



**Creating and Validating  
Awards for SCQF  
Credit Rating – Procedures**

**January 2026**

## History of Changes

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description of Change</b>	<b>Authored by</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>1.2</b>	Change to the title so that it is clear that the procedure relates to activity that we are credit rating using the SCQF. Inclusion of further guidance for the credit rating of third-party provision	D Killean	27/10/2015
<b>2</b>	Changes to reflect changes to the staffing structure and committees, and SCQF updates. Inclusion of relevant internal links to forms and external links. Removal of reference to third party credit rating. Removal of appendices. Renamed to improve accessibility	J Robertson	31 January 2019
<b>3</b>	Inclusion of Annual IV Report which is required after approval is granted. Removal of references to credits as an Approval Panel is always required. Committee name changed	J Gracie	15/09/2020
<b>4</b>	Updates of Job titles/roles	Lynne Gilchrist	24-10-22
<b>5</b>	Updated following College Credit Rating Review 24/25 and includes update of Job Titles/ roles and SQA name change	J George	January 2026

## 1. Preface

Borders College procedures to validate locally devised awards have been devised from Qualifications Scotland (formerly SQA) procedures for designing and validating new units and awards. The credit rating and level process uses the SCQF Partnership's Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) and associated documents.

## 2. Introduction

Locally devised awards must follow design principles to ensure that they are easy for the deliverer and candidates to follow and interpret. The delivery and assessment of the award must be practical and repeatable. The College will develop and credit rate and level locally devised awards only where there is no equivalent award available through a nationally recognised awarding body.

The College has used Qualifications Scotland's design principles and support documents to help develop this procedure. We use Qualifications Scotland examples because they are the main awarding body used by the College and their units and award design rules are familiar to College staff and managers.

The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) is based on the main programmes and qualifications that characterise the Scottish education and training system. The Framework has 12 levels, ranging from National 1 qualifications and Qualifications Scotland (formerly known as SQA) Awards at SCQF Level 1 to Doctorates at SCQF Level 12 (Appendix 1).

Borders College is permitted to credit rate its own provision and to credit rate third party provision. Credit rating is achieved through matching the expected outcomes of an award with the characteristics described in the generic level descriptors provided within the SCQF.

The allocation of credit points is achieved by judging the total amount of time an average learner would take to achieve the outcomes.

More detailed information can be found on the SCQF's website: <https://scqf.org.uk/>

Scotland's colleges SCQF rated provision is subject to external accountability through Education Scotland.

## 3. Procedure to Credit Rate New or Existing College Provision

When the need for new provision is identified the Assistant Principal (AP) and Head of Sector (HoS) investigates with the Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC) whether a product is available from an awarding body to meet the identified need.

The College will consider credit rating and levelling provision only where no existing nationally validated provision exists.

The HoS and/or the Delivery Team Manager (DTM) or Business Manager will seek approval from the Quality & Approval Committee (Q&AC) to commence the design and development of the new provision. They must demonstrate demand and the financial viability of the proposed provision following the Approvals Procedure and associated forms.

The Q&AC will:

- Give approval for the design of the new award to commence and allocate resources, or
- Place conditions before design can commence, or
- Reject the application

Where conditions are placed, the HoS/DTM or Business Manager must demonstrate to Q&AC that those conditions have been met before commencing design work.

In all cases, the Q&AC will appoint a Validation Panel to scrutinise the new award's design. The Validation Panel will also check the SCQF level and credits allocated to the award by the design team.

The Q&AC will also appoint an Approval Panel at this point to approve the award once the award has been validated as per Approvals Procedure.

The HoS and/or DTM or Business Manager will appoint a design team to create the new award following the College's award design principles.

Once approval to develop has been granted, a member of staff experienced in credit rating should be identified to work with those involved in designing the award. They will advise the design team in setting outcomes, assessment strategies, credit rating and levelling, and the development of unit descriptors. Consultation with appropriate industry representatives should be evidenced.

The design team should work to the Unit Specification Design Guidelines (Appendix 2), Award Design Guidelines (Appendix 3) and the SCQF Framework (Appendix 1).

On completion of the work, the DTM or Business Manager should submit the draft unit specifications, the award design documentation and evidence of the credit rating and levelling to the Validation Panel Chairperson.

The Validation Panel will meet once the design stage is complete. The Panel assures itself the awards aims, objectives, structure and assessment approaches meet the original applications intentions. They should also assure themselves that the award is practicable, content is clear, and the assessment approaches are valid, reliable, repeatable and practicable. The design team will have created the award to meet a particular credit value and SCQF level, which should be evidenced with the completion of the Credit Rate and Level a Programme Questionnaire (CR1). The Validation Panel assesses the award against the framework, checks the justifications recorded for the SCQF level against each characteristic, and either accepts or rejects the SCQF level and credit value suggested by the design team on the CR1.

The Validation Panel either recommends approval or imposes conditions on the award on behalf of Q&AC.

Where conditions have been imposed either because of design flaws or because the desired credit rating or level has not been achieved the design team can agree to a resubmission date for an amended award or withdraw the proposed award.

When validation is complete and credit values and levels are set then the development of teaching, learning and assessment material can commence in preparation for Approval and Internal Verification of assessment instruments.

Once the programme has been validated the QA will notify SCQF of the new provision, by adding the details of the programme to the SCQF Partnership Database.

The Internal Verifier for each SCQF provision will be required to complete an Annual IV Report form, which will be distributed by the QAC. The completed form will then be reviewed by the Assistant Principal: Quality and Development.

## **4. The Validation Panel**

### **4.1 Membership**

The membership of the Panel will vary according to the nature of the proposals it has to consider. The Director of MIS and Quality, or the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager will normally chair each panel. Members of the panel will include a HoS or DTM presenting the award, or Business Manager and a HoS or DTM from another sector. The Q&AC shall appoint each panel.

#### **Quorum:**

- Director of MIS and Quality, or the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager
- HoS or DTM or Business Manager presenting the award
- HoS of STM from sector (not presenting the award)
- Appointed External Specialist(s) with appropriate professional and/or vocational knowledge and experience

The appointment of External Specialist(s) is not mandatory for all Validation Panels. The organisation of an appropriate External Specialists is the responsibility of the presenting curricular area.

The following sources of External Specialists may be considered, and it is recommended that the design team consult with more than one source:

- local employers
- professional bodies
- local enterprise company
- reciprocal arrangements with other Colleges
- universities
- voluntary bodies

### **4.2 Presenting Staff**

The presenter is the HoS or DTM or Business Manager in charge of the proposed delivery. Note: The External Specialist should take no part in the portfolio area's presentation.

### 4.3 Remit of the Panel

- To ensure that the validation criteria are met.
- To place conditions on any area where criteria for validation are not met, with a timescale for the submission of new/revised evidence to the panel chair.
- To prepare reports for the next meeting of the Q&AC in line with the Panel's decision.

### 4.4 Roles and Remits

**Chair** (Director of MIS and Quality, or the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager):

The key role is to facilitate the smooth running of the Panel, provide independent advice and maintain and circulate a record of the decisions of the Panel to Q&AC.

#### **The HoS or DTM or Business Manager presenting the Award**

##### **External Specialist:**

The key role is to provide independent scrutiny of the proposal from a perspective external to the College and contribute to the decision of the Panel.

##### **HoS or DTM not presenting the Award:**

The key role is to provide independent scrutiny of the validation documents and unit specifications presented to the Panel, and to provide technical advice and support to the external specialist.

The Chair of the Panel, the appointed External Specialist and the appointed HoS/DTM make the decisions of the Validation Panel.

All recommendations should normally be met within three months of the date of the panel meeting.

