



Human Resources
Goireasan Daonna

Guidance for Roles with a Qualification Pathway

Contents

Clàr-innse

Introduction	3
Guidance	3
Key principles	3
Recruitment and selection	4
Contract of employment and qualification guidance	5
Quick Links	7

Introduction

The Highland Council faces challenges in filling certain qualified roles across services, and this guidance sets out a positive and proactive approach to strengthening our talent pipeline. By welcoming individuals who bring enthusiasm, potential, and a commitment to developing their professional skills, we can reduce pressure on existing qualified staff while opening opportunities for motivated candidates who may not yet hold the required professional qualification. This supportive pathway enables such individuals to step into the role, contribute meaningfully from the outset, and follow a structured development plan to achieve the agreed qualification during their employment. Upon successful completion, they will progress into the fully qualified post at the appropriate grade, helping us build a sustainable and skilled workforce for the future.

Important: Before progressing with this Qualification Pathway, you must email THCMA.Centre@highland.gov.uk to confirm whether a Modern or Graduate Apprenticeship Framework is available. This guidance must only be used once confirmation has been received that no Modern or Graduate Apprenticeship Framework exists.

This guidance applies to Scottish Joint Council (SJC) employees and will apply to both internal and external candidates.

Guidance

Key principles

Staff appointed to an “unqualified” role will be required to undertake study and actively work toward obtaining a professionally recognised qualification required for their role within an agreed timeframe. The vacancy will be permanent, with the unqualified role converting to the permanent qualified post upon successful completion of the qualification.

The Service must implement clear safeguards to ensure that unqualified employees are not expected to carry out duties that are reserved for qualified staff. It must also provide appropriate support and maintain well defined role boundaries throughout the qualification period.

Access to learning resources, mentoring, and regular progress reviews will be provided by the Service.

Upon achieving the recognised qualification, the member of staff would automatically move into the permanent qualified position.

For selected roles, this approach will enable the Council to 'grow our own' workforce by creating a clear career pathway towards becoming professionally qualified.

Achievement of the required professional qualification is mandatory.

Recruitment and selection

When a post requiring a professional qualification becomes vacant, it may be advertised in accordance with The Highland Council's [Recruitment & Selection Policy & Guidance](#), with the option for candidates to apply either as qualified or as unqualified, provided that:

- an approved unqualified job title and grading structure exists for the role; and
- a recognised professional qualification pathway is available and supported by the service.

The job description and person specification must clearly state that a qualified candidate is preferred; however, an appointment may be made at the unqualified level where the candidate is willing to undertake the required qualification. Separate job descriptions and person specifications are required for the qualified and unqualified versions of the role.

Note: For unqualified appointments, the cost of obtaining the recognised qualification required for the role will be fully funded by the Service, or through SAAS funding if available.

If a qualified post does not currently have an approved unqualified job title but may be suitable for this progression route, please contact HR for guidance before proceeding.

Services are required to develop the unqualified to qualified progression pathway for their specific roles. This pathway must be reviewed and formally approved by a senior officer within the hiring Service.

Contract of employment and qualification guidance

Terms and conditions

Successful candidates will be employed under Scottish Joint Council (SJC) Terms and Conditions at the appropriate grade for the unqualified position. Upon completion of the recognised professional qualification, the employee will progress to the salary grade for the qualified position.

Expenses and support

Employees appointed to an unqualified role will receive travel and subsistence expenses in line with The Highland Council's [Travel and Subsistence Policy](#). This includes costs incurred for mandatory learning required to achieve the relevant professional qualification. Travel between home and the normal work location is not eligible for reimbursement.

Qualification requirement

Employees appointed to an unqualified role are expected to complete the required professional qualification in line with the standards of the awarding body and within the agreed timescale. The Service will provide appropriate support and ongoing monitoring throughout the qualification period to ensure the employee remains on track and is fully supported to achieve successful completion.

Qualification provider

If the chosen learning institution discontinues the qualification, the Service will support the employee to identify an alternative approved provider and ensure a smooth transition so the qualification can be completed.

The qualification provider is expected to offer appropriate professional support, including access to a tutor or mentor, for employees undertaking the qualification in an unqualified role.

External learning providers will normally supply academic support and mentoring. However, line managers must also provide ongoing workplace support to ensure the employee can successfully progress through the qualification.

Training agreement and repayment conditions

A completed Training Agreement is required for all unqualified roles and The Highland Council's [Qualification Guidance](#) applies. If an employee leaves within three years of completing a qualification, or withdraws before completing it, they will be required to repay the cost of the qualification. Additional details are outlined in the Qualification Guidance.

Exceptional circumstances

Where an employee is unable to complete any part of the course due to illness or other exceptional personal circumstances, the service will normally provide appropriate support to help them continue their studies. Any extension to the standard training period must be agreed by the line manager in consultation with the awarding body and the relevant senior manager.

Failure to achieve qualification

Failure to achieve the agreed qualification within the agreed timescale will result in termination of employment in that role.

Employees with two or more years of continuous service will be eligible for redeployment opportunities.

If no suitable redeployment can be identified, the employee will receive contractual notice and their employment will be terminated.

Quick Links

The Hyperlinks listed here will redirect you to the related guidance, letters, information, and relevant organisations mentioned in this policy.

[HR Microsite](#)

[Qualification Guidance](#)

[Recruitment and Selection Policy and Guidance](#)

[Travel and Subsistence Policy](#)



myjobscotland