

SCQF PARTNERSHIP

# GUIDANCE ON USING THE LEVEL 1 DESCRIPTOR





## Introduction to the SCQF and the Level 1 Descriptor

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is Scotland's Lifelong Learning Framework which has 12 levels reflecting Scotland's education system. Qualifications on the Framework include those qualifications gained through, for example, workplace training, community learning and professional development programmes as well as those through the more formal environment of the classroom. The SCQF Partnership is delighted with the value that all sectors which provide learning are placing on the Framework, and we actively encourage learning providers to have their programmes credit rated. However, there is a lack of learning provision, outside of mainstream qualifications, credit rated at SCQF Level 1.

As an inclusive framework SCQF Level 1 provides the opportunity for recognition and progression for those who are on the first 'rung' of learning. SCQF Level 1 is also relevant for qualifications and learning programmes designed for those learners who require additional support for learning. Like all levels on the Framework, SCQF Level 1 is for all learners who achieve the learning outcomes at that level. The SCQF Partnership is keen to encourage those developing such programmes for learners to have them credit rated onto the Framework where that would add value to the learner, giving recognition for the learning that has been achieved.

It is important to stress that the SCQF is concerned with achievement of learning outcomes. The Level 1 descriptor clearly recognises that there are learners that require different levels of support to achieve the learning outcomes at this level.

This guide aims to provide additional supplementary information and guidance for those credit rating programmes at SCQF Level 1 and should be read in conjunction with the SCQF Handbook and SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained where the detailed processes of credit rating are outlined.

## Level 1 Learners and Programmes

Level 1 programmes will include learning for a wide range of learners with a range of abilities in achieving learning outcomes. For example, learners may include:

- those taking their first steps towards formal learning;
- those who require additional support for learning;
- those in the early stages of learning English as a Second (or additional) Language.

Such learners may:

- need on-going personal support in line with their individual needs;
- require additional resources in order to engage effectively in learning and assessment;
- experience barriers to communication arising from:
  - their level of development in communication skills;
  - a need that impacts on communication which can be one or a combination of physical, sensory and cognitive.

*SCQF Level 1 recognises learning development and achievement that ranges from participation in experiential situations to the achievement of basic tasks, with varying degrees of support.*

In the same way as other levels, the Level 1 descriptor embraces (where applicable) knowledge and understanding, practical skills, cognitive skills, communication, ICT and numeracy and autonomy, accountability and working with others. At this level the emphasis is on the learning which takes place as a result of learners' participation in, and experiencing of, situations as well as the carrying out of basic tasks.

It is important to recognise that at this level the personalisation of support is crucial and that the level of support required by a learner to achieve the outcomes at this level will, and should, be needs led.

Whilst the format of the descriptor at Level 1 is different, the physical process of credit rating at SCQF Level 1 does not differ from that at any other level and the SCQF Handbook should be referred to for this. However there are a number of considerations to take into account when interpreting and applying the Level 1 descriptor.

## Interpreting and applying the Level 1 Descriptor

It is not enough to say that a unit or programme is at Level 1 simply because it does not meet the criteria for the Level 2 descriptor, although this may be part of the rationale. When considering a programme against the Level 1 descriptor, cognisance should be taken of the SCQF Level 2 descriptors but also other similar qualifications which sit at SCQF levels 1 and 2 such as SQA National 1 and 2 qualifications and relevant ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) qualifications. These can then provide useful benchmarks to the standards likely to be achieved. For example, at Level 2 Applied Knowledge and Understanding learners are expected to "relate knowledge to a few simple everyday contexts with prompting". At Level 1, it might be appropriate to expect that learners would "relate knowledge to a single context with varying degrees of support."

In relation to generic cognitive skills at Level 2, the learner is expected to be able to “take some account, with prompting, of identified consequences of action.” At Level 1, it might be that taking account of consequences may not be expected.

It would be expected that any unit or programme at Level 1 would contain a positive statement of achievement and that the learning outcomes and assessments would indicate the achievement required by learners in order to be successful. These learning outcomes should:

- clearly emphasise the experiential and participative nature of the learning activities; and
- require the achievement of practical tasks involving a limited number of specified steps.

The SCQF Level 1 descriptor is written as an inclusive statement designed to allow learners with different types of abilities to respond to and achieve learning outcomes. It is therefore important that the aims and objectives, learning outcomes and assessments reflect this appropriately.

Learning outcomes at Level 1 need to be:

- straightforward, for example,
  - concentrating on a single task;
  - focusing on completion of a routine;
- communicated in a format that breaks activities down into a series of manageable steps or defines the experiential nature of the learning situation;
- communicated in a way that the differentiated levels of support required by learners can be accommodated eg personalisation, elaboration, enhancement and adaptation.

This too must be reflected in assessment which could involve, as appropriate:

- direct observation of the learning, accompanied by the use of a checklist;
- audio, video and/or photographic recording;
- evidence of the learner's participation;
- a range of communication methods to indicate learning;
- independent witness testimonies as to learning taking place;
- a range of support and resources to allow the learner to demonstrate their learning.

It is important that at this level assessment is designed in such a way as to avoid excluding or disadvantaging any learner. It should therefore take account of:

- the learner's mode of communication;
- supportive and/or assistive technologies;
- answers/responses comprising a single indication (such as a word, symbol, graphic, picture etc);
- simple responses based on positive versus negative indications (eg yes v no, agree v disagree etc);
- giving an indication or making a choice of a correct response from a given selection.

Assessment should take place when suitable opportunities present themselves during learning activities and/or completion of learning activities as it is recognised at this level that it can be difficult to assess independently specific skills and that assessment is more likely to be through successful participation of a learning experience and the evidence generated from that participation.



## Additional Sources of Information

- SCQF Handbook
- SCQF Credit Rating Criteria Explained
- SCQF Level Descriptors (August 2012)
- SQA – Additional Support Needs – Advice on Implementation of Supported Units at Access 1
- Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching
- Support for Learners with Profound and Complex Needs Project (Scotland’s Colleges September 2012)
- Meaningful Learning Provision for Learners with Profound and Complex Needs in a College Setting (Scotland’s Colleges).

## Note:

The SCQF Partnership actively welcomes comments on the content and usefulness of this guidance note. It is the intention of the Partnership to review this document in February 2013 with a view to updating and/or providing further guidance/clarification on using the Level 1 descriptor.

If you have any comments you would like to make you should email these to the following address:

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SEPTEMBER 2012