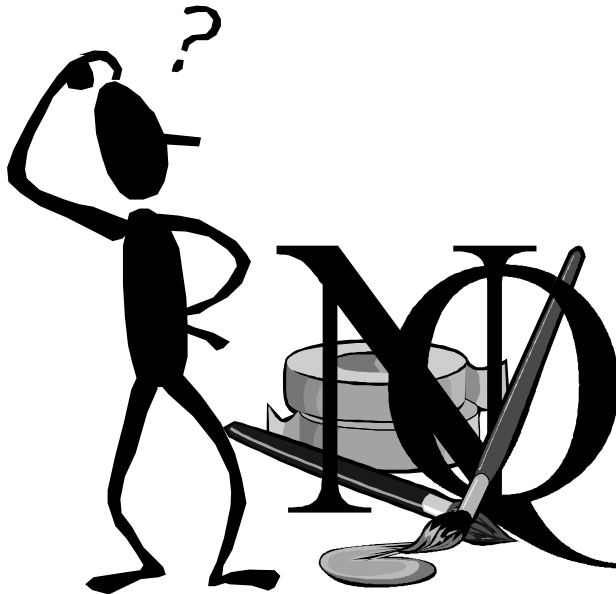




"Serving Parents
for 60 Years"

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**The Qualifications Mystery
Tour!**

A simple guide for parents

The Programme Outline

May/June is the exam season. Parents worry, pupils worry and teachers worry that everything will go OK. But what exactly are all the exams that pupils do these days and how do they fit together? The picture is very complicated with some youngsters doing Standard Grades, some doing "Intermediates" and some taking the new Skills for Work courses. Some youngsters start exams in S3 whilst others wait until S4. Some do everything at school, whilst others go off to the local college for part of the time. **Decisions about what courses will be offered** and at what levels are made by the school, based on the experience of the staff and their judgement about which are the most appropriate courses for their pupils.

So, let's look at the various qualification options that are offered in **schools** or through **school-college partnerships**;

Standard Grades (SGs) are offered in schools. They have been around for about twenty years; they are available in the traditional school subjects.

- § Usually a two-year course with an exam taken in S4, although some schools offer the exams in S3.
- § Offered at three levels (starting with the lowest): Foundation, General and Credit.
- § Students normally sit two levels: either General/Foundation or Credit/General.
- § The exam is external, marked by SQA with grades tied to the specific levels. Credit level is graded 1 or 2; General level is graded 3 or 4 and a Foundation level is graded 5 or 6. A grade 7 indicates the course has been completed.

National Qualifications (NQs): is the overall name for a range of courses offered at school and college. They provide qualifications in traditional school subjects and more “vocational” subjects.

- § Courses are designed to be taken in one year but may be taken over a longer period of time.
- § They come in different levels (starting at the lowest): Access 1, 2 & 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher, Advanced Higher. Youngsters can progress upwards through the levels in the same subject or move sideways to a new subject and take it at a level that is appropriate to their skill and knowledge in that subject.
- § They can take courses of different levels in the same year.
- § Youngsters can move into the NQ courses from Standard Grade; they do not have to restart at the beginning.
- § All courses are made up of three units that are assessed by the school. (Units are also qualifications and can be taken separately).
- § For levels from Intermediate 1 to Advanced Higher there is also an external assessment/exam set and marked by SQA.
- § For the course to be awarded at Intermediate 1 to Advanced Higher, all three units plus the external assessment must be passed.
- § The pass grades, “A” (highest) to “C”, are awarded purely on the basis of the external exam. A “D” grade is awarded to students who just miss the pass mark in the external exam.
- § Access is a unit-only course; all three units must be passed to get the course award.
- § Whilst youngsters may take Access or Intermediate courses in any year when they are sitting exams, they do not usually take Higher before S5 or Advanced Higher before S6.

Skills for Work courses: these are offered through school-college partnerships and youngsters may take the course in college or partly in college and partly in school. They are new NQ courses and are still being developed at the various levels. They cover a range of more vocational subjects including Early Education and Childcare, Financial Services, and Construction. All courses cover employment skills like time-keeping, organisation, working with others, etc. They differ from other NQs in that there are four units and no final exam; youngsters must pass all four internal assessments to be awarded the course.

College Provision: The complicated picture continues once youngsters move beyond school. If they go to college, they may take Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) which come at five levels, Higher National Certificates (HNCs) or Higher National Diplomas (HNDs). These courses are vocational in that they focus on the needs for employment but they lead to very well respected qualifications and cover a large range of subjects including sciences, languages and health care. To find out more, go on the website of your local college. Moreover, someone with an appropriate HND can often move into year 3 of a degree at a University.

University Provision: Youngsters who go to university may do a degree course but then follow it up with a Diploma, Masters Degree or Ph.D.

If that is the range of qualifications, how do they fit together? All the qualifications have been carefully developed so that they fit into the **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)**. This shows the level of all qualifications, starting at level 1 for Access 1 and going up to level 12 for a Ph.D. It is easy to see at a glance what fits where so, for example, although they are all very different qualifications, SVQ level 2, Standard Grade

Credit and Intermediate 2 qualifications are all at SCQF level 5. For more information go to www.scqf.org.uk

Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework

SCQF level	SQA National Units, Courses and Group Awards	Higher Education	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12		Doctorates	
11		Masters	SVQ 5
10		Honours Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate*	
9		Ordinary Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate*	
8		Higher National Diploma Diploma in Higher Education	SVQ 4
7	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate Certificate in Higher Education	
6	Higher		SVQ 3
5	Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade		SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade		SVQ 1
3	Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade		
2	Access 2		
1	Access 1		

* These qualifications are differentiated by volume of outcomes and may be offered at either level

Other leaflets available

1. What is a PTA? / What is Parent Council?
2. A Model Constitution (PTAs)
3. Charities, Constitutions & Confusion
4. Money matters
5. Advice on Disclosure Checks

ABOUT S.P.T.C.

You may be interested to know that our membership insurance scheme covers:

- Public Liability
- Personal Accident
- Fidelity Guarantee
- Employer's Liability
- Extended Public Liability for hired-in entertainers
- All-Risks (for equipment purchased by the PTA/Parent Council)
- Short-term all-risks insurance for special events.

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Scottish Parent Teacher Council, the independent voice of parents, is a national organisation. It has been serving parents' groups in schools for 60 years. For further information and membership forms
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