

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Unit code: D7JO 35

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to analyse and evaluate the impact of human activity on the environment. Local, national, EU, and global contexts will be used as appropriate. This Unit provides an opportunity to examine the impact of development on the environment and to explore the themes of sustainability and conservation.

On completion of this Unit, the candidate will be able to:

1. Explain the impact of human activity on the environment.
2. Analyse and interpret data relevant to the impact of human activity on the environment.
3. Evaluate strategies for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment.

Credit value: 2 HN Credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8)

SCQF (the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) brings Scottish qualifications into a single framework of 12 levels ranging from SQA Access 1 to doctorates. The SCQF includes degrees; HNC/Ds; SQA National Qualifications; and SVQs. Each SQA Unit is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at a specific level. 1 SCQF point = 10 hours of learning. HN candidates are normally expected to input a further number of hours, matched to the credit value of the Unit, of non-contact time or candidate-led effort to consolidate and reinforce learning.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would be beneficial.

In addition, candidates should have achieved HN Unit *D7HX 34 Geography A: Introducing a Geographical Perspective* and HN Unit *D7HY 34 Geography B: Urban Geography*.

Ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Core skills: There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.

Context for delivery: The Unit can be delivered as a stand-alone Unit. If this Unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes. This Unit is included in the framework for HNC/D Social Sciences.

Higher National Unit specification: General information for centres (cont)

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Assessment: This Unit will be assessed using two instruments of assessment, as follows:

1. Outcome 1 will be assessed by one closed book exercise of unseen questions requiring a response of approximately 1000–1500 words. The topic area will be known approximately one week prior to the assessment date. Candidates are not permitted to take pre-prepared notes into the assessment. The assessment will be conducted under supervision. It is recommended that the assessment is undertaken in one sitting of approximately two–three hours' duration.
2. Outcomes 2 and 3 will be holistically assessed by one open book essay/report of not less than 2000 words. The essay need not be written under supervision.

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines have been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The section of this Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence required are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Explain the impact of human activity on the environment

Knowledge and/or skills

- the characteristics of the main environmental systems
- the interactions and inter relationships between the main environmental systems
- the positive and negative impacts of human activity on the main environmental systems with reference to local, national, EU, and global examples

Note: The main environmental systems are: atmospheric/climatic, hydrological, erosion, ecosystems.

Evidence requirements

Each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills. This evidence will be presented in the form of one closed book exercise of unseen structured questions. Each candidate will need to show that he/she can :

- describe the characteristics of **two** of the main environmental systems
- analyse the interactions and inter relationships between **two** of the main environmental systems
- identify and explain the positive and negative impact of human activity on **two** of the main environmental systems

Responses to the structured questions should be approximately 1000-1500 words in total. The questions will be unseen, although the topic areas will be known approximately one week prior to the assessment date. Candidates are not permitted to take pre-prepared notes into the assessment. The assessment will take place in supervised conditions. It is recommended that the assessment is conducted in one sitting of two-three hours' duration

Assessment guidelines

It is recommended that the assessment is conducted under supervision in one sitting of approximately two–three hours.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Outcome 2

Analyse and interpret data relevant to the impact of human activity on the environment

Knowledge and/or skills

- geographical information appropriate to the impact of human activity on the environment
- drawing valid conclusions from geographical information

Outcome 3

Evaluate strategies for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment

Knowledge and/or skills

- definitions of sustainability
- examples of legislation, policies and initiatives designed to conserve the environment

Evidence requirements for Outcomes 2 and 3

The evidence requirements for Outcomes 2 and 3 will be combined for assessment purposes. Each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate the knowledge and/or skills for both Outcomes. This evidence will be presented in the form of one open book essay requiring a response of not less than 2000 words. The exercise will not be conducted under supervision. Candidates must show that they can :

- select appropriate geographical information
- interpret appropriate geographical information
- analyse appropriate geographical information
- draw valid conclusions from geographical information
- give definitions of sustainability
- give examples of legislation, policies and initiatives designed to conserve the environment
- critically evaluate strategies for reducing the impact of human activity on the environment.

Assessment guidelines

The appropriate geographical information could include : maps, tables, models, diagrams, graphs.

Administrative Information

Unit code: D7JO 35

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

Superclass category: RF

Date of publication:

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

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This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

For Outcome 1, candidates should be given an overview of the main environmental systems. Teaching and learning at this stage should concentrate on establishing a basic understanding of the processes of each system and clarifying the key terminology. Two environmental systems should be selected for more detailed study and the emphasis should be on the inter relationships between them and the impact of human activity, eg case studies from areas of tropical rainforests allow consideration of climate change, erosion, flooding and ecosystem impact. Acid rain, global warming and ozone depletion can be used to illustrate inter relationships and the impact of human activity. Case studies of floods, storms, pollutant pathways, biodegradability, marine pollution are examples of other topics that tutors may wish to explore.

Outcome 3 requires the themes of sustainability, protection and conservation to be addressed and candidates should be encouraged to reflect on the concept of sustainability and to examine how this concept is applied in a variety of situations. Candidates will also be required to have knowledge of a range of policies/legislation/innovations applicable to different aerial contexts and emphasis should be given to the critical evaluation of examples in terms of reducing the impact of human activity on the environment. Agenda 21, UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro 1992), UK Climate Change Programme, etc are some examples that may be appropriate.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

There is no single best way to deliver this Unit. The Unit can be delivered in a flexible manner to suit the needs of the tutor and candidates, eg formal lectures, group discussions, tutorial based study, field study/audio visual stimuli etc.

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning, however it will require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment for Outcome 1 was conducted under supervised conditions. For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 — publication code A1030).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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Special needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs and Candidates for whom English is an Additional Language* (SQA, 2000).

General Information for Candidates

Unit title: Geography C: Environmental Geography

In this Unit you will have the opportunity to examine environmental aspects of the world in which we live. Links between environmental systems and human activity will be explored in terms of sustainability. There is a particular emphasis on evaluating strategies to reduce the implication of human activity on the environment.

There are two forms of assessment associated with this Unit. You will be required to complete one closed book exercise consisting of unseen questions requiring a response of approximately 1000–1500 words. The questions will focus on the impact of human activity on the environment. The topic areas will be known approximately one week prior to the assessment date. Candidates are not permitted to take pre-prepared notes into the assessment. The assessment will be conducted under supervision in one sitting of approximately two-three hours' duration.

You will also produce one open book essay of not less than 2000 words. In this essay you will analyse and evaluate the impact of human activity on the environment, and evaluate strategies for reducing the impact. The exercise will not be conducted under supervision.