### 4.5 Timing

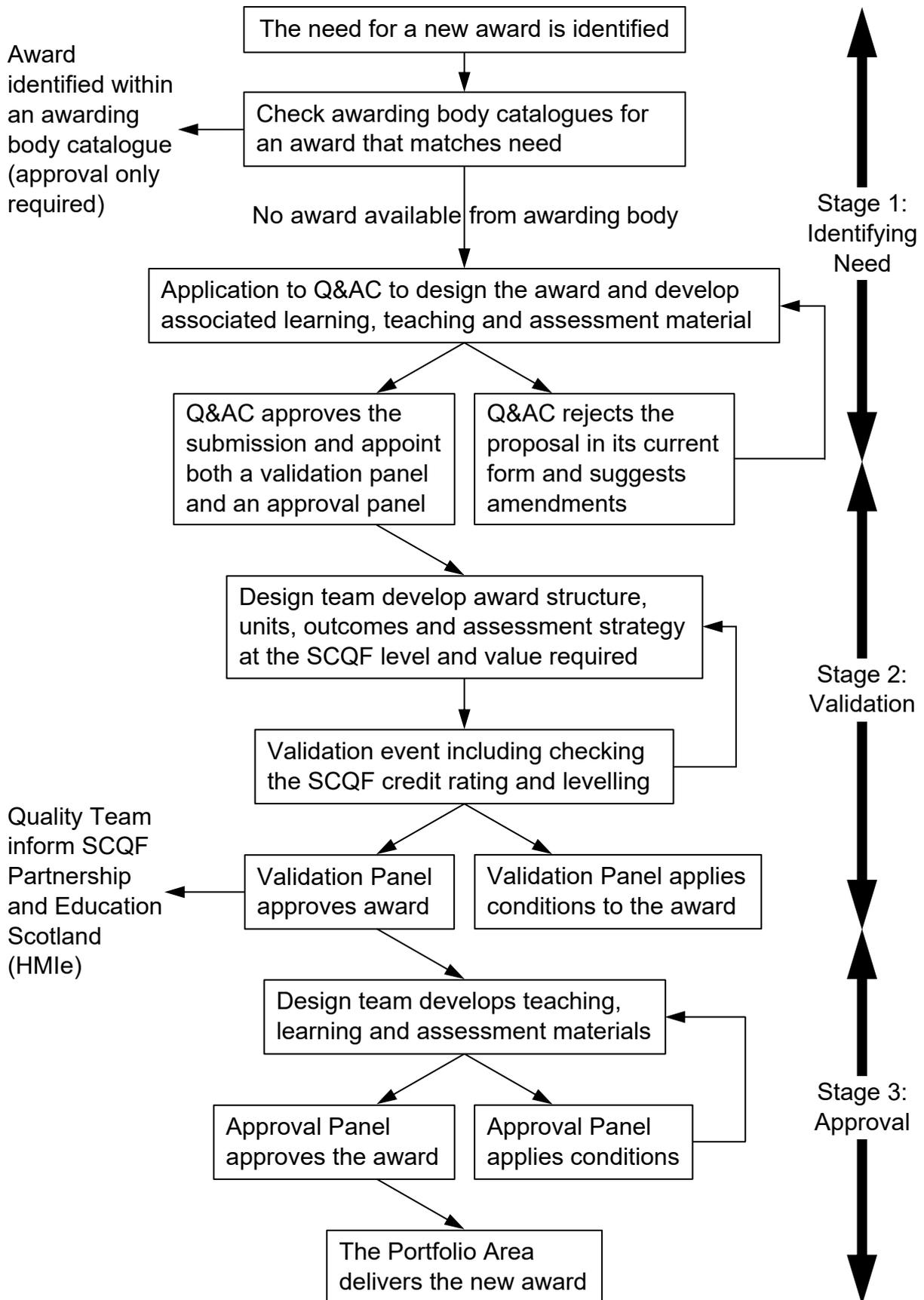
This will be as determined by the Q&AC.

