*Using the SCQF in recruitment and staff selection*) it was explained how the SCQF can be used to specify the level of knowledge and skills required to perform in individual roles, through a person specification. The next step is to discover if the workforce has the skills required to meet the demands of these roles. To perform an effective skills audit it is best to have undertaken the steps outlined in the previous *How to* guide for to you understand the skills requirements for individual roles, as without this information a skills audit is of limited use.

HOW DOES THIS WORK IN PRACTICE FOR EMPLOYERS?

Starting with a clear outline of your organisational objectives, and the roles and tasks which support them, is vital to using the SCQF for recruitment and selection or staff development. Your organisation must be clear about where it is going and what needs to be done to get there. Once you have established the business needs and associated job roles you will then need to consider the skills required; this is dealt with in the previous *SCQF How To* guide. Only after you have considered these issues can you meaningfully use a skills audit to measure whether you have the skills needed within your organisation.

Determining whether the current level of skills and knowledge for each job holder is sufficient for current and future needs will help to identify if there is a skills gap that requires a development intervention, or the recruitment of new staff. If your business needs have recently changed you may be thinking about training, restructuring or recruiting to ensure you have the right skills in the right places. The results of a skills audit should help you to decide which skills you are looking for, taking into account the wider business.

The clear outcome of such a skills audit process is a 'skills gap analysis'. This information will enable the organisation to progress by providing the appropriate training and development to employees, to close any identified skills gaps. It can also help your organisation to adopt an effective recruitment strategy when recruitment of new staff is the best solution. It can also help you to feel confident that the organisation is on track in terms of skills where this is the case, so it can be a positive affirmation of the skills already within the business.



PERFORMING THE SKILLS AUDIT

A skills audit can be carried out in different ways and the way that you choose to perform the audit will depend on many factors such as the size of your organisation, the number and variety of job roles, the complexity of the business and the organisational culture. For example, in a large business it may be necessary to use a mix of face-to-face meetings and online surveys, whereas a small business with close relationships between staff might benefit from a more tailored approach. Specific issues such as recent restructuring or redundancy would also influence the approach taken to conduct a skills audit. This guide provides a starting point and advice which you may want to adapt to the needs of your organisation.

A skills audit can form part of the performance management systems within your business, such as an annual appraisal, or it can be done separately as required. Crucially, a skills audit should give a view of the skills across the business; a skills audit is more than looking at the skills of an individual, although this is a vital part of the process too.

It is important that staff understand the purpose of a skills audit and are reassured that the process is designed to support and develop, rather than to simply highlight any problems. Sometimes it is the changing needs of a business which creates a skills gap, rather than any short-comings with the existing skills of staff. The role of the skills audit is to help you as an employer understand the changing skills needs you have, what skills you already have within the business, and what you need to do to address any difference.

In our supporting pack for the *How To* series you will find two blank skills audit templates; one for auditing and recording the skills of individuals and one to help you to audit and record the skills across the organisation. When you understand where the business needs to be and you have developed job descriptions and person specifications which set out skills/competency requirements for each role you can use your person specifications to build on these templates.



STEP 1

The first template to use is the one for individuals (individual skills audit template). Using your job descriptions and person specifications, which you will have developed using the previous *How To* guide, you should produce a skills audit template for each role (or group of roles) within your organisation. This should set out clearly the skills which you identified as required for the role plus any skills you think may be needed in the future. This template will then allow you to build a process to measure the skills of current job holders or potential employees, ensuring that their skills match the requirements of the job whilst allowing you to identify and support any development or training needs.

**STEP 2**

Using the skills audit template for the business (organisational skills audit template) will allow you to record all of the skills needs of your business. This is essentially a collation of all of the skills needs for the roles within the organisation, taken from the individual skills audit templates, again supplemented by any additional skills which you think are required for the organisation. For example, if you are planning to develop new products or services or are planning to grow or shift the focus of the organisation then it is possible that not all future skills requirements will be associated with existing job roles. Therefore, you can see how this second part of the skills audit process, and getting a view of skills within the organisation as a whole, is critical to successful business and human resource planning.

