



National 5  
Course  
Specification



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# National 5 Biology Course Specification

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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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# Course outline

**Course title:** National 5 Biology

**SCQF:** level 5 (24 SCQF credit points)

**Course code:** to be advised

## Mandatory Units

<b>Cell Biology (National 5)</b>	<b>6 SCQF credit points</b>
<b>Biology: Multicellular Organisms (National 5)</b>	<b>6 SCQF credit points</b>
<b>Biology: Life on Earth (National 5)</b>	<b>6 SCQF credit points</b>

**Course assessment** **6 SCQF credit points**

This Course includes six SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

## Recommended entry

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by one or more of the following or by equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ National 4 Biology Course or relevant component Units

There may also be progression from National 4 Chemistry, National 4 Environmental Science, National 4 Physics or National 4 Science Courses.

In terms of prior learning and experience, relevant experiences and outcomes may also provide an appropriate basis for doing this Course.

## Progression

This Course or its Units may provide progression to:

- ◆ other qualifications in Biology or related areas
- ◆ further study, employment and/or training

Further details are provided in the Rationale section.

## Equality and inclusion

This Course Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Course Support Notes*.

## **Rationale**

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

## **Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles**

Biology affects everyone and aims to find solutions to many of the world's problems. Biology, the study of living organisms, plays a crucial role in our everyday existence, and is an increasingly important subject in the modern world. Advances in technologies have made this varied subject more exciting and relevant than ever.

Biology Courses should encourage development of skills and resourcefulness, which lead to becoming a confident individual. Successful learners in biology think creatively, analyse and solve problems. Biology aims to produce responsible citizens, through studying of relevant areas of biology, such as health, environment and sustainability.

The Course allows learners to understand and investigate the living world in an engaging and enjoyable way. It develops learners' abilities to think analytically, creatively and independently, and to make reasoned evaluations. The Course provides opportunities for learners to acquire and apply knowledge to evaluate biological issues, assess risk, and make informed decisions. This enables learners to develop an informed and ethical view of complex issues. Learners will be able to develop their communication, collaborative working and leadership skills, and be able to apply critical thinking in new and unfamiliar contexts to solve problems.

## **Purpose and aims of the Course**

The purpose of the Course is to develop learners' interest and enthusiasm for biology in a range of contexts. The skills of scientific inquiry and investigation are developed, throughout the Course, by investigating the applications of biology. This will enable learners to become scientifically literate citizens, able to review the science-based claims they will meet.

The Course will be of interest and value to learners wishing to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of biology. The Course is a broad and up-to-date selection of concepts and ideas relevant to the central position of life science within our

society. An experimental and investigative approach is used to develop knowledge and understanding of biology key areas.

The Course covers major areas of biology ranging from cellular to whole organism and up to ecosystems. The key areas of biodiversity, interdependence, body systems and cells and inheritance are developed through the Course. The focus on cellular level processes will lead to an understanding of the importance and roles of the cell. By comparing the processes in multicellular plants and animals, learners investigate increasing levels of complexity. In *Life on Earth*, the key areas of biodiversity and interdependence are covered, along with the processes leading to evolution as well as food security and ethical issues.

The Course allows flexibility and personalisation by offering choice in the contexts studied.

The aims of this Course are for learners to:

- ◆ develop and apply knowledge and understanding of biology
- ◆ develop an understanding of biology's role in scientific issues and relevant applications of biology, including the impact these could make in society and the environment
- ◆ develop scientific inquiry and investigative skills
- ◆ develop scientific analytical thinking skills in a biology context
- ◆ develop the use of technology, equipment and materials, safely, in practical scientific activities
- ◆ develop planning skills
- ◆ develop problem solving skills in a biology context
- ◆ use and understand scientific literacy, in everyday contexts, to communicate ideas and issues and to make scientifically informed choices
- ◆ develop the knowledge and skills for more advanced learning in biology
- ◆ develop skills of independent working

The Course also serves to equip all learners with an understanding of the impact of biology on everyday life, and with the knowledge and skills to be able to evaluate media reports. This will also equip learners to make their own decisions on issues within a modern society where the body of scientific knowledge and its applications and implications are ever developing. By using the skills base and knowledge and understanding of biology, learners will become scientifically literate citizens.

## **Information about typical learners who might do the Course**

The Course is suitable for learners who have experienced learning across the sciences experiences and outcomes. The Course may be suitable for those wishing to study biology for the first time.

This Course has a skills-based approach to learning. It takes account of the needs of all learners and provides sufficient flexibility to enable learners to achieve in different ways.

Biology Courses are offered from SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 7. Vertical progression is possible through these levels, while lateral progression is possible to other qualifications in the sciences. This Course can also assist entry to employment, training and further education.