### 4.6 Documentation for the Validation Panel

The Validation Panel will use the College internal Validation Panel Checklists (VP1 – single unit or VP2 – greater than 12 credits, as appropriate) to guide their judgement of the materials presented which must contain the following:

- All draft unit specifications (set out as described in Section 4)
- All completed credit rating and levelling documentation for each unit
- Validation documentation (set out as described in Section 5)
- All supporting evidence for the proposed award

## Validation and Approval of College Devised Awards Requiring SCQF Credit Rating and Levelling



## The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12				Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11				Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10				Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9				Professional Development Award	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8	Higher National Diploma		Diploma of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ	
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate		Certificate of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher				Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5				Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award		SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3				
2	National 2, Awards				
1	National 1, Awards				

## Unit Specification Design Guidelines

Where the award is intended to be a single unit of delivery there is a requirement to produce a unit specification and support notes with the sections set out below included within the documentation. There is no requirement to also submit documentation demonstrating how the design principles have been met in devising the award.

### 1.1 Unit Specification

The draft unit specification must include the following sections:

**Unit Title:**

The title should reflect the content of the unit.

**Unit code:**

To be provided by MIS.

**Unit purpose:**

The purpose should be an accurate summary of the Outcomes.

**Credit points and (SCQF) level:**

The credit rating and level of the unit should be stated. To calculate the level and points rating use the questions provided in Forms CR1 and CR2, and Exemplar CR3 in the College intranet.

**Recommended prior knowledge and skills:**

The unit should state the knowledge and skills required by a candidate as a prerequisite to starting this unit.

**Core Skills:**

The unit should state the core skills that will be developed by completing this unit and to what level.

**Context for delivery:**

The unit should provide information on opportunities for integration of delivery and assessment.

**Assessment:**

This section should set out the assessment strategy for the unit explaining how the unit will be assessed and where assessment can be integrated.

**Outcomes:**

Each outcome should state what is expected of the candidate in terms of the knowledge they should have or the skills they should be able to demonstrate. The SCQF level descriptors should be used to help word the outcomes and set them at the level required for the award.

### **Knowledge and/or Skills**

The Knowledge and skills required to undertake the outcome should detailed within this section.

### **Evidence Requirements**

The evidence requirements must match the required knowledge and skills and describe the type of evidence required. The required standard must be stated for each item of knowledge or skill. The unit should also state the type and amount of evidence required to achieve the outcome.

### **Assessment Guidelines**

This section should state how the assessment is to be conducted. The assessment method must be reliable and practicable. It should state details of how assessments could be integrated if this is feasible.

## **1.2 Unit Support Notes**

It is advisable to provide unit support notes to help in the delivery and assessment of the unit. They do not form a mandatory part of what the candidate needs to achieve to pass the unit, but they should expand of the information provided with the unit specification.

### **Guidance on content and context**

This section should expand on the Unit purpose and give more details of the Outcomes. It should expand on the content of each Outcome and the required knowledge and skills.

### **Guidance on delivery and assessment**

It should state the relationship between this unit and any college devised group award. It should provide guidance on the sequence of delivery and assessment. Information should be given on opportunities for flexible delivery and assessment through the use of a virtual or open learning.

Where the candidate is required to gather or produce evidence of their knowledge and/or skills guidance should be given on the authentication of this evidence.

### **Opportunities for developing Core Skills**

Detail should be provided of how the candidate can develop their core skills further through this unit.

### **Candidates with Additional Support Needs**

The following standard statement is given:  
“The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering alternative Outcomes for Units.”

### **General information for candidates**

This section should be an accurate summary of the Unit written in a user-friendly manner, addressed to the candidate in plain English.

## Award Design Guidelines

Where a proposed award is greater than 24 credits or designed to include several credits and award pathways then the design team must also produce a validation document for the award by following the Award Design Guidelines stated below. The validation document should have separate sections for each of the headings below and appendices including the unit specifications and any supporting evidence.

### 1.1 Validation Document Sections

#### Front Page

Award Title  
Level and credit rating  
Curricular Authors

#### Aims

The aims of the award should be consistent with the nature of the target group and the level of the qualification.

