

## Higher National Unit Specification

### General information for centres

**Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

**Unit code:** D7MF 35

**Unit purpose:** This Unit is designed to allow candidates to acquire knowledge of the ways in which communication can effect attitude change and to develop awareness of social and cultural influences on attitude formation and then apply this in the content of personal research study. This Unit is about the analysis of attitudes in relation to individual, social and cultural factors.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to:

1. Analyse attitudes in relation to social and cultural factors
2. Explain the main factors involved in influencing the success of communications designed to change attitudes
3. Analyse the influence of mass media on attitudes

**Credit value:** 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 8: (8 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:** Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. It would be beneficial if the candidate had skills in communication as shown by possession of at least one of the following:

- National Unit EE3T 12 (7110055) *Communication (NC)*
- Higher *English and Communication* or its component Units
- Core Skill Communication at Higher

**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:** 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.



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

### **Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

**Assessment:** Ideally, candidates should progress through Outcomes 1-3 in that order, as each Outcome represents a clearly defined stage in the learning process. In Outcomes 1 and 2, candidates consider theories relating to attitude formation and change, using given exemplars. In Outcome 3, they are required to apply the theories to exemplars they have chosen themselves.

Since the summative assessment process in this Unit requires the candidate to provide the research and case study material on which analysis is based, formative work should introduce the candidate to the process.

Finally, it is important that the candidate is given sufficient time to prepare for Outcome 3, which requires the generation of a research project, and therefore this should be introduced into the assessment schedule at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

## **Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards**

### **Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements 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. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be assessed on each assessment occasion.

### **Outcome 1**

Analyse attitudes in relation to social and cultural factors

#### **Knowledge and/or skills**

- Theories relating personality to attitude
- Social identity theory
- Theories relating to the impact of group norms, inter-group conflict and scapegoating on attitude
- Theories relating to the effect of cultural background on attitudes

#### **Evidence requirements**

The candidate will need evidence to show that he/she can:

analyse attitudes in relation to individual, social and cultural factors in the form of answers to restricted response questions. In answering the questions the candidate should demonstrate that he/she can:

- explain the influence of personality on attitudes in terms of currently accepted theory
- explain the influence of social identity on the formation of attitudes in terms of currently accepted theory
- explain the effect of group membership on individual attitudes to members of other social groups in terms of current research
- explain the effect of cultural background on attitudes and behaviour in terms of current research.

It is important that the candidate should be able to outline the current areas of theory on the factors which affect the formation of attitudes, but not essential that all current theories are identified and explained. It is appropriate therefore that the restricted response questions should allow a sampling of knowledge in this area. Candidates should cover one major theory relating to personality and attitude, and one major theory relating to social identity and attitude. The written evidence should be a minimum of 600 words.

Assessment should be conducted in supervised conditions and should be closed-book.

## **Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)**

### **Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

#### **Assessment guidelines**

It is advised that this assessment be carried out first as it provides a theoretical base for subsequent Outcomes.

### **Outcome 2**

Explain the main factors involved in influencing the success of communications designed to change attitudes

#### **Knowledge and/or skills**

- Factors which affect the efficiency of a communication in inducing attitude change
- External factors — source of message, content of message, situation/context of delivery
- Internal factors — function of attitudes, resistance to persuasion, latitude of acceptance and rejection, individual differences
- Analysis of persuasive communication in terms of factors which influence its effectiveness

#### **Evidence requirements**

Evidence for the knowledge and skills in this Outcome will be provided on a sample basis. The candidate will need evidence to show that he/she can:

explain the main factors involved in influencing the effectiveness of persuasive communication in the form of structured questions based on case study material.

In answering the structured questions the candidate should demonstrate that he/she can:

- explain how external features of communication affect its persuasive power, in terms of current theory
- analyse how external factors affect the persuasive power of a communication, in relation to a specific example of persuasive communication
- explain the effects of internal factors on the individual's resistance to persuasive communication, in terms of current theory.

The sample should be based on a video case study or similar material with structured questions. The sample should identify at least three factors that induce attitude change. The written evidence should be a minimum of 600 words and should be carried out in supervised conditions. A different sample should be used on each assessment occasion.

#### **Assessment guidelines**

It is important that the candidate should be able to apply theories relating to the factors which affect communication in the analysis of exemplar material.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

### Outcome 3

Analyse the influence of mass media on attitudes

#### Knowledge and/or skills

- Theoretical models of media influence: conditioning theory, uses and gratifications model, the agenda setting model, the amplification or contagion models, models relating to long term social control or consciousness forming through media influence
- Research skills
- Analysis of the effect of the media on a subject/issue or social group in terms of public attitudes

#### Evidence requirements

The candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can analyse the influence of the mass media on attitudes in the form of an extended written response.

In the extended response the candidate should demonstrate that he/she can:

- explain the effect of mass media output on public attitudes in relation to a subject/issue
- analyse the persuasive effect of media output on a subject/issue in relation to recognised models of influence

At least two models of media influence should be considered in the extended written response, which will be a minimum of 1200 words. Assessment should be conducted in conditions where arrangements have been put in place to assure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

#### Assessment guidelines

The research area for the extended response will be chosen by the candidate in discussion with the assessor.

