

Graduate Level Apprenticeships

Product Specification at SCQF level 8

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Document control

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Terms and abbreviations

Term	Meaning
GLA(s)	Graduate Level Apprenticeship(s) / Apprentice(s)
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
HND	Higher National Diploma
PDA	Professional Development Award
DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
FA	Foundation Apprenticeship

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Contents

1.	Product Specification at SCQF level 8	4
1.1	What are Graduate Level Apprenticeships?	4
1.2	Why do we need Graduate Level Apprenticeships?	4
1.3	The flexible curriculum and employers needs	4
1.4	What are the Principles and Criteria of Graduate Level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8? 5	
1.5	Purpose of Graduate level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8	6
1.6	Work-based learning and the role of employers	6
1.7	Standards and professional bodies	7
1.8	Individualised Learning and the Recognition of Prior Learning and advanced entry	7
1.9	Graduate attributes	8
1.10	Equalities	8

1. Product Specification at SCQF level 8

1.1 What are Graduate Level Apprenticeships?

Graduate Level Apprenticeships (GLAs) are work-based learning programmes at SCQF levels 8, 10 or 11 that lead to degree-level qualifications. These are nationally recognised, accredited and certificated by a national awarding body. In the case of Graduate Level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8, they will lead to a Higher National Diploma (HND) a Professional Development Award (PDA) or a Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE).

1.2 Why do we need Graduate Level Apprenticeships?

Graduate Level Apprenticeships support the education and development of employees so that they acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and competence necessary to work and progress in the sector. These apprenticeships have several advantages and benefits when compared with traditional learning based primarily in an educational establishment.

In a Graduate Level Apprenticeship work-based learning is learning delivered and assessed in the workplace. Employees learn and reflect through working with others on real life challenges. The curriculum and the methods of delivery and assessment are based on what industry has identified as their current and future needs. This means that Graduate Level Apprenticeships deliver directly to the needs of industry.

Graduate Level Apprentices are paid employees. They are in employment and remain in employment while working towards a qualification. The integration of the achievement of skills, knowledge and competence results in individuals who, on completion of the award, are ready to work at the level required by their employers and by the industry as a whole.

1.3 The flexible curriculum and employers needs

As part of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) enhancement themes programme for higher education the flexible curriculum was identified as a key need of employers and employer bodies. These needs are equally applicable to the Graduate Level Apprenticeship at SCQF level 8.

The needs of employers and employer bodies in respect of flexible curricula are:

- programmes align with employer strategic objectives and goals
- partnership working is developed and sustained with employers
- programmes align with standards e.g. national occupational and professional body standards
- programmes and associated qualifications offer cross-border mobility
- partnerships and joined-up approaches are developed and sustained with educational providers
- employees are supported by employers and institution, using e.g. mentoring

Product Specification at SCQF level 8

- programmes develop employability-related skills
- work-related learning opportunities are developed that are cost-effective and efficient
- work-based learning offers flexible delivery

Employer needs have been recognised in the principles and criteria for developing Graduate Level Apprenticeship at all levels as has the need to ensure robust quality in the design and delivery of all programmes.

1.4 What are the Principles and Criteria of Graduate Level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8?

All Graduate Level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8 will:

- lead to a recognised qualification such as HND, PDA or Diploma of Higher Education with a minimum of 240 SCQF credit points
- be built on principles and practices of work-based learning
- have work based-learning thoroughly integrated into the programme design, delivery and assessment
- be based on a partnership between employer and the college or other training provider or university in the programme design, delivery and assessment and quality assurance
- ensure that apprentices have achieved necessary industry knowledge, skills and competence
- ensure that apprentices can achieve or work towards necessary professional/regulatory body standards
- ensure that apprentices have acquired a range of transferable and generic professional knowledge and skills
- ensure that apprentices have developed aspects of graduate attributes including research capabilities
- have processes and opportunities for the Recognition of Prior Learning as an integral part of the HND or Diploma of Higher Education
- have clear set of goals and aspirations in support of equality and diversity
- develop learning through the process of reflection on work practice and reviewing and learning from experience
- be recognised nationally across the sector by all employers
- be transferable across employers and industry

Colleges, other training providers or universities proposing to deliver a Graduate Level Apprenticeship should detail how they will meet the principles and criteria of the Graduate Level Apprenticeship at SCQF level 8 in the design and delivery of the programme.

1.5 Purpose of Graduate level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8

The aim of Graduate Level Apprenticeships is to ensure industry has a supply of highly skilled and qualified individuals. This will be achieved through an HND, PDA or Diploma of Higher Education which equips individuals with the required subject specific knowledge, skills and competence for their chosen profession.

These programmes will prepare the apprentice to work across the sector and to meet the needs of a range of employers.

The skills, knowledge and competence learned will be based on the needs of employers in the sector generally and not only the needs of one employer.

Graduate Level Apprenticeships will also enable individuals to develop a range of transferable skills, knowledge and competence to support their employability across a profession in a range of different roles and in different settings. They will equip the apprentice with generic skills, knowledge and competence in areas such as leadership and problem solving.

In these ways Graduate Level Apprenticeships will not only qualify the apprentice to enter the profession but will also open opportunities for future professional career development. The Graduate Level Apprenticeship will also be built on the standards of the relevant professional and/or regulatory body. Thus the individual on completion of the Graduate Level Apprenticeship may be in a position to apply for the formal recognition of that body at the appropriate level wherever the requirements of the professional body make that possible.

1.6 Work-based learning and the role of employers

This section should be read in conjunction with the SDS document [Work-based Learning Principles](#).

There is an assumption in Graduate Level Apprenticeship programmes that the workplace is also the place of learning.

The delivery of a Graduate Level Apprenticeship at SCQF level 8 is built on a partnership between employers and colleges, other training providers or universities.

The work-based learning component of Graduate Level Apprenticeships is a significant and central part of the whole award and is based on real life experience in the workplace. The apprentice's work setting will be central to the contextualisation of their learning and to the assessment of the award. Skills, knowledge and competence will be integrated throughout the programmes.

Colleges or other training providers or universities and employers will establish partnerships specifically for the purpose of delivering a work-based diploma. Employers have an equal role in the delivery and assessment of the programme. They will also have a role in the selection and ongoing support such as mentoring and in the range of quality assurance systems and processes.

1.7 Standards and professional bodies

Graduate Level Apprenticeships are based on the standards required by industry. These are normally occupational standards but may also include subject or professional benchmark standards. They are also based on the standards of professional or regulatory bodies. Apprentices must have a clear pathway to professional recognition.

Professional or regulatory bodies vary across occupations in terms of registration, regulation, certification and qualifications. In some professions it is necessary to belong to a professional body in order to practice. In others it may not be necessary but membership in that body may support career development. Professional bodies may have a range of different levels of membership depending on the achievement of specific awards or status.

Subject specific knowledge, skills and competence is identified by the relevant professional or regulatory body or bodies for that profession or occupation, and by the awarding bodies or universities that develop qualifications in that subject area. Government legislation and policy also contributes to the professional requirements. All of this contributes to the professional standard of any occupation or profession. The standard encompasses all of the skills, knowledge and competence which an individual must be able to have and do in order to qualify to act in that professional role. There is an expectation with this level of apprenticeship that the level at which individuals are taught and assessed must allow them to exit with an award at SCQF Level 8.

It will be possible in some sectors for apprentices having completed a Graduate Level Apprenticeship at SCQF level 8 to gain professional body recognition immediately on completion of the qualifications. In others apprentices will need to complete further training or to spend a given amount of time in practice. Because the curriculum of the Graduate Level Apprenticeship ensures that the learning outcomes of the HND PDA or Diploma of Higher Education align with professional standards these graduates will be in a strong position to work towards or to apply for professional recognition. In addition because of the pivotal role of the work-based learning experience on the Graduate Level Apprenticeship and because employers are partners in the design, delivery and assessment of the curriculum graduates will be well placed to meet the requirements of employers and the standards of professional bodies and it is expected to take less time to evidence.

1.8 Individualised Learning and the Recognition of Prior Learning and advanced entry

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) concerns learning which has its source in experience. It can be formative and can help learners identify skills and knowledge which they have gained through a variety of informal and non-formal situations and experiences. RPL can also be for credit through a summative process whereby the learning is assessed and credit given, for example, for entry to a formal programme of learning or for credit towards a qualification (SSSC 2008).

Within a Graduate Level Apprenticeship at SCQF level 8 the RPL process may be used for access to the programme or to assess and give credit for current competence developed in

the workplace. The RPL process can also form the basis of individualised learning which is designed to achieve the standards and the learning outcomes of the work-based curriculum.

Progression to degree programmes may also be possible. Some learning providers may allow admission to more advanced stages of the programmes. Skills Development Scotland expects individuals who have successfully completed Foundation Apprenticeships in the specified subject area to be able to use the FA as one of the entry criteria to a Graduate Level Apprenticeship.

It will be for providers to establish Graduate Level Apprenticeship programmes that provide for appropriate progression through SCQF levels 7, 8, 9 and 10.

1.9 Graduate attributes

Graduate attributes have been defined as being 'the skills, knowledge and abilities of university graduates, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable to a range of contexts'.

Scottish learning providers have all developed statements on graduate attributes, and common threads have been identified. These are: lifelong learning, research scholarship and enquiry, employability and career development, global citizenship, communication and information literacy, ethical social and professional understanding, personal and intellectual autonomy, and collaboration teamwork and leadership. (QAA 2011)

Graduate Level Apprenticeships at SCQF level 8 will support the development of graduate attributes including research capabilities for apprentices whether the Graduate Level Apprenticeship is through a HND, PDA or a Diploma in Higher Education.

1.10 Equalities

Learning providers and their partners are expected to be aware of the protected characteristics under equalities legislation. Programme developers will promote equality and take steps to avoid discrimination by taking positive action to increase the uptake by underrepresented groups in work and training in the relevant sector.

When developing the Graduate Level Apprenticeship colleges, training providers and universities and partners should undertake an equalities impact assessment to ensure appropriate measures have been addressed. Evaluation will be built into ongoing quality assurance processes.

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www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk