

# Qualifications are changing

What you need to know – a guide for parents and carers  
Autumn/Winter 2011 Update



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This booklet answers important questions about the new National Qualifications. We'll explain what the changes mean for you and your family.

## Why are the qualifications changing?

Curriculum for Excellence is the Scottish Government's plan to introduce a new way of learning into schools and colleges.

Curriculum for Excellence is designed to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century.

The skills young people learn today will help them to succeed in life outside the classroom.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is designing new qualifications which will help young people demonstrate the knowledge and skills they've learned at school or college. The new National Qualifications will be available in schools and colleges from August 2013 onwards.

SQA is working with parents, teachers, colleges, universities and employers to make sure national standards are maintained and the new qualifications are of the same high standard as those we currently have.

The new qualifications will help young people reach their full potential as they progress from their broad, general education through to college, university, other learning and employment.





## Which qualifications are changing?

The table below lists the new National Qualifications and shows which current qualifications they will replace:

| New National Qualifications     | Replaces | Current National Qualifications                  |
|---------------------------------|----------|--|
| Access 1 and Access 2 (revised) | →        | Access 1 and Access 2                            |
| Access 3 (revised)              | →        | Access 3 Standard Grade (Foundation level)       |
| National 4                      | →        | Standard Grade (General level)<br>Intermediate 1 |
| National 5                      | →        | Standard Grade (Credit level)<br>Intermediate 2  |
| Higher (revised)                | →        | Higher   |
| Advanced Higher (revised)       | →        | Advanced Higher                                  |



## New awards

As well as developing Scotland's new National Qualifications, SQA is also developing a number of new Awards.

These new Awards will offer young people another way of recognising their achievements in school or college.

Some of the new Awards cover work from across different subjects areas and recognise success across different levels of difficulty, meaning they're suitable for young people of all abilities.

The new Awards, which will be available in 2012, will be marked and assessed by schools and colleges and do not have any external assessment or exams.



## When will the new qualifications be available?

The handy chart on the back of this leaflet shows when the new National Qualifications will be available.

The new qualifications will be introduced gradually.

In August 2013, **Access 1, Access 2, Access 3, National 4** and **National 5** will be available.

New **Highers** will be introduced in August 2014 and the new **Advanced Highers** will be available from August 2015.

In most cases, pupils will be in S4, S5 and S6 when they study for the new qualifications.

Speak to your school or college about how the new qualifications will be introduced.

# Will young people still choose their subjects?

Young people will continue to choose individual subjects at all qualification levels.

The actual Courses they will choose from are still being developed but information on these new Courses is regularly added to the SQA's website.

For more information about when young people will make their subject choices, speak to your school or college.



# How will the new qualifications be assessed?

Schools and colleges will continue to mark and assess **Access 1, Access 2, Access 3** as well as the new **National 4**.

Courses at **National 5, Higher** and **Advanced Higher** levels will still include work which is assessed by schools, but for these qualifications, students will also have to pass an additional assessment – usually a question paper and/or an assignment – which will be marked externally by SQA.

Assessment methods for the new qualifications will be appropriate to the subject and level pupils are studying. For example, a National 4 Geography case study will have different demands from a Higher Geography case study.

We are working with schools and colleges to implement robust quality assurance procedures that will ensure all our assessments are fair, consistent and continue to meet national standards.

For more information on assessment, visit SQA's website.



## How will the new qualifications be graded?

Courses will continue to contain work which is assessed and marked throughout the year by teachers, as it is at present. For example, teachers will continue to mark assessments such as PE or drama performances and English listening and talking assessments.

These are 'Units' of work which are marked as pass or fail in all National Qualifications.

Individual subjects at **Access 1**, **Access 2**, **Access 3** and **National 4** levels will not be graded but marked overall by pass or fail.

If a learner fails an end of year assessment/exam, they will receive credit for what they have achieved at that level. This is similar to what currently happens with a number of our other qualifications.

Subjects at **National 5**, **Higher** and **Advanced Higher** will be graded A to D.

If a learner fails an end of year assessment, they will receive credit for what they have achieved at the level they were working at. This is similar to what currently happens with a number of our other qualifications.

For more information on grading, visit SQA's website.



## How can pupils prepare for the new exams and assessments?

Sample question papers and other resources will be available before the first set of assessments to help pupils revise and prepare.



## Where can I find further information?

Your school or college is the best place to find out more about how they will introduce the new qualifications.

The SQA website, [www.sqa.org.uk/cfeforparents](http://www.sqa.org.uk/cfeforparents), is also full of useful information to help you understand the new National Qualifications.

## Other useful websites

Some other websites you might find useful are:

- [www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone)
- [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

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# Which qualifications will be available?

This table shows when the new National Qualifications will be available to pupils currently in S1 and S2. Pupils in S3 and above will continue to work towards the current National Qualifications.

| Academic Year / Session | Pupil is in S1 now:   | Pupil is in S2 now:   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
|                         | 2011/12   | S1<br>Pupil working at secondary level  |
| 2012/13                 | S2<br>Pupil working at secondary level  | S3<br>Pupil working at secondary level<br>Pupil may choose subjects for S4*         |
| 2013/14                 | S3<br>Pupil working at secondary level<br>Pupil may choose subjects for S4*<br>New Access 1-3, National 4 and National 5 available* | S4<br>New Access 1-3, National 4 and National 5 available*                          |
| 2014/15                 | S4<br>New Access 1-3, National 4, National 5 and Higher available*  | S5<br>New Access 1-3, National 4, National 5, and Higher available*                 |
| 2015/16                 | S5<br>New Access 1-3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher available*   | S6<br>New Access 1-3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher available* |
| 2016/17                 | S6<br>New Access 1-3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher available*   |   |

\*Speak to your school or college about how the new qualifications will be introduced.