

Higher National group award Graded Unit Specification

General Information for centres

This group award Graded Unit has been validated as part of the HNC Business. Centres are required to develop the assessment instrument in accordance with this validated specification. Centres wishing to use another type of group award Graded Unit or assessment instrument are required to submit proposals detailing the justification for change for validation.

Group award Graded Unit Title: Business: Group Award Graded Unit 1

Group award Graded Unit Code: DE3T 34

Type of group award Graded Unit: Examination

Assessment Instrument: Closed book with seen case study

Credit value: 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Purpose: This group award Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following aims of the HNC Business:

- provide the competencies required by employers of those engaged in entry level administrative, managerial or commercial positions in organisations
- develop and apply a range of vocational knowledge and skills in an integrated manner to the analysis of business situations
- build on previously acquired transferable skills
- adopt an innovative and creative approach to their work and be able to respond quickly to the challenges posed by changes in the business environment.

Recommended Prior Knowledge and Skills: It is recommended that the candidate should have completed or be in the process of completing the following Units relating to these specific aims prior to undertaking this group award Graded Unit:

- Business Accounting
- Economic Issues: An Introduction
- Managing People and Organisations
- Marketing: An Introduction

[All these are mandatory units in the HNC Business]

General Information for centres (cont)

Core Skills: The achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5.

Assessment: This examination-based group award Graded Unit is a closed book assessment. It will consist of a written examination of three hours.

The questions in the examination will be based on a case study of an organisation. The case study will be made available to candidates prior to the examination. The questions will be unseen until the time of the examination.

An exemplar instrument of assessment and marking guidelines have been produced to provide examples of the specific evidence required to demonstrate achievement of the aims of the HNC Business group award which this Graded Unit is designed to cover, and to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 7.

To achieve this unit, candidates should attain 50% of the available marks with achievement being graded according to marks attained.

Administrative Information

Graded Unit Code:	DE3T 34
Graded Unit Title:	Business: Group Award Graded Unit 1
Original date of publication:	October 2003
Version:	02 (September 2006)

History of Changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Amendment to Core Skills statement — Page 2	20/9/06

Source: SQA

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Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative assessment arrangements. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

Higher National group award Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates

Group award Graded Unit Title: Business: Group Award Graded Unit 1

Conditions of Assessment

The assessment is based on a closed-book written examination lasting three hours. The grade given will reflect the candidate's achievement on the first assessment event. A candidate may wish to retake the group award Graded Unit but this should be based on a significantly different examination.

The examination will consist of a case study of an organisation and questions relating to the case study. The examination questions should be unseen and the assessment should be conducted in controlled and invigilated conditions.

The case study should be given to candidates no less than 10 days prior to the date of the examination. Candidates may not bring their copy of the case study to the examination with them. A fresh copy of the case study must be given to candidates at the time of the examination.

Instructions for designing the assessment task:

The examination should be designed to assess the candidate's critical knowledge and understanding of the topics relating to the specific aims which this group award Graded Unit is designed to cover. The questions and corresponding marks should be designed in accordance with the ranges indicated in the table that follows. However, the overall total mark for the examination is 100.

The questions in the examination should be based on a case study of an organisation which operates in the context of Scottish business. Suitable organisations may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- based in Scotland
- based outwith Scotland but with some operational activities in Scotland
- no operational activities in Scotland but with Scottish connections such as Scottish origins, previous operations in Scotland or a significant market in Scotland
- in the private, public or voluntary sectors

The case study will consist of a written account of some aspects of the organisation's activities plus some additional information on the organisation. The written account should be between 1250 - 1750 words long. The additional information may take a variety of forms and consist of material such as financial statements, extracts from literature produced by the organisation, background information on the organisation's product or market, examples of promotional activity and so on.

The format of the examination should be designed to meet the following requirements.

1. The examination paper should be in one section.
2. Candidates will be required to attempt all questions.
3. The examination paper must cover both aspects of integration and problem solving.
4. It is not necessary for all aspects of the four main topic areas to be covered in the examination. Sampling is permitted within each of the four main topic areas. A minimum of two aspects within each of the four content topics should be covered.
5. Questions may be split into several parts and each part given a separate mark.
6. Some questions must be integrative in that they must cover more than one of the four content topics.

Topic	Level of knowledge/ understanding	Weighting/ Mark Allocation
Integration and problem solving	Use knowledge and understanding from a number of different business disciplines to identify, explain and analyse issues arising from a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding from a number of different business disciplines to suggest and justify actions which could be taken to respond to issues arising from a prