



# SCQF CREDIT RATING: CRITERIA EXPLAINED



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# INTRODUCTION



This guide has been developed for organisations preparing learning for credit rating and for staff across all sectors who develop and deliver learning programmes, including staff in public sector organisations, private sector organisations, professional bodies, training providers, community learning and development and the voluntary sector.

Guidance for Credit Rating Bodies can be found in the SCQF Handbook on the SCQF website at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk).

We would strongly advise that those organisations new to the credit rating process attend the free, one day 'Would You Credit It?' workshop run regularly by the SCQF Partnership. Further details can be found at [www.scqf.org.uk/events](http://www.scqf.org.uk/events).

## OVERVIEW OF THE SCQF

The SCQF is Scotland's Lifelong Learning Framework. It was established in 2001 to provide a means of recognising and valuing learning.

The SCQF provides a shared context for learning in Scotland. It was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified Framework. Within the overall context of lifelong learning, the aims of the SCQF are to:

- help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfil their personal, social and economic potential;
- enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how the qualifications relate to each other, and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce; and
- provide a Framework which can support the aims of fair work and social justice by ensuring that it provides tools and resources which can recognise prior learning, support progression and improve social inclusion.

The SCQF has 12 levels which reflect the current Scottish education and training system. Each SCQF Level has a set of Level Descriptors which provides a broad understanding of the expected attainment at every level.



# SECTION 1: THE BASICS

## WHAT IS CREDIT RATING?

Credit rating is the process of allocating an SCQF Level and Credit Points to a qualification or learning programme so that it can be placed on to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework by a Credit Rating Body. Any qualification or learning programme can be credit rated as long as it meets the following criteria.

The programme must have:

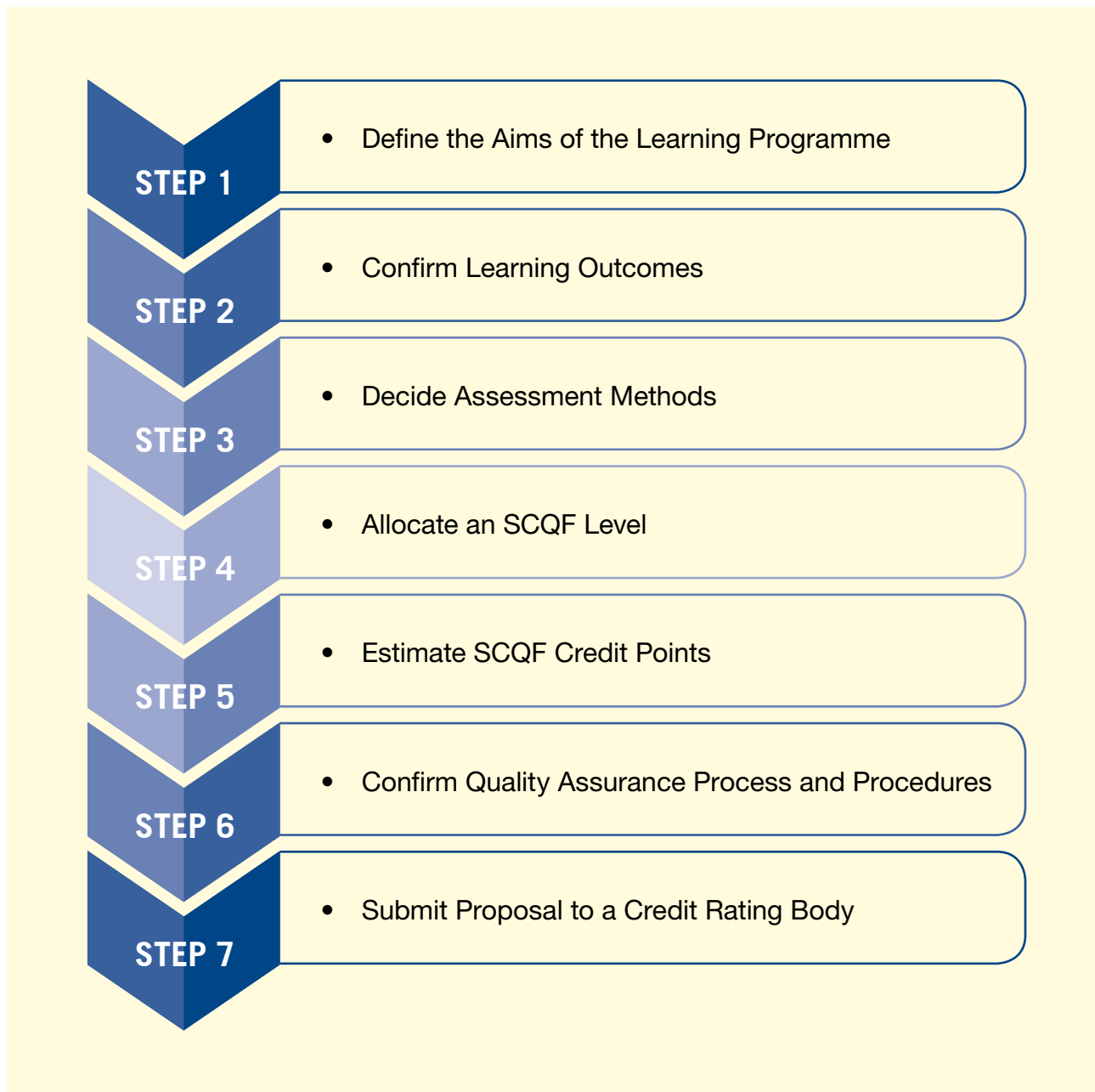
- clear learning outcomes;
- a minimum of 10 notional learning hours;
- formal assessment that is recorded; and
- internal and external quality assurance.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CREDIT RATING?

There are many benefits to having a qualification or learning programme credit rated onto the SCQF:

- Helps organisations understand the level of employees' skills
- Helps individuals to understand the level of their learning
- Provides recognition for in-house training
- Aligns learning programmes to the European Qualifications Framework thus giving those programmes international recognition
- Aids job evaluation processes and helps identify workforce development opportunities
- Gives recognition and status for learning and skills
- Allows individuals to utilise their skills effectively
- Helps individuals to plan their career pathways
- Aids learner mobility both nationally and internationally
- Helps organisations gain competitive edge

In general, the steps in the credit rating process will be similar to the following suggested model:



## THE SCQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Level descriptors are fundamental to the SCQF. They are used to credit rate every qualification and learning programme on the Framework. The SCQF Level Descriptors describe in broad terms what learners should be able to do or demonstrate at a particular level. They provide a common vocabulary to allow the comparison of qualifications and learning programmes.

