

Independent Schools' Qualification in Academic Management, Scotland (ISQAM Scotland) 2024-25, pilot year

1. Overview

This guidance document provides an overview of the *Independent Schools' Qualification in Management, Scotland* (ISQAM Scotland) for academic Middle Leaders such as Heads of Academic Departments (HoDs), aspiring HoDs and Heads of Faculty in the Scottish Division of The Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) and The Girls' School Association (GSA). The ISQAM is designed and delivered in partnership with the UCL/Institute of Education (IOE). The focus of the course is S1-S6 although colleagues working with younger age groups are welcome to join on the understanding that exemplars will be drawn from senior schools but that content is relevant to the wider age group and portfolio tasks can be adapted to suit different age ranges.

2. The Aim

The aim of the ISQAM is to:

- Improve standards in teaching and learning by providing training for Heads of Department, aspiring Heads of Department and other managers in the key practical skills that they need to perform their job
- Provide an academic leadership programme bespoke to independent schools in Scotland, with a focus applied to the GTCS standards for Middle Leadership
- Encourage the on-going continuous professional development of Middle Leaders
- Establish best practice and define sector-wide standards in relation to these skills, and
- Provide a qualification that is understood by schools, is applicable to the GTCS standards for Middle Leadership and is portable between schools

“It is a real pleasure to spend time with like-minded colleagues from a range of outstanding HMC schools as we collectively strive to be better at our jobs. ISQAM provides a great platform for professional discussion and development.”

(ISQAM L2 Participant 2017-)

3. The Structure

The ISQAM is a modular programme and Level 1 will be offered in the pilot year:

- **Level One:** An introduction to some of the key skills required by HoDs:
 1. Improving learning through effective lesson observation and post-lesson dialogue
 2. Coaching approaches and challenging conversations
 3. Establishing and developing standards in student assessment, marking and feedback
 4. Employment issues and employment law

It is likely that the ISQAM level 2 programme will be offered in subsequent years. A note of the Level 2 module content is listed at the foot of this document.

4. Delivery

Each level of the ISQAM programme comprises training sessions relating to each module, completion of an electronic portfolio of activities undertaken during the school year, and support from an in-school mentor¹.

Eight Level 1 clusters will run in the 2024-25 academic year

- 3 UK clusters will follow the “original” ISQAM model with 2 face-to-face training days (autumn term and spring term)
- 1 “virtual cluster” will be delivered via online sessions in the autumn and spring terms
- One blended cluster with face-to-face and online sessions will run in Hong Kong
- One face-to-face cluster will run in Scotland with bespoke content for the Scottish education system
- One face-to-face cluster will run in London for the Infant and Junior age range with bespoke content
- One face-to-face cluster will run in Prague (ISQAM Europe) with a focus on exploring wider perspectives in terms of academic leadership

Two Level 2 clusters are planned with one being face-to-face and the other online

¹ An in-school mentor, who may be an experienced HoD or the Deputy Head Academic/Director of Studies, is an essential part of the delivery of this course. **Mentors must have the capacity to meet with their mentees at least twice per term and should review their portfolios and add a supporting statement before they are submitted at the end of the year. Mentors must hold full registration with the GTCS.**

5. Portfolio Review

All portfolios which are submitted before 15 July 2025 deadline will be reviewed to ensure that certificates are only awarded to those who have completed the programme to a satisfactory level. A sample of portfolios will be moderated by the UCL / IOE as part of this process.

6. Delegate Fees and How to Book Places

The fee for the ISQAM Scotland is £650 for HMC and GSA schools.

Fees include participant access to the training days / sessions for their cluster, an optional online training session for their mentor, online and distance-learning materials, support for participants and mentors from HMC during the year, and review and moderation of the portfolio and certification.

Please visit the HMCPD website for information regarding cluster locations and to register online: [HMC - The Heads' Conference](#)

ISQAM Scotland– Programme Content and Portfolio Activities

Level 1: Level 1 consists of four modules. The topics covered can be cited as evidence for the GTCS [Standard for Middle Leadership](#) and the portfolio of activities can be uploaded as evidence.

