

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Meeting Skills

Unit code: D7XJ 35

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to develop candidates' sophisticated, analytical, presentational and interactive skills through preparation for and participation in simulated meetings. It is primarily intended for candidates expecting to take up posts in the communications and media industries, in business and working in the community.

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

1. Analyse the meetings process
2. Participate in a formal meeting
3. Produce documentation for a formal meeting

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 Skill Working with Others at Higher
- Core Skill Problem Solving 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: Meeting Skills

Assessment: This Unit could be assessed in three parts. In the first, the candidate responds to a set of questions based on a videotaped meeting. It is desirable to complete this Outcome first, as this provides the candidate with the underpinning knowledge required for Outcomes 2 and 3. Assessment should take place in supervised conditions. In Outcome 2, the candidate participates in a formal meeting. In Outcome 3, the candidate compiles a folio of relevant meetings documentation, a process which might continue over several sessions.

An Assessment Exemplar pack for this Unit has been produced to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Meeting Skills

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 sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Analyse the meetings process

Knowledge and/or skills

- Purposes of meetings
- Typical structure of formal meeting
- Typical functions of participants in meetings
- Typical roles adopted by participants in meetings
- Effects of group dynamics
- Identification of central issues
- Suitable vocabulary, register, style
- Non-verbal communication and paralanguage typical of meetings
- Advantages and disadvantages of meetings
- Identification of leadership styles
- Evaluation skills

Evidence requirements

The candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and skills by showing that he/she can:

- explain clearly the purposes of a meeting
- analyse roles adopted by participants
- examine procedures
- evaluate the performance of the chairperson
- evaluate group decision-making
- evaluate the meetings process.

The candidate will view a video of a meeting and answer a series of structured questions in supervised, open-book conditions. Responses may be written and/or oral.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Meeting Skills

Assessment guidelines

The meeting to be analysed should be presented on videotape and might be characteristic of the communications industry (for example, the interpretation of a client's brief, or devising a PR strategy). The videotaped meeting should be of sufficient formality and structure to include a perceptible agenda, and of sufficient complexity to allow discussion and evaluation of such features as roles adopted by participants, group dynamics and leadership styles.

Outcome 2

Participate in a formal meeting

Knowledge and/or skills

- Goal setting
- Procedures
- Application of appropriate meeting structure
- Time-management

Evidence requirements

Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome will be provided by participation in a formal meeting. The candidate will be required to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- contribute to the conduct of an effective meeting through:
 - the use of non-verbal communication and paralanguage
 - the ability to select, edit and communicate complex data
 - effective presentation
 - positive contribution
 - advancement of discussion
 - provision of positive feedback
 - justification of point of view as appropriate
 - adherence to procedure
 - adherence to schedule
- present effectively an agenda item involving a complex issue.

A videotape of the meeting, a detailed observation checklist and a record of performance for each candidate should be made for assessment purposes.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Meeting Skills

Assessment Guidelines

Meetings typical of the Communications Industries could form the context for a role play meeting – conducted to a brief – or a real meeting, for example devising a strategy for a campaign to be implemented as part of another Unit. The candidate will participate in such a meeting, present an agenda item, and contribute to the conduct of an effective meeting.

Outcome 3

Produce documentation for a formal meeting

Knowledge and/or skills

- Ability to select and edit complex data
- Setting of objectives
- Devising an agenda
- Participation in allocation of roles
- Form of notice of meeting
- Form of agenda
- Form of presentation paper
- Appropriate styles and formats of minutes

Evidence requirements

Evidence for the knowledge and/or skills in this Outcome will be provided through the presentation of a folio of meetings papers. To achieve this Outcome the candidate will be required to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- construct an accurate notice of meeting
- devise a relevant agenda
- draw up an effective presentation paper
- make accurate records in two different formats of a meeting.

Each candidate is required to produce the items in his/her meetings paper folio individually.

Assessment guidelines

The candidate might co-operate with others in devising an appropriate meeting, or adopt roles in a given case study. He/she should produce the papers necessary to call, conduct and record the decisions of the meeting.

Administrative Information

Unit code: D7XJ 35

Unit title: Meeting Skills

Superclass category: AF

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Meeting Skills

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

While the exact time allocated to the delivery and assessment of 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

The candidate should first of all be aware of the various purposes for which meetings are called: for example, focus groups could be cited, or quality circles, community groups, negotiations, public meetings, regular development meetings, voluntary groups or editorial meetings. It is important to consider occasions on which meetings might be counter-productive, and to point out that meetings can suffer from marked disadvantages. Meetings may help to build teams, increase involvement in group tasks, disseminate information, offer opportunities for consultation and solve problems, but they may also waste time, add to work pressures, or be so ill-timed or ill-prepared that they might be best avoided.

The structure and level of formality of a particular meeting should be derived from its purpose, and candidates should appreciate that the use of a given structure or application of a certain level of formality is, or should be, a more or less conscious decision. Since, however, formal meetings are an integral part of workplace and community activities, the candidate should become familiar with the terminology of formal meetings.

Care should be taken to distinguish between the functions of participants and the roles they adopt, the former being determined by position in an organisation, the latter by social inclination and temperament. The company accountant will therefore provide financial advice and information at a meeting, but he/she may characteristically adopt one of the social roles identified as typical of meetings.

These roles may be positive or negative. Constructively, group-orientated roles such as that of the facilitator, optimist, team builder or leader may be adopted; exemplifying self-orientated behaviours, participants may maintain silence, act as chatterers, aggressors, jokers, complainants or oracles.

The candidate should be encouraged to examine the way in which these roles combine to betray the group dynamic operating within a given meeting, appreciating the interplay of issues and interests and the skill with which the chairperson manages difference of opinion or conflict in order to achieve the goals of the meeting. Chairing skills are usually seen as including the ability to welcome participants, drive the agenda, introduce items, maintain positive interaction, invite and close discussion, call for decisions, delegate, summarise and close the meeting. The role of leadership is not, of course, exclusive to the chairperson: candidates should be able to distinguish the classic authoritative, democratic, *laissez-faire* and collective styles of leadership.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Meeting Skills

Since the interaction typical of most meetings is complex, the role of non-verbal communication and paralanguage is important. Participants may, passively, reveal attitude through signals provided by body language: head movements, facial expression, gaze, posture and inclination. Any of these may signal involvement or alienation, antagonism or a willingness to participate. In the area of paralanguage, pitch, tone and volume of voice, as well as words stressed, can be used to analyse, persuade, and influence decisions.

Groups are normally seen as having a life cycle, sometimes described as the forming, storming, norming and performing stages, through which groups come together, argue out their role, devise their mode of operation and, ultimately, try to achieve their tasks. It is impossible to represent this in a single Unit, but candidates should, nevertheless, be aware of the likely differences in behaviour at different points of the group cycle, and also have an appreciation of problems that typify groups whose purposes may have become redundant: a noticeable overcohesion, exclusive concentration on maintenance of relationships, a sense of invulnerability.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

The obvious sequence of delivery in this Unit is that candidates are introduced to the various skills required in conducting meetings of some complexity, and, having analysed meetings observed on video or in real life, prepare to conduct a meeting of their own, providing all necessary documentation and evaluating their own performance.

Ideally, this Unit builds upon speaking skills developed in HN Unit D7LP 34 *Complex Oral Presentation* and on an understanding of perception problems in communications covered in HN Unit D7XS 35: *Interpersonal and Group Skills*.

In preparing to hold meetings, candidates might either work to a brief provided by an assessor or devise an acceptable brief on their own, possibly in response to the requirements of a client in a live project. The brief should be of sufficient complexity to allow a number of participants to contribute a paper on an agenda item involving a complex issue. The aim of such an item will ideally be to resolve a problem through analysis of a given situation and the offering of various options, one of which should be selected by the group. Candidates should be introduced to conventional meetings paperwork including notice of meeting and formal agenda, and may require coaching in the skills involved in making a brief presentation to a meeting. Presentational approach may range from simply handing out a brief, structured position paper and talking to it, to a more sophisticated solution, possibly using presentation software. Roles may, if desired, be allocated by candidates themselves in group.

The role of chairperson can be particularly awkward in meetings conducted by candidates. When a candidate consents to act as chairperson, it is essential that he/she is assessed solely as a contributor to the meeting, and not as chairperson *per se*. One way of tackling this problem is to hold an additional meeting for all candidates who have acted as chairpersons of the various groups composing a class.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Meeting Skills

Each candidate should act as minutes secretary, adopting an appropriate style of record from those covered in Outcome 1. These might be in the form of resolution minutes, which detail proposals, amendments and decisions arrived at; action minutes, summarising tasks to be accomplished following the meeting; or narrative minutes, which expand on the point of view of individual candidates. Each style is typical of specific groups: it is unlikely, for example, that a regular development meeting would use resolution or narrative minutes, but a political group might demand the former, or a voluntary group the latter.

Open learning

Delivering this Unit on an open learning basis is possible, though complicated. Outcome 1 may be completed without class attendance. Outcome 2 must be delivered in a supervised environment, under conditions where arrangements have been put in place to assure the authenticity of the candidate's work. If the assessor is not present during the delivery of Outcome 2, each meeting should be recorded clearly on video.

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 with Special Needs and Candidates for whom English is an Additional Language* (SQA, 2000).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Meeting Skills

In this Unit, particularly in Outcome 1, you will demonstrate your awareness of a number of features that contribute to an effective meeting, such as structure, group interaction, roles of participants, non-verbal communication and leadership styles, and analyse these factors in studying a meeting on video. You will analyse the purposes of the meeting and judge its effectiveness in dealing with these.

In Outcome 2, you will participate in a meeting organised by your group and present an agenda item which you have prepared, adopting a role which you have chosen or been allocated. The meeting may either be held in response to a brief presented by your assessor, or as part of a live project in which you act for an external client. For example, your meeting might devise a publicity strategy for a community group or institution. You will be assessed on your contribution to the meeting, taking into consideration the quality of your participation, adherence to schedule, powers of presentation and the quality of your interaction with other participants.

Outcome 3 requires you to produce a folio of papers associated with a meeting. You will need to produce a notice calling the meeting, a formal agenda and minutes that record the decisions of the meeting accurately in two different formats. You will also produce a paper to support the presentation you make to the meeting.

There are three assessments for this Unit:

1. You will be asked to respond to questions about the processes of meetings.
2. You will be asked to participate in a formal meeting. The meeting will be videotaped and a record of your performance kept.
3. You will be asked to produce a folio of papers for a meeting.

On completion of the Unit you should be able to:

1. Analyse the meetings process
2. Participate in a formal meeting
3. Produce documentation for a formal meeting