The SCQF Level Descriptors provide a common reference point for all learning irrespective of whether it is academic, vocational, non-formal or informal learning. Therefore they can be used when:

- writing learning outcomes for a qualification or learning programme;
- designing assessment;
- recognising prior learning from work-based, informal and non-formal learning contexts; and
- credit rating qualifications and learning programmes.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

The SCQF Level Descriptors have five characteristics or skill areas. These are:

- Knowledge and understanding;
- Practice (applied knowledge and understanding);
- Generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis;
- Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills; and
- Autonomy, accountability and working with others.

It is important to remember that some characteristics may not be relevant for particular qualifications or learning programmes. Another important factor in using the SCQF Level Descriptors is to follow a “best fit” approach. It is not expected that learning outcomes in qualifications and learning programmes will cover all the characteristics of an SCQF Level as described in the SCQF Level Descriptors.

Detailed information on the SCQF Level Descriptors and full descriptions of how these generic characteristics are described for each of the 12 Levels of the Framework are shown in the SCQF Level Descriptors booklet and on the SCQF website, [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk).

## USING THE SCQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

The following key points are important to remember when you are using the SCQF Level Descriptors:

- The SCQF Level Descriptors should be seen as a useful guide to be used with other reference documents such as subject benchmarks, arrangement documents and other relevant qualifications and learning programmes on the Framework.
- The characteristics of the level descriptors are generic in nature and may not all be relevant for every qualification or learning programme.
- They provide a general overview of what would be expected of an average learner at a specified level. However as some of the characteristics may not be relevant it is not necessary that all are met.
- When deciding an appropriate level for a qualification or learning programme, it is helpful to look at descriptors across a range of levels to determine the “best fit”.
- The vocabulary of the SCQF Level Descriptors may provide appropriate wording that can be used to describe learning for programme descriptions, learning outcomes and assessment evidence.

## SCQF LEVELS

There are 12 SCQF Levels which provide an indication of the difficulty of qualifications and learning programmes. SCQF Level 1 is the least demanding and SCQF Level 12 is the most demanding. Decisions on appropriate levels for qualifications and learning programmes involve a process of professional judgement, normally made by staff who have expert knowledge and experience in the occupational area, skills area or subject using the SCQF Level Descriptors.

## SCQF CREDIT POINTS

The number of credit points allocated to qualifications and learning programmes is based on the number of notional learning hours required to achieve the learning outcomes (see Section 4 for definition of notional learning hours). One SCQF Credit Point represents 10 notional learning hours. Allocating credit points is carried out by those best qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of skill and familiarity with the levels of the SCQF.

SCQF Credit Points are awarded to learners when they successfully achieve the learning outcomes of the learning programme or qualification. Although the actual amount of time taken by individual learners to achieve the learning outcomes may vary, this does not affect the number of credit points that are awarded.

SCQF Credit Points provide a way for learners, employers and learning providers to describe and compare the amount of learning that has been achieved, or is required to be achieved, within a qualification or learning programme at a given level of the Framework.

As noted above, SCQF Credit Points are used to quantify the amount of learning required to achieve specified learning outcomes at a particular level. Most mainstream qualifications in Scotland have been credit rated.

The advantage of credit points is that they assist in the process of recognising prior learning (RPL) ensuring that learning is not repeated unnecessarily which is costly and wastes time for the learner.

Credit points can be used in two ways:

- To gain entry onto another learning programme
- To gain 'advanced standing' onto another learning programme e.g. being able to move into the second or third year of a degree programme in a related subject

However, it is important to note that decisions around the use of credit are always the responsibility of the accepting institution and there is no guarantee that they will accept a learner's credit points.

We go into more detail about credit points and notional learning hours later in this guide.





# SECTION 2: WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES

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## WHAT IS A LEARNING OUTCOME?

A learning outcome is a statement of what a learner will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity. Learning outcomes should be achievable and assessable. The outcomes based approach to learning, teaching and assessment is used widely in learning programme specifications, benchmark statements and national qualification frameworks, including the SCQF. Learning outcomes provide a common approach across all learning sectors to express and measure learning achievements within qualifications or learning programmes. The use of learning outcomes is one of the criteria that is applied to allow a qualification or learning programme to be included on the SCQF.

Learning outcomes should:

- be written in the future tense;
- use active verbs to describe what the learner will be able to do and to enable the learner to show their knowledge and understanding;
- avoid using verbs whose meaning is ambiguous;
- describe the final output or achievement for the learner;
- use clear language that is easily understood by learners and non-experts;
- be informed by the SCQF Levels and Level Descriptors;
- be achievable as a result of the learning activity;
- be able to be assessed; and
- be specific.

Some examples from SCQF Credit Rating Bodies are:

Course title: <b>Fitness Awareness</b>	
<b>Aim</b>	The aim of the course is to enable individuals to organise and instruct training sessions, administer the National Fitness Standard and advise others on factors affecting physical fitness.
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	On completion of this course students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist and advise others on health and exercise at a basic level</li> <li>• Administer the National Fitness Standard.</li> </ul>

Course title: <b>Basic Computer Skills</b>	
<b>Aim</b>	The aim of the course is to provide learners with a knowledge of basic computer skills.
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	On completion of this course students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the mouse</li> <li>• Identify folders, menus and windows</li> <li>• Identify online search facilities and carry out an online search.</li> </ul>

Course title: <b>FP1 – Supporting Activities</b>	
<b>Aim</b>	Candidates will be equipped with, and be given access to the requisite knowledge, resources, documents and systems to enable them to commence their fire and rescue service career. FP1 forms week 1 of the Foundation Programme.
<b>Learning outcomes</b>	On completion of this course students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the SFRS code of conduct and discipline</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of equality and diversity within SFRS</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the subjects: health, safety and risk management, manual handling, heat and hydration</li> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the subjects: supporting colleagues, managing yourself, staying resilient and driver assistant vehicle marshalling procedures</li> </ul>



## USING LEARNING OUTCOMES IN COURSE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Using learning outcomes in course design and development leads to a learner-centred approach so that the focus is on the outcome of the learning rather than the input or teaching process.

Learning outcomes can:

- help to guide learners in their learning by:
  - explaining what is expected of them;
  - describing the level of learning anticipated; and
  - providing clear information to support learning progression and recognition of prior learning.
- provide information to potential learners and employers about the knowledge and skills that they will have on successfully completing a particular qualification or learning programme.
- help staff to:
  - design the content of a qualification or learning programme;
  - focus on exactly what they want students to achieve in terms of both knowledge and skills;
  - show the connection between the programme aims and the learner outcomes; and
  - decide on appropriate assessment criteria and methods.

## SOME GUIDELINES FOR WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Organisations will write learning outcomes that meet the particular requirements of their own organisations. The following general principles may be helpful to consider when writing learning outcomes:

- Keep learning outcomes to a manageable number to focus on the essential requirements for the learner.
- It is helpful to start a learning outcome with a phrase such as *“on completion of this qualification/ learning programme/unit/module, learners/you will be able to.....”*

When writing learning outcomes, you may wish to consider using Bloom’s Taxonomy as a reference tool to help you find an active verb that meets your requirements. Some active verbs are listed at Annex B.



# SECTION 3: ASSESSMENT

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Assessment is the process of evaluating an individual's learning. It involves generating and collecting evidence of a learner's attainment of knowledge and skills and judging that evidence against defined standards which are expressed in the learning outcomes. Assessment has many different purposes, such as to:

- identify strengths and development needs;
- plan learning;
- provide feedback to learners;
- measure individual attainment;
- support the learning process and move learning forward;
- help learners to make future choices;
- provide information for learning providers;
- provide information for employers;
- award qualifications;
- monitor and maintain standards; and
- evaluate performance levels.

The overall aim of assessment is to support both the learning and the teaching experience.

## KEY PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

The key principles that underpin assessment are that it should be:

- valid
- reliable
- proportionate
- practicable
- cost-effective
- equitable
- fair.

Assessment is important to:

- measure learner achievement;
- show progress and distance travelled in the learning journey; and
- provide evidence of the efficacy of teaching methods.



## WHAT IS FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT?

**Formative assessment** forms the basis of active learning. It is ongoing throughout the learning, teaching and assessment process as it helps assessors and learners to identify any gaps that exist between the learner's desired goal and their current understanding, knowledge and skills in order to advise them of actions that are required to help them reach their goal. It is not formally recorded. It is used to complement learning and teaching. Feedback to the learner is an important element of formative assessment.

**Summative assessment** measures and records an individual's achievement — the assessment of learning. It can be completed internally or externally. Assessment may involve observation of practical skills, product evaluation, or questioning or a combination of some or all of the three. Feedback to the learner is an important element of summative assessment.

## ASSESSMENT METHODS

There are many different methods of assessment, known to learning providers as 'assessment instruments'. Whether they are used formatively or summatively, the most important issue is whether the assessment is appropriate for the intended learning outcome and/or learners.



Methods of assessment include:

- Observation
- Products of work
- Simulation
- Witness testimony
- Questioning
- Case studies and projects
- Personal statements
- Portfolios and logs
- E-assessment
- Examinations and tests
- Written assignments/essays.

The vocabulary of the SCQF Level Descriptors can be used with the learning outcomes statements to define the criteria for assessment. When designing a qualification or learning programme, you need to think about the intended learning outcomes and the assessment together. The method of assessment used should be appropriate for the learning.

For example, it would not be appropriate to ask a learner to write an essay as evidence that they can swim. If the learning outcome was “...*to be able to swim 50 metres without using any aids*”, an appropriate method of assessment would be to observe the learner swimming the required length.

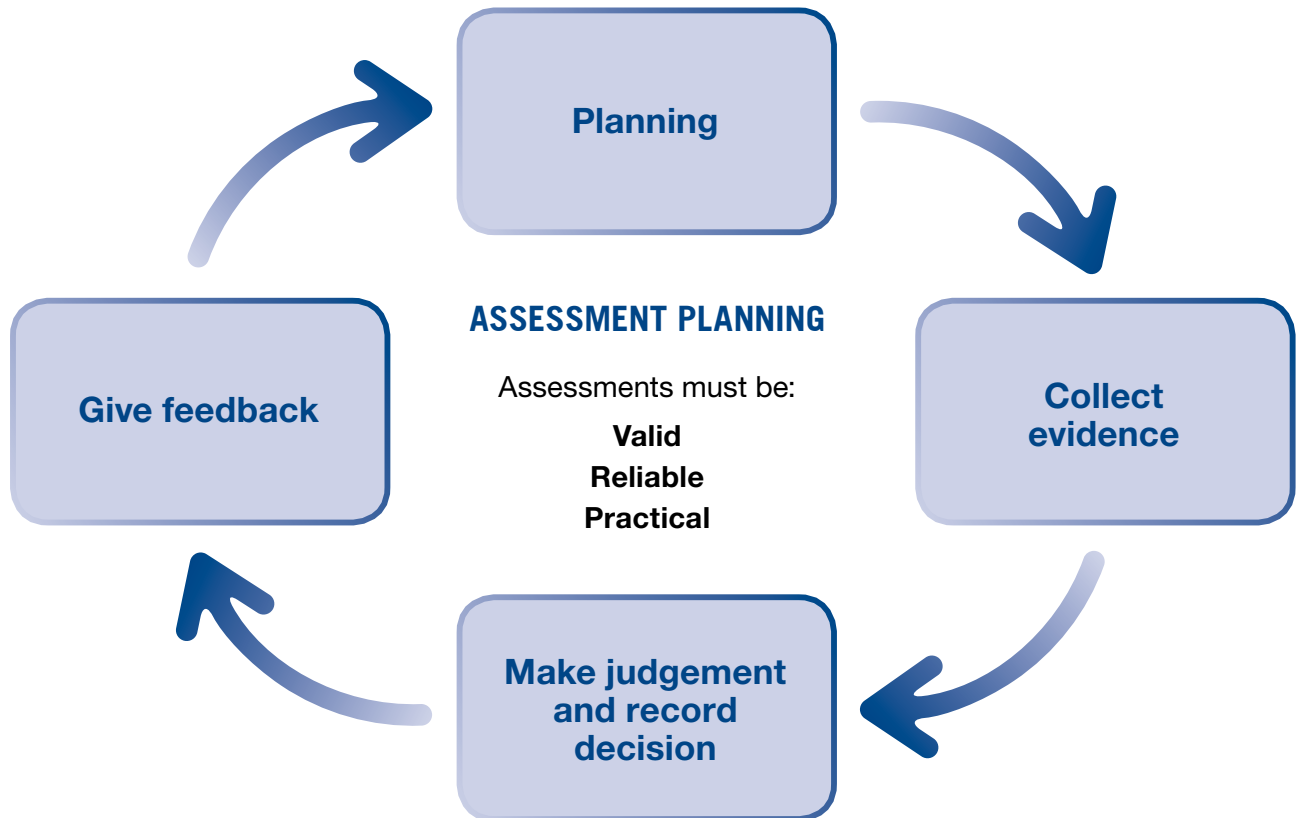
Equally, using the example of swimming, if the learning outcome was “... *to describe the actions that a swimmer must perform to be able to swim*”, the assessment method would involve the learner providing evidence of knowledge and understanding of how to perform the action of swimming. This might be assessed by a written report or by questioning the learner.