# Course structure and conditions of award

## Course structure

The Course develops skills in a biological context. Learners will gain an understanding of biology, and develop this through a variety of approaches, including practical activities.

The Course has three mandatory Units, as listed below.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a number of ways.

Units can be taught sequentially or in parallel to each other. However, learning and teaching approaches should provide opportunities to integrate skills, where possible.

### Cell Biology (National 5)

In this Unit, learners will develop skills of scientific inquiry, investigation and analytical thinking, along with knowledge and understanding in the context of cell biology. Learners will research issues and communicate information related to their findings, which will develop skills of scientific literacy.

The key areas covered are: cell structure; transport across cell membranes; producing new cells; DNA and the production of proteins; proteins and enzymes; genetic engineering; photosynthesis and respiration.

### Biology: Multicellular Organisms (National 5)

In this Unit, learners will develop skills of scientific inquiry, investigation and analytical thinking, along with knowledge and understanding in the context of multicellular organisms. Learners will research issues and communicate information related to their findings, which will develop skills of scientific literacy.

The key areas covered are: cells, tissues and organs; stem cells and meristems; control and communication; reproduction, variation and inheritance; the need for transport and effects of life-style choices on animal transport and exchange systems.

### Biology: Life on Earth (National 5)

In this Unit, learners will develop skills of scientific inquiry, investigation and analytical thinking, along with knowledge and understanding in the context of life on Earth. Learners will research issues and communicate information related to their findings, which will develop skills of scientific literacy.

The key areas covered are: biodiversity and the distribution of life; energy in ecosystems; sampling techniques and measurement of abiotic and biotic factors; adaptation, natural selection and the evolution of species and human impact on the environment.

## Conditions of award

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

## Skills, knowledge and understanding

Further information on the assessment of the skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course is given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course is given in this section. This includes:

- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of biology by making statements, describing information, providing explanations and integrating knowledge
- ◆ applying biology knowledge to new situations, interpreting information and solving problems
- ◆ planning, designing, and safely carrying out experiments/investigations to test given hypotheses or to illustrate particular effects
- ◆ selecting and presenting information appropriately in a variety of forms
- ◆ processing information (using calculations and units, where appropriate)
- ◆ making predictions and generalisations based on evidence/information
- ◆ drawing valid conclusions and giving explanations supported by evidence/justification
- ◆ suggesting improvements to experiments/investigations
- ◆ communicating findings/information

Skills, knowledge and understanding to be included in the Course will be appropriate to the SCQF level of the Course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level ([www.sqa.org.uk/scqf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/scqf)).

# Assessment

Information about assessment for the Course is included in the *Course Assessment Specification*, which provides full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

## Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specification*.

They can be assessed on a Unit-by-Unit basis or by combined assessment.

They will be assessed on a pass/fail basis within centres. SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgments are consistent and meet national standards.

The assessment of the Units in this Course will be as follows.

### Cell Biology (National 5)

Learners who complete the Unit will be able to:

- ◆ apply skills of scientific inquiry and draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of this Unit to carry out an experiment/practical investigation
- ◆ draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of this Unit and apply scientific skills

### Biology: Multicellular Organisms (National 5)

Learners who complete the Unit will be able to:

- ◆ apply skills of scientific inquiry and draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of this Unit to carry out an experiment/practical investigation
- ◆ draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of this Unit and apply scientific skills

### Biology: Life on Earth (National 5)

Learners who complete the Unit will be able to:

- ◆ apply skills of scientific inquiry and draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of this Unit to carry out an experiment/practical investigation
- ◆ draw on knowledge and understanding of the key areas of this Unit and apply scientific skills

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units is provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

## Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)<sup>1</sup>. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge or application.

In the National 5 Biology Course, added value will focus on breadth, challenge and application.

Learners will draw on, extend and apply the skills they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed within a [question paper](#)<sup>2</sup> and an [assignment](#)<sup>3</sup>, requiring demonstration of the breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding acquired from across the Units and how they can be applied in unfamiliar contexts and/or integrated ways.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitions can be found here: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html)

<sup>2</sup> See link above for definition.

<sup>3</sup> See link above for definition.



# Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will develop broad, generic skills through this Course. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Course are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Course where there are appropriate opportunities.

## **2 Numeracy**

- 2.1 Number processes
- 2.2 Money, time and measurement
- 2.3 Information handling

## **5 Thinking skills**

- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these skills is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills will be appropriate to the level of the Course. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for the Course is given in the *Course Support Notes*.

## Administrative information

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**Superclass:** to be advised

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## History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date