At the end of the skills audit process you should have:

- A clear record of the skills needs for each job, and a record of the current skills of the job holder. This record will be developed from the individual skills audit template using the requirements of each role taken from the relevant person specification.
- A clear record of the skills needs of your organisation. This is developed using the organisational skills audit template. The template is completed using the job descriptions and person specifications for individual job roles and any additional competencies you require of staff to meet wider organisational objectives.
- A clear record of how the skills of all individuals map across to the skills requirements of the organisation. This is done by cross referencing the individual and organisational audit templates.
- The necessary information to identify any skills gaps and develop a training and/or recruitment strategy. This is developed at an organisational and at an individual level. At an individual level you can use this to develop a personal development plan and at an organisational level a skills gap analysis.



EVIDENCING SKILLS

When asking employees to outline the skills that they have as part of the individual skills audit you will need to consider how you will ask them to demonstrate their skills or knowledge. The amount and type of evidence you require of employees will depend on the type of competence/skill you are trying to determine and how critical it is to the business. If for example you operate in a heavy manufacturing environment and you are trying to determine competence to use potentially dangerous machinery then you may reasonably expect strong evidence and perhaps would add some kind of formal assessment process. In all cases, you will need to balance the need to seek evidence and certainty against the costs and time taken to provide that evidence. The appropriate balance will be dependent on the context and the needs of your organisation. Of course, the same principle applies when recruiting and interviewing.



CHOOSE OR DEVELOP A LEARNING PROGRAMME TO SUIT YOUR EMPLOYEES' NEEDS

If you have identified skills gaps at an individual or organisational level you may want to consider developing your staff by having them complete a course or undertaking some kind of learning programme. Naturally, looking at a list of courses/programmes which are badged with an SCQF level would be a good place to start – because you will know the level at which knowledge or skills are required you will be able to match these to the SCQF level of a 'credit rated' programme or qualification.

You can find all the learning programmes which carry an SCQF level on the SCQF Database. This is with the exception of many mainstream qualifications which are given a level automatically and are referenced on the SCQF Framework diagram; for example, Masters Degrees.

The SCQF Database can be viewed on the SCQF website. From the home page simply click on Search the Database: www.scqf.org.uk.



The database can be searched according to level or subject area. So, for example, if you were looking to develop management skills at SCQF level 8 you could filter your search to provide you with a number of options which might suit your employees' needs. It could be a Diploma in Management and Leadership, an Award in Management or a Professional Development Award. The important thing is that you know it needs to be at SCQF level 8, and not SCQF level 6 or 10, if it is going to provide your employees with the right sort of learning experience and challenge. Not only that, but when you describe your requirements to the training providers in terms of SCQF levels, you will be talking in a shared language, thereby reducing the possibility of costly misunderstandings.

Having a workforce that is trained to the right level can not only boost productivity but can also improve job satisfaction and the retention of skilled staff. Employers who understand the SCQF can also use it to develop in-house career pathways that support these goals, ensuring that progression within the organisation is linked appropriately to learning and development opportunities at the right SCQF level. If your organisation has the capacity to deliver training, or provide learning in-house, then the SCQF Level Descriptors are an invaluable tool in ensuring effective course design.



THE SCQF AND QUALITY

It is also important to note that, regardless of where learning takes place, it has to be subject to a robust, quality assured assessment before it is placed onto the SCQF database.

This means that, whatever the type of course, or the sort of organisation providing it, if it has a declared SCQF level and is on the SCQF Database you will know that it has been subject to appropriate quality assurance and that the SCQF level gives the programme national recognition. This frees you up from traditional views about what sort or location of learning is best – in-house, college, e-learning, distance, private provider, academic or practice based delivery – meaning that you can choose the options that are most relevant and cost-effective for you and your employees' needs. It is important to point out that not all learning is formal and an employee could equally benefit from some work shadowing or mentoring by a more senior colleague and there are still many good courses which aren't SCQF credit rated yet.