Summative assessment of qualifications and learning programmes is essential for inclusion on the SCQF. In some instances, this can be a key factor in deciding whether to credit rate qualifications or learning programmes. In some learning contexts, especially the voluntary sector and community based learning sectors there may be concerns that formal assessment would have a negative impact on the learning activity and compromise operating principles.

However, it is important to recognise that there is a range of assessment methods that can be used to fit with all learning contexts and will not intrude on the learning. These will add value to both the learner and the provider in recognising particular learning achievements. In these learning contexts, assessment is often done through a process of review and reflection of learning.



## ASSESSMENT PLANNING



### VALID:

- Does the assessment match the learning outcome?
- Can you generate evidence?
- Will the assessor be able to make decisions?
- Does the assessment exclude anyone?

### PRACTICAL:

- Is it cost effective and efficient?
- Have you got the necessary resources?

### RELIABLE:

- Will the assessor make decisions consistently?
- Will it always generate evidence linked to the learning outcome?



# SECTION 4: ALLOCATING LEARNING HOURS AND CREDIT POINTS

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## NOTIONAL LEARNING HOURS

The SCQF Handbook defines notional learning hours as:

*the time required for a “typical” learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes.*

A “typical” learner refers to a learner who is currently working at or just below the level of the programme they are undertaking. It does not refer to a perception of ability nor is it based on age or experience.

Notional learning hours includes all the learning activities that are required to achieve the learning outcomes. When credit rating a qualification or learning programme, it is important to consider the time spent on activities that take place before and after delivery as well as the actual delivery.



For example, activities before delivery might include:

- preparation such as reading materials provided prior to delivery;
- self-reflection on prior knowledge and experience and how it links to the delivery;
- personal programme planning; and
- using libraries or learning resource centres for reading and research.

Some of the more obvious activities for actual delivery are:

- attending formal teaching sessions;
- practical work in laboratories and other locations;
- relevant ICT activities;
- self-directed study using online or text-based open learning materials; and
- involvement in informal learning such as community groups, youth groups, outdoor activities.

After delivery, notional hours might include:

- private study, revision or remedial work;
- assessment of learning;
- reflection on what has been learned; and
- practice through gaining, using and refining skills in the workplace.

Notional hours must reflect the time spent on ALL of the activities relating to the programme.

The allocation of SCQF Level and Credit Points does not demonstrate inter-changeability of qualifications or learning programmes. For further information on SCQF Credit Transfer see Section 4 of the SCQF Handbook.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

More details on credit points and notional learning hours can be found in the SCQF leaflet entitled 'Credit Points Explained' which is available online at [www.scqf.org.uk/resources](http://www.scqf.org.uk/resources).

# SECTION 5: ALLOCATING AN SCQF LEVEL

## How do I allocate an SCQF Level to units or modules in a qualification or learning programme?

The content of the learning outcomes combined with the assessments will determine the level of a learning component/unit/module and ultimately the level of the overall qualification or learning programme. The following suggested actions may help to identify the level of a qualification or learning programme:

- Ensure you are familiar with the SCQF Level Descriptors and the distinctions between levels.
- Refer to appropriate sources of information and advice on credit rating given out at the 'Would You Credit It?' workshops run by the SCQF Partnership.
- Refer to the handout 'Allocating a level to Modules/Units and programmes' in Annex D.
- Match the overall aims and learning outcomes to the SCQF Level Descriptors.
- Ensure the learning outcomes relate clearly to a particular SCQF Level.
- Check that the wording of the learning outcomes suggests a level of skill.
- Ensure that the assessment evidence indicates a particular level of performance.
- Identify other similar qualifications that have been credit rated/allocated an SCQF Level to use as a "benchmark".
- Look at other reference points for comparison such as relevant occupational or professional standards if available and subject benchmarks.
- Consider the SCQF Level Descriptors at the levels above and below the anticipated level for the qualification or learning programme. Ask why the qualification or learning programme would not be placed at the level above or below your decision.

## How can I use the SCQF Level Descriptors to allocate an SCQF Level to a qualification or learning programme?

- Qualifications or learning programmes will generally consist of several components, such as units or modules.
- When individual units or modules have been mapped against the SCQF Level Descriptors to allocate an SCQF Level, the next stage is to decide how to allocate an SCQF Level to a whole qualification or learning programme.
- You should level each of the units or modules individually using the five characteristics of the SCQF Level Descriptors and then aggregate the levels to decide on an overall SCQF Level for the qualification or learning programme. Remember, not all the characteristics will necessarily apply to every programme. For more guidance on different scenarios, refer to Appendix D.
- In many instances, all units or modules will have been mapped against the SCQF Level Descriptor for one level. If that is the case, it is likely that the whole qualification or learning programme can be allocated that SCQF Level. However, it is still necessary to review and test this allocation.
- If that is not the case, there are different approaches to allocate a level to a whole qualification or learning programme.

## What happens if the learning outcomes for some units in my learning programme are at different levels?

In instances where a qualification or learning programme includes components from different SCQF Levels, they should be reviewed together to make a decision about the overall level of the qualification or learning programme. The following models can be used to reach this decision to allocate an overall level:

### Exit level model

- Is it designed to take learners from a lower starting point to a higher end point?
- Does it involve a form of exit assessment that is at the level of the qualification or learning programme?

### Proportional design model

- Does it have core components that cover the main elements with a range of options?
- Does it have a minimum of half of the credit points at, or above, the overall level?

More examples of different models can be found in the document 'Allocating a level to a learning programme' in Annex D.

## SECTION 6: QUALITY ASSURANCE



For a programme to be credit rateable two types of Quality Assurance must be in place:

Internal QA requirements must consider:

- arrangements for safe record keeping;
- arrangements for secure assessment (anti-fraud/plagiarism);
- verification of the assessment processes being carried out by a person not involved in delivery of programme;
- arrangements for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL);
- an approach to act on both internal and external advice; and
- review process.

External QA requirements must consider:

- using an external person or group to carry out an independent report to ensure that the overall processes and systems have been used consistently;
- the QA expertise and subject area competency of those involved; and
- an annual report for submission to the CRB.

NB: External QA can often be provided by the CRB but a cost will be incurred if this service is required.

# SECTION 7: SUBMITTING YOUR PROGRAMME TO A CREDIT RATING BODY

Once you have prepared your programme and checked that it meets the criteria for credit rating, you are ready to approach a Credit Rating Body.

We would always suggest you speak to the SCQF Partnership first for non-biased advice on Credit Rating Bodies. They will talk to you about the rough level of the programme as well as its content and recommend two or three organisations to approach. As there is a cost to credit rating, it is helpful to compare the costs of two or three credit rating bodies.

Once you have chosen a Credit Rating Body you may find that each one may use its own documentation to record information for their credit rating process and procedures.

You should check with your Credit Rating Body to confirm any specific forms they require.

The Credit Rating Body will review your programme and advise whether it is ready for credit rating. They will then appoint experts and a review panel to take the programme through the credit rating process and work with you to agree timescales.

Once the programme is credit rated, the Credit Rating Body will load the programme onto the SCQF database and advise you on certification requirements and correct use of the SCQF logo.

Programmes are normally reviewed between three and five years but it is the decision of the Credit Rating Body and they will advise you of their procedure.

## ANNEX A: GLOSSARY

Term	Explanation
<b>Credit Rating</b>	The process of allocating SCQF Level and Credit Points to qualifications and learning programmes, whether formal, non-formal or informal.
<b>Credit Rating Body</b>	An organisation that carries out credit rating for the SCQF. These are Scotland's colleges, Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), SQA and other organisations that have been approved by the SCQF Partnership.
<b>Credit Transfer</b>	The transfer of SCQF Credit Points from one programme into another to minimise the duplication of learning.
<b>Learning: Formal</b>	Takes place within the context of programmes delivered by learning and training providers. It is assessed and leads to recognised qualifications.

Term	Explanation
<b>Learning: Informal</b>	Informal learning can be defined as experiential learning and takes place through life and work experiences. It is often unintentional learning. The learner may not recognise at the time of the experience that it contributed to the development of their skills and knowledge. The recognition may only happen retrospectively through the RPL process, unless the experiences take place as part of a planned experiential or non-formal learning programme.
<b>Learning: Non-formal</b>	Non-formal learning takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training. It may be assessed but does not typically lead to formal certification. For example, learning and training activities undertaken in the workplace, voluntary sector or trade union and through community based learning.
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.
<b>Learning Providers</b>	Organisations across all education and training sectors that provide formal, non-formal or informal learning.
<b>Notional Learning Hours</b>	The time required for a typical learner at a specified SCQF Level to achieve the learning outcomes. Includes all the learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes as well as the assessment.
<b>Professional Judgement</b>	A decision reached by those best qualified through experience and knowledge of the discipline, field of study, profession, trade or area of skill.
<b>Recognition of Prior Informal Learning (RPL)</b>	RPL is the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.
<b>SCQF Credit Points: General</b>	Quantified learning outcomes that are subject to valid, reliable methods of assessment. The number of SCQF Credit Points is worked out on the basis of the amount of notional learning time that a 'typical' learner at a specified level might expect to take to achieve the learning outcomes, including the assessment.
<b>SCQF Credit Points: Specific</b>	General Credit Points become specific when they are recognised as being relevant for entry or transfer to a particular qualification or learning programme.
<b>SCQF Guidelines</b>	The SCQF Guidelines underpin the principles of embedding and implementing the Framework across all sectors of lifelong learning in Scotland. There are Guidelines on SCQF Credit Rating, Credit Transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning in the SCQF Handbook.
<b>SCQF Levels</b>	The SCQF has 12 SCQF Levels. The complexity of learning and level of demand increases from Level 1 through to Level 12.
<b>SCQF Level Descriptors</b>	These define the generic outcomes for the five characteristics for each of the SCQF Levels.

Additional support materials that provide further information, explanation and examples of best practice are available on the SCQF website, [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk).

# ANNEX B: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

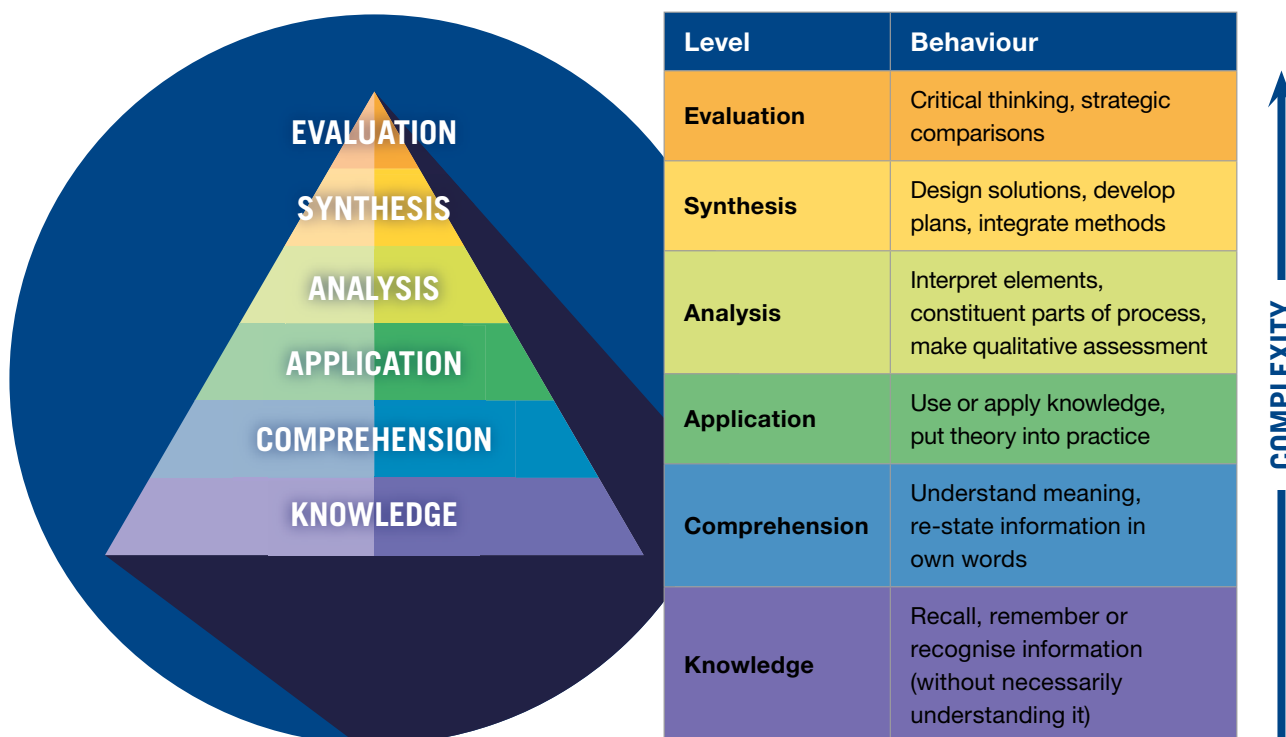
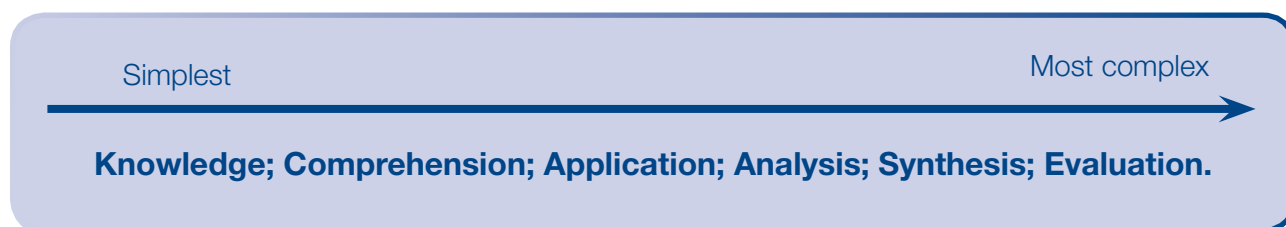
There are numerous sources of information on the topic of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956).

Further sources of information on this are available by searching online.

## BLOOM'S TAXONOMY: OVERVIEW AND KEY FEATURES

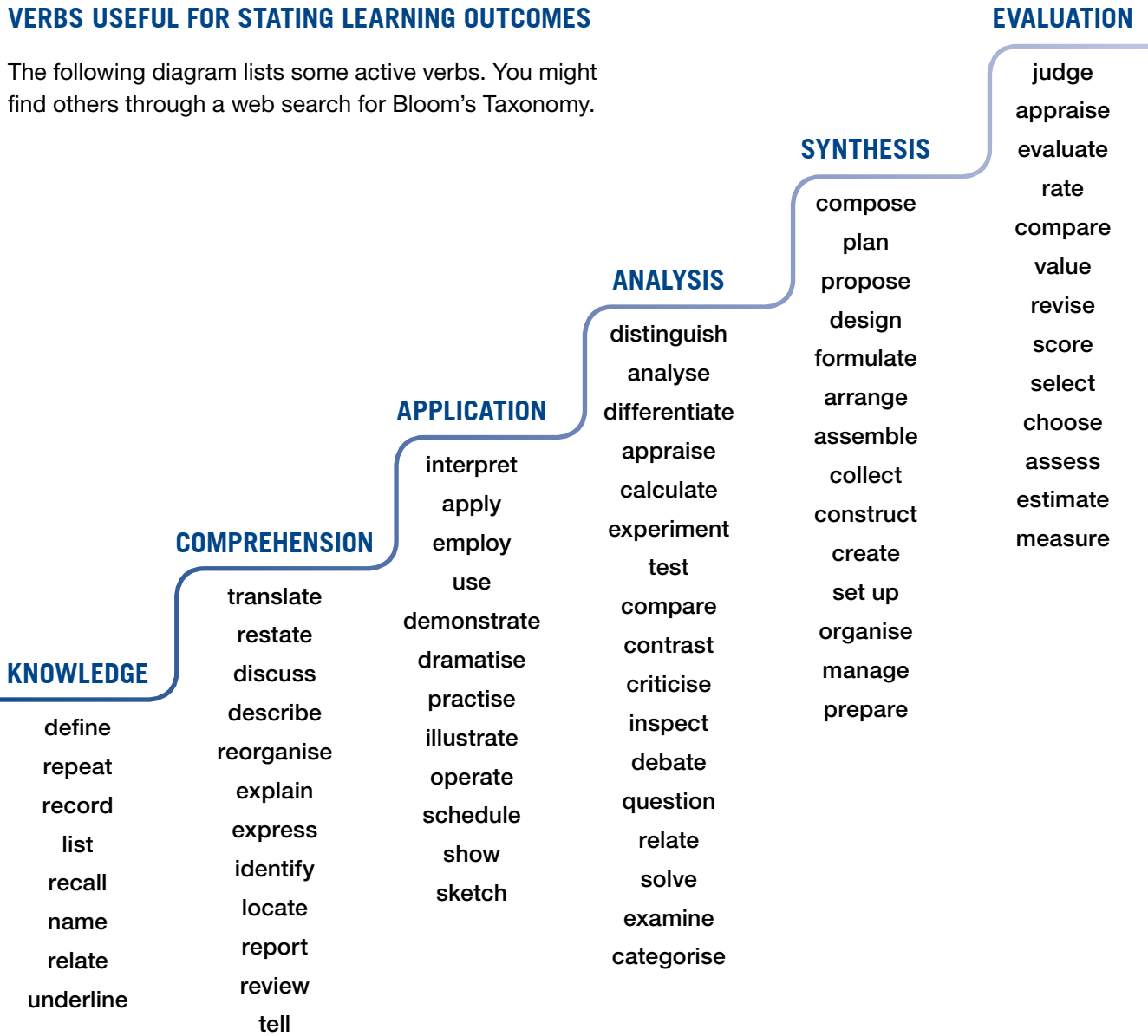
Bloom's Taxonomy is a useful reference tool to indicate vocabulary that is related to specific levels and specific knowledge and understanding and intellectual skills.

In Bloom's Taxonomy six categories of learning in the Cognitive Domain were identified. The following summary explains key features of this that relate to writing learning outcomes.



## VERBS USEFUL FOR STATING LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following diagram lists some active verbs. You might find others through a web search for Bloom's Taxonomy.



# ANNEX C: REFERENCES AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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## SCQF PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

(available from SCQF website – [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk))

- SCQF Level Descriptors Booklet
- SCQF Credit Points Explained: Notional Learning Hours leaflet
- SCQF Credit Rating case studies

## SQA PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

(available from the SQA website – [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk))

- SQA Guide to Assessment

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education website, [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)
- How to Use Level Descriptors, Jenny Moon , SEEC (2002)
- How to use Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria, Gosling D. and Moon J. (2001)

## BLOOM'S DIGITAL TAXONOMY

Many references and information about the updated version of Bloom's Taxonomy can be found online.







## ANNEX D: USEFUL TEMPLATES

The logo for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), consisting of the lowercase letters 'scqf' in white on a blue background.

scottish credit and  
qualifications framework

### ALLOCATING AN SCQF LEVEL TO MODULES/UNITS AND WHOLE PROGRAMMES

The first step in being able to allocate an SCQF Level to a whole programme is to look at the SCQF Level that has been allocated to each of the modules/units in the programme. The level of these will determine the level of the programme as a whole.

We would always recommend that credit rating is carried out by more than one person. The more people who agree about a level, the stronger will be your justification for deciding on that particular level.

### ALLOCATING AN SCQF LEVEL TO A MODULE/UNIT – HOW DOES IT WORK?

#### Step One

Read through the full module/unit – learning outcomes, criteria of achievement (performance criteria) and assessment or evidence requirements. Also read any additional information that is provided. This read through will give you a broad understanding of the content.

Think about what other programmes or qualifications you know that are at that recommended level. This may help you to understand a bit more about what level of demand is expected in this module/unit.

#### Step Two

Look at the SCQF Level Descriptors. Read through the descriptor at the level you feel it might be (remember, you know your own programme). What are your initial thoughts about how well the module/unit fits? Then read through a couple of the levels above the recommended level and a couple of levels below the recommended level. Are you starting to get a feel for where the module/unit might best sit?

#### Step Three

To carry out a detailed credit rating of the module/unit, you might want to use a scorecard showing the 5 SCQF Characteristics from the level descriptors, against each of the learning outcomes of the module/unit (see Figure 1 below). For each learning outcome and each characteristic, identify an SCQF Level and write this down. Remember – you are trying to get the ‘best fit’ which need not be an exact match. Perhaps one or more of the characteristics don’t apply to any of the learning outcomes of this module/unit. That’s fine – you can ignore that characteristic in this case. Also, not every bullet point listed under each characteristic will necessarily apply – that’s OK too. We’re looking for a ‘best fit’.

Figure 1

A scorecard like the one below could be used to help with the credit rating process. The first characteristic is completed as an example.

SCQF Characteristic/skill area	Best fit level	Comments (note that not all elements of the characteristics or level descriptors will necessarily be relevant)
Knowledge and Understanding	7	This unit requires learners to have a broad knowledge of administration in the context of further and higher education, including sound knowledge of the principles and techniques which underpin efficient administration in the education sector. It does not require detailed specialist knowledge of particular practice areas within education other than an awareness of them and some of their principal similarities and differences.
Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding		
Generic Cognitive Skills		
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills		
Autonomy, accountability and working with others		

**Step Four**

Once you’ve completed an analysis of each learning outcome/characteristic (skill area) you will have a list of SCQF Levels that you feel are the best fit for the learning outcomes (see Figure 2 below). From this list you may be able to see what the overall SCQF Level for the module/unit should be. For example, in Figure 2, the most prevalent SCQF Level is level 6, so this is the overall level for that module/unit.

Figure 2: Module/Unit A

SCQF Characteristic/skill area	Best fit level
Knowledge and Understanding	6
Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	6
Generic Cognitive Skills	7
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	5
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	6
<b>Estimated overall level (best fit)</b>	<b>6</b>

### What if there isn't a majority at one level?

In the example below you can see that two areas sit at level 7, two at level 6 and one at level 5.

Figure 3: Module/Unit B

SCQF Characteristic/skill area	Best fit level
Knowledge and Understanding	7
Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding	6
Generic Cognitive Skills	7
Communication, ICT and numeracy skills	5
Autonomy, accountability and working with others	6
<b>Estimated overall level (best fit)</b>	<b>6</b>

In this example, you will have to use your professional judgement to decide which of these characteristics is most important – a kind of ranking exercise. For example, in Figure 3 above, you might decide on balance that for this particular module/unit, Practice: Applied knowledge and understanding and Autonomy, accountability and working with others are the most important skill areas for learners. On these grounds you would allocate this module/unit an SCQF Level 6. Crucially, you should record your decision and your thoughts about why you have chosen this level for this module/unit so that anyone else querying the decision can understand why you have reached this conclusion. This would apply equally if you decided that the module/unit should be allocated, for example, an SCQF Level 7.

### Step Five: Consulting others

Once you've completed your work on all modules/units (or ideally before) you should compare your findings with those of someone else. Initially, there are likely to be some differences, but these will probably not be huge. You'll probably find that other people have come up with roughly the same SCQF Level. If there are differences, then you should sit down together and go through the module/unit and the level descriptors again. Each person should try to justify why they opted for a particular level. Then you can start to negotiate – using your professional judgement – about which SCQF Level should be your final decision. Remember – you can only choose one SCQF Level per module/unit. Remember to record your final decision and your rationale for that decision.

The final tasks in this credit rating exercise are to (a) formally record the findings from the credit rating (b) write down a rationale for why your decisions were made the way they were. The rationales will be crucial to the Credit Rating Body and will undoubtedly help if there is any question later about why a particular SCQF Level was decided upon.

## IF THAT'S HOW I ALLOCATE THE SCQF LEVEL TO A MODULE/UNIT, HOW DO I APPLY A LEVEL TO A WHOLE LEARNING PROGRAMME?

### Step Six

The next step in the process is to allocate an SCQF Level to the whole learning programme. The main principle to apply here is that the SCQF Level of the programme should reflect the level at which the majority of the learning takes place. In figure 4 (below) you can see that although all the modules/units have the same credit points value, the majority of the learning - 50% of it (= 2 credit points' worth) - is at SCQF Level 7. Therefore, your programme of 4 SCQF Credit Points sits at SCQF Level 7.

Figure 4

Unit	Level	SCQF Credit
Using administrative software in the office environment.	5	1
Principles of efficient administration.	7	1
Applying office systems and procedures. Filing, accounting basics and writing skills.	6	1
Managing a team. Management theories and practice in administration.	7	1
<b>Overall best fit Level and Credit</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>

In the next example, the same units make up the programme, but this time they have a different number of SCQF Credit Points. From this example you will be able to see that both the level of each module/unit and the amount of credit are important when considering the overall programme level.

In Figure 5 (below), there are still 2 modules/units at SCQF Level 7. However, the majority of the learning (4 credit points' worth) takes place at SCQF Level 6. Therefore, on balance, this programme would sit at SCQF Level 6.