Module 1: Improving learning through effective lesson observation and post-lesson dialogue	
Module 1 training sessions are delivered by the UCL Institute of Education	
Content	Portfolio activities
Module 1 offers an opportunity to: Explore and clarify: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The extent to which lesson observation, evidence triangulation and post lesson dialogue enhance the learning and development of teachers and subsequently enhance pupils' classroom experience• How to ensure that the monitoring of effective learning and teaching makes a difference to teacher practice and pupil achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1.1 Structured reflection on the training session1.2 Online lesson observation practice exercise1.3 Undertake a minimum of 3 lesson observations1.4 Structured response to reading: Stoll, L., 'Stimulating Learning Conversations'

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How using a coaching approach can have an impact on the culture around lesson observation and ensure a focus on teacher development <p>Further develop skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating learning and teaching and triangulating evidence, and (with reference to Module 2) • Using a coaching approach to enhance post lesson dialogue <p>This module enables participants to develop a sound knowledge and understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purposes of lesson observation • The value of triangulating evidence to monitor the quality of teaching • The purpose of everyone's role in relation to it • What we are observing • How a coaching approach can enhance and support colleague development 	<p>1.5 The triangulation of evidence regarding learning and teaching - reflection</p>
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Module 2: Coaching approaches and challenging conversations	
Module 2 training sessions are delivered by the UCL Institute of Education	
Content	Portfolio activities
<p>This module is designed to introduce the process and practice of coaching and provides an opportunity to explore how a coaching approach can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support you as a leader and a manager to make a difference to staff performance, and 	<p>2.1 Structured reflection on the training session</p> <p>2.2 Lead three coaching conversations during the year, including at least one in which you have to address a difficult issue. (Alternative available for</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable you to be proactive and confident in having 'challenging' conversations 	aspiring HoDs) 2.3 Reflection on reading: 'Systems Thinkers' (Brown & Isaacs)
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Module 3: Establishing and developing standards in student assessment, marking and feedback

Module 3 training sessions are delivered by experienced HMC academic deputy heads

Content	Portfolio activities
Module 3 enables participants to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand what is meant by work scrutiny, the role and responsibility of the HoD, and how this links to whole-school approaches and processes • Develop the skills to conduct effective work scrutiny and give effective feedback, making it a positive process for the staff involved • Identify anomalies and trends across the department/faculty that contribute to, for example, under and over achievement • Understand what activities should follow a work scrutiny exercise, including feedback, accountability/self-accountability and development • Take away practical strategies and approaches to work scrutiny to use in their own school 	3.1 Structured reflection on the training session 3.2 Planning a departmental work scrutiny 3.3 Work scrutiny of at least one year group and creation of an action plan as a result

Module 4: Employment issues and employment law

Module 4 training sessions are delivered by an experienced senior legal practitioner

Content	Portfolio activities
Module 4 enables participants to:	4.1 Structured reflection on the training session

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an awareness of the key issues in employment law, including equal opportunities • Have confidence and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the academic middle leader, and their school policies and procedures in relation to employment issues 	<p>4.2 Locating key school policies, processes and colleagues</p> <p>4.3 Responses to questions relating to recruitment and capability</p> <p>4.4 Reflection on training session case studies</p> <p>4.5 Discussion with key colleagues on employment issues and safeguarding</p>
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ISQAM Level 2 covers the following topics:

- Module 5: Academic managers as leaders of learning. Making a difference to teacher practice and pupil outcomes
- Module 6: Practicalities and innovation in curriculum planning and reform
- Module 7: The use of data to improve pupil and departmental performance
- Module 8: Strategic Planning as a Head of Department/Head of Faculty

REGISTRATION

To register for our ISQAM courses, please click [HERE](#) to visit the ISQAM webpage with the booking links for each cluster