



Frequently Asked Questions — Centres Higher National Graded Units

Q: Will learners be certificated as normal?

A: Yes, learners will be certificated for the full award through the normal process and their certificates will look the same as usual. Administration of grades will also be processed in the usual way.

Q: Will the qualifications still have the same number of credit points or do centres need to deliver additional units?

A: The qualification will contain the same number of credit points as usual and centres should not deliver additional units. The removal of the need to complete the assessment of the graded unit is intended to allow more time to focus on delivery and assessment of all other units within the qualification framework and to reduce the burden of assessment.

Q: My learners have already completed part of their graded unit. What happens to this work/evidence if we choose not to continue delivering and assessing the graded unit?

A: Any evidence gathered from partial delivery and assessment of the graded unit can be used to inform the grading decision. This evidence can be used alongside the other evidence you have for the principal aims and contributing or mandatory units of the graded unit as noted in [Guidance on gathering key evidence for Higher National Graded Units in session 2020–21](#).

Q. What is the difference between ‘contributing’ and ‘mandatory’ units?

A: Contributing units are listed under the ‘recommended entry’ or ‘recommended prior knowledge and skills’ section within the graded unit specification. Mandatory units in the group award should be referred to if the graded unit specification does not specify contributing units.

Q: The graded unit’s contributing or mandatory units do not give enough scope for learners to excel above a pass or fail. Is it possible to consider other units delivered in the course to contribute to a learner’s grade?

A: Yes. SQA issued guidance in August supporting a combined assessment approach for session 2020–21. Additional units deemed to provide strong grading evidence can be considered if they can be linked to the principal aims. However, the focus for making an assessment decision and final grade should be based on the guidelines issued in the document [Guidance on gathering key evidence for Higher National graded units in session 2020–21](#).

Q: Some learners have already started and/or completed some of the contributing/mandatory units. Isn't this putting them at unfair disadvantage as they were not aware these would contribute to the overall grade?

A: The assessor should use the units as a basis for grading but should also take a holistic view of each learner's work over the course of the award to arrive at a fair and robust grade.

Q: The guidance document explains the graded unit process as mapping against the graded unit specification, but also against the group award aims. Can this be clearer?

A: The grading is linked to the principal aims in the group award specification that are identified in the graded unit specification.

Q: Do we need to grade every contributing or mandatory unit?

A: No, assessors should provide feedback for the units. All feedback should then be collated and a final grading applied at the end of the academic session.

Q: Can we share resources and approaches across the sector?

A: Centres may use existing networks for sharing of resources where possible and practicable. However, approaches for supporting learners in generating assessment evidence are dependent on a wide range of local factors, including the extent to which assessment has already taken place, access to equipment and resources, and remote communication networks. Therefore, assessment approaches and conditions will be based on professional judgement at local level.

Q: How can we apply a grade to a graded unit when it has not been delivered?

A: The graded unit is the summation and application of the learner's understanding of contributing or mandatory units required to meet the principal aims of the graded unit. The course team, through a professional discussion, will review the quality of learners' evidence in relation to the graded unit assessment criteria to determine a grade.

Q: Should we continue with progress meetings?

A: Lecturers/assessors should continue to provide feedback on the quality of learners' work. Progress interviews also provide an important monitoring and authentication mechanism where lecturers can ensure that work produced is a learner's own.

Q: Learners are completing the course on a part-time basis. Can we refer to mandatory or contributing units completed last session as part of the grading process?

A: Yes, these can contribute to the overall grade. However, as learners were not aware these would form part of the grading process for this session, a grade should be based on a holistic view of the learner's achievements towards the end of the academic session taking into account the quality of evidence rather than quantity.

Q: Learners had to defer last session as it was not possible to complete the course. Can we refer to mandatory or contributing units completed last session as part of the grading process?

A: Yes, these can contribute to the overall grade. However, as learners were not aware these would form part of the grading process for this session, a grade should be based on a holistic view of the learner's achievements towards the end of the academic session taking into account the quality of evidence rather than quantity.

Q: I have learners who failed the graded unit last year and want to infill this year. How will we manage this if we are not delivering or assessing the graded unit this session?

A: It is the centre's decision when re-assessment takes place. Your centre will have a policy in place for this.

Q: The existing grading structure for graded units is C 50–59%, B 60–69% and A 70–100%, however the pass marks for the units is 60%. How do we manage this?

A: Grading should take a holistic view of the learners' assessment evidence over the course of the award to form fair and robust grade based on the grading criteria rather than individual percentages.

Q: The guidance talks about diaries/logbooks. How would this work and is this mandatory?

A: Logbooks and diaries may support learners gathering relevant evidence such as reflecting on and evaluating what they have learned. This is not mandatory.

Q: How can we ensure standardisation in graded unit assessment judgements across the sector?

A: The guidance outlines a standardised approach across the sector. These are truly exceptional circumstances, and we are asking centres to make judgements on candidate evidence using criteria that are used by centres every year. The difference this year being the flexibility for centres to decide whether or not candidates will complete the task associated with Graded Units. External verification will also take place in due course

Q: Do centres need to use the pre verification service to adapt graded units?

A: No

Q: Are the graded units being verified? If they are verified is it enough for a centre just to provide the Candidate Outcome Record: (COVID-19: Session 2020–21) or do they also need to provide evidence from every unit to explain why they came to their decision?

A: Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions, all quality assurance activity will take place in a virtual platform with group award verification taking place for Higher National qualifications, where logistically possible. Unit verification will take place if the group award verification is not possible. You must maintain robust records in support of all assessment decisions as this may be asked for during external verification.