Figure 5

Unit	Level	SCQF Credit
Using administrative software in the office environment.	5	1
Principles of efficient administration.	7	1
Applying office systems and procedures. Filing, accounting basics and writing skills.	6	2
Planning and organising meetings	6	2
Managing a team. Management theories and practice in administration.	7	1
<b>Overall best fit Level and Credit</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

## MORE COMPLEX LEARNING PROGRAMMES

There are other ways to allocate an overall programme level when:

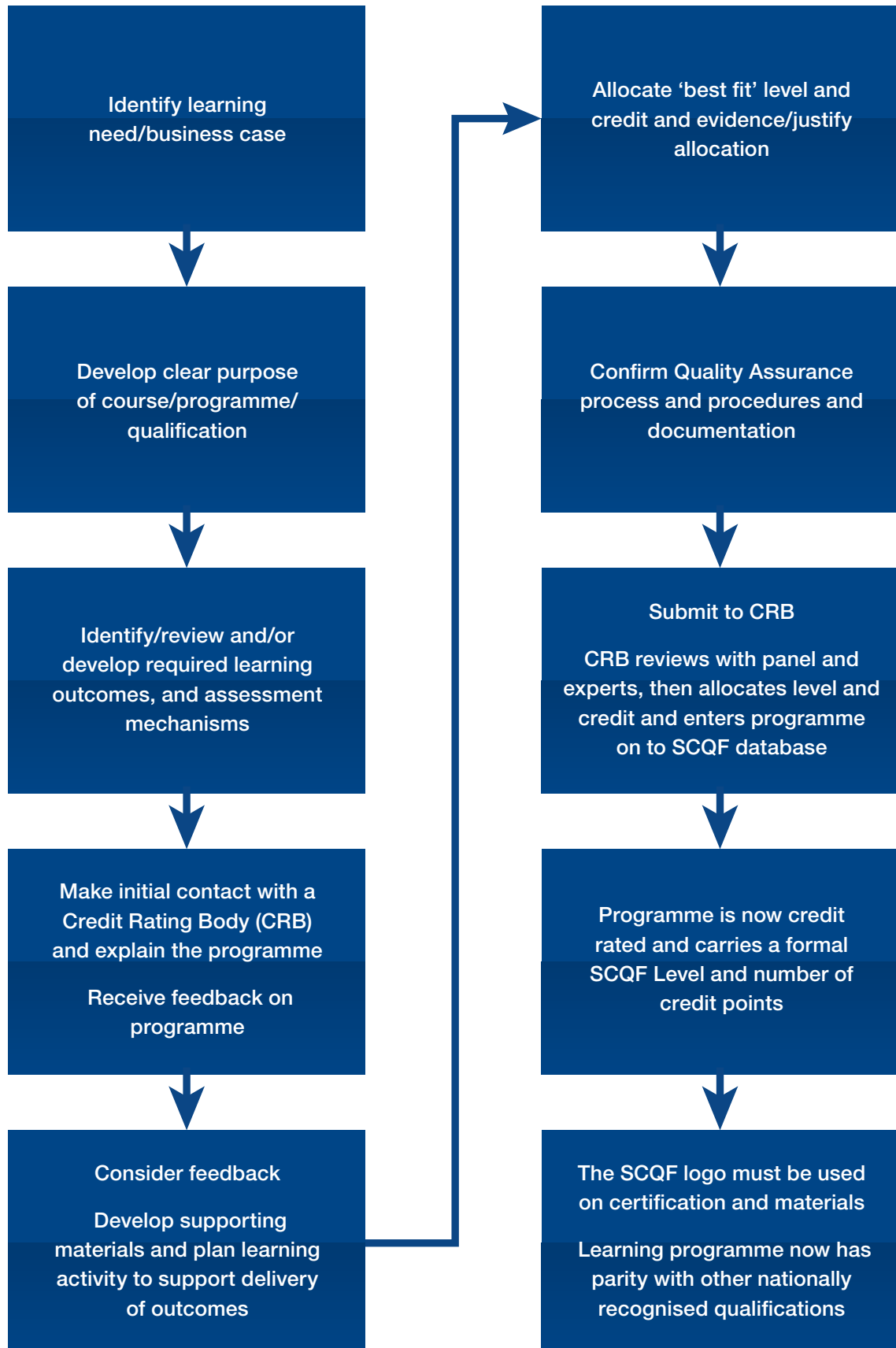
- 1) The programme has a number of core components which are mandatory but also has a number of optional or elective components, for an example, as in Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) or a Higher National Diploma.
- 2) Or, when the programme begins at a lower level and allows progression over a period of time to build skills and knowledge with the learner exiting with assessed capabilities at a higher level, for example, degree programmes.

For these and other more complex scenarios, your Credit Rating Body will be able to advise and assist.

# THE CREDIT RATING PROCESS



scottish credit and  
qualifications framework



## IS YOUR PROGRAMME READY FOR CREDIT RATING?

### Criteria Checklist

<p><b>✓ Clear purpose?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who is it for?</li><li>• What is it for?</li></ul>	
<p><b>✓ Written in learning outcomes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear?</li><li>• Unambiguous?</li><li>• Assessable?</li><li>• Not too big?</li><li>• Right level for purpose?</li></ul>	
<p><b>✓ Formally assessed?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How?</li><li>• Valid (assessment of and suited to learning outcomes)?</li><li>• Reliable (will it give consistent results and provide evidence)?</li><li>• Practical (can you do it consistently at reasonable cost)?</li><li>• Right level for outcomes?</li></ul>	
<p><b>✓ Minimum of ten notional learning hours?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Right mix of learning activities for outcomes, assessment and contact time/self-directed study?</li><li>• Have you allocated notional learning hours?</li><li>• Clearly documented activity and assessment to support credit allocation?</li><li>• Evidence and supporting materials?</li></ul>	

## ✓ Quality assured?

### INTERNAL

- A person(s) external to delivery or assessment (but can still be from within organisation)?
- Provided with evidence of assessment criteria and processes that are appropriate to learning outcomes?
- Effective procedures in place for approving, supervising and reviewing of assessment?
- RPL policy?
- Proper and secure recording of achievement?
- Procedures for taking into account external judgement?

### EXTERNAL

- Completely external appointment to the submitting body?
- Experienced in QA?
- Not focused on re-assurance of assessment, but on delivery and assessment processes?
- Knowledge of subject area needed?
- If not using the CRB then an alternative needs to be agreed with the CRB.

## ✓ Next steps?

- What further action/information do I need to take/access?

info@scqf.org.uk [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)  
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