There is a possibility for integrating this Outcome with the relevant Outcome in the HN Unit D7LX 34 *Research Skills*, although, as the latter concentrates on research drawn from survey material, this may not be simple to achieve. Given that the candidate is required to carry out individual research for Outcome 3, the assessment of this Outcome should be introduced with sufficient time remaining in the Unit for the work to be carried out, and the candidate should be given the opportunity to select and plan a topic in advance.

## **Administrative Information**

**Unit code:** D7MF 35

**Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

**Superclass category:** KA

**Date of publication:** October 2001

**Source:** SQA

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## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes**

### **Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

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 40 hours.

### **Guidance on the content and context for this Unit**

This Unit is intended to introduce the candidate to theories which deal with social and cultural influences on attitude formation, and to allow the candidate to acquire knowledge of the ways in which communication can bring about attitude change. These theories are then applied by the candidate in the context of a personal research study.

In Outcome 1 the candidate is introduced to the individual, social and cultural influences which affect attitudes. Topics which should be covered include theories relating personality to attitude, social identity theory, and theories relating to the impact of group norms, inter-group conflict, and scapegoating on attitude. Although these ideas need to be introduced as theoretical issues, they should be discussed and related wherever possible to the candidate's experience and to the current political/social environment.

Outcome 2 introduces theories about the external and internal factors which affect the efficiency of a communication in inducing attitude change. This will then be applied in a detailed analysis of a piece of persuasive communication. The external factors covered should include the following: source of message, content of message, situation/context. The internal factors should include function of attitudes, resistance to persuasion, latitude of acceptance and rejection, and individual differences.

Outcome 3 introduces models of media influence as a context for individual research into the relationship between public attitudes and media output on the candidate's chosen topic. Models of influence which might be relevant include conditioning theory, the uses and gratifications model, the agenda setting model, the amplification or contagion models, and models relating attitude to long term social control or consciousness forming through media influence.

### **Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit**

Although there is a natural progression through the Outcomes in this Unit, each introduces new and supplementary ideas, and therefore there is not much opportunity for integration of assessment. However, in delivering the Unit it will be possible and desirable to stress the interconnection between the separate subject areas. An integrative approach to the delivery of the material is therefore recommended.



## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

### **Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

The assessment of Outcome 1 focuses on the description of theoretical ideas, though these should be both discussed by the assessor and illustrated by the candidate in the context of personal examples. While Outcome 2 continues to develop theoretical concepts, and therefore again requires a considerable amount of assessor exposition, the assessment of the Outcome requires the candidate to apply these ideas to case study material – ideally a video showing an example of persuasive communication. It is thus important to encourage the candidate to make the transition from understanding of ideas to their application, and this should firstly be achieved through formative work, involving the candidate analysing examples of mass media communication, before attempting the summative assessment.

This approach will then build a platform for the delivery of Outcome 3, in which the candidate is required to apply a knowledge of theoretical models of media influence to a chosen topic, within the context of a piece of individual research into the relationship between public attitudes and media output. Again formative work in this area will enable the candidate to build and reinforce their skills in doing so, before they attempt to relate research findings to relevant models of influence.

### **Open learning**

While there is potential for an open-book learning approach to this Unit, particularly given that it draws heavily upon notes and printed materials, there may be some difficulties inherent in this approach. The Unit relies heavily upon exemplar material, which may not easily lend itself to being placed within the context of open learning, either from the point of view of technical or copyright issues. This is also a Unit which relies heavily, in its delivery, on assessor exposition, and therefore any open learning approach would need to build this element into the delivery strategy.

For further information and advice, please see *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (SQA, February 2001 -- publication code A1030).

### **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 for whom English is an Additional Language* (SQA, 2000).

## **General information for candidates**

### **Unit title:** Communication and Attitudes Research

The relationship between the individual's and society's attitudes and communication, particularly mass media communication, is an important one. If we are to understand how the mass media works, and the part it plays in helping form our attitudes, we must look at that relationship.

You will begin by looking at the factors which affect attitudes – individual, social and cultural factors – and how we gain identity as members of groups and as members of society. Our cultural backgrounds help to form our attitudes, and this is also something you will examine.

You will then go on to look at how communications attempt to persuade the individual, and in particular how these attempt to change our attitudes. As examples you will use various case study materials, including examples of mass media communications. Finally you will look at theories of how the mass media changes or attempts to change attitudes, and you will go on to select a topic area in which to research this relationship. As a result you will not only come to understand the theoretical ideas, but also you will be able to apply these to practical examples.

There are three assessments for this Unit.

1. You will be required to analyse attitudes in relation to individual, social and cultural factors, in a series of questions.

Your completed answers should be a minimum of 600 words, and the assessment will be carried out in supervised, closed-book conditions.

2. You will be asked to answer questions, based on a case study, which may be in the form of video material.

Your completed answers should be a minimum of 600 words, and the assessment will be carried out in supervised conditions.

3. You will study at least two models of media influence. You will be asked to write an essay of a minimum of 1200 words.

On completion of the Unit you should be able to:

1. Analyse attitudes in relation to social and cultural factors
2. Explain the main factors involved in influencing the success of communications designed to change attitudes
3. Analyse the influence of mass media on attitudes