- The specific aims must be clearly and adequately stated.
- The aims must be appropriate to the target group.
- There must be evidence of employer/sector support for the aims of the qualification.
- The aims should be reflected in the qualification title.
- The aims should demonstrate the achievement by the successful candidate.
- The aims should state if they include the development of Core and/or other transferable skills, where appropriate.

#### Access

The qualification should have no features which create barriers to achievement by placing unnecessary restrictions on the place, pace or mode of learning.

- The selection criteria for access to the qualification should be clear.
- There should be a realistic indication of the previous achievement or experience which a candidate should have on entry to the award.
- The access statement should clearly define the required level of prior knowledge and skills.
- Access to the award should be based on recognised qualifications, where appropriate.
- The access requirements should be appropriate to the level of the qualification and advice given on bridging any learning gap.
- There must be consistency between the Award and Unit specifications access criteria.

## **Structure**

The structure of the Award should be clearly stated. The aims of the qualification should be satisfied by all allowable combinations of Units.

- The structure of the Award should be clear and unambiguous.
- The choice of structure (mandatory or mandatory/optional or optional) should reflect the title and aims of the award.
- The structure of the Award should have an appropriate number of credits.
- All possible routes to the qualification must satisfy the aims of the qualification.
- All routes must be equal in terms of the number of credits and levels.
- There should be a logical progression and/or link between the Units of the Award.
- There should be evidence of coherence between the Units of the Award.
- There should be evidence of support from employers/sector for the structure of the qualification.

## **Approaches to delivery and assessment**

This should provide information which help to contextualise and expand on the rationale and aims of the Award.

- It must provide information on how the Award will be delivered.
- It must provide advice to course team on approaches to the organisation of delivering the Award.
- It must provide guidance on how embed delivery in workplace experience or simulation, where appropriate.
- It must provide information on the recommended sequence in which Units should be delivered.
- It must provide guidance on the possible integration of content or Units.
- It must provide advice on assessment strategy.
- It must provide guidance on potential integration of assessment.
- It must provide guidance on the modes of delivery, including flexible learning, and the implications of different modes.
- If Core and/or other transferable skills have been included in the aims, further guidance must be given

## **General information for candidates**

The information should be clear and helpful and written in a style and tone appropriate for candidates.

It should give information on:

- The knowledge and skills to be developed,
- The contribution it could make to their job/career,
- Conditions of the award,
- Possible progression routes,
- The types of learning and assessment activities involved.

### **Unit Specifications**

The validation document should contain a complete set of specifications for all mandatory and optional Units, which make up the Award framework.

### **Supporting evidence**

There should be evidence to support the claims made within the validation document in the form of an appendix which should include details of the consultation undertaken, and a summary of the feedback obtained from employers, schools, universities, national bodies, and details of market analysis and any professional body recognition.

The SCQF Level Descriptors are designed to allow broad comparisons to be made between the outcomes of any learning that has been, or can be, subject to valid, reliable, and quality-assured assessment. They are not intended to give precise or comprehensive statements of required learning at each level, but can provide a useful reference point when:

- determining the SCQF level of a qualification or programme of learning.
- designing a programme of learning.
- determining the level of individual units/modules etc.
- assessing prior learning.
- providing guidance/information on learning opportunities/training provision.

It is not envisaged that every qualification or programme will, or should, have all of the characteristics set out in the level descriptors.

## Useful Internal and External Documents

### Available from the College Intranet:

- Credit Rate and Level a Programme Questionnaire (CR1)
- SCQF Credit Points Proforma (CR2)
- Exemplar – Summary Checklist to Credit Rate and Level a Programme (CR3)
- Validation of Locally Devised Awards Single Unit Validation Checklist (VP1)
- Validation of Locally Devised Awards Checklist (VP2)

### Useful external links:

SCQF website

<https://scqf.org.uk/>

SCQF interactive framework

<https://scqf.org.uk/interactive-framework/>

SCQF handbook

<https://scqf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/handbook.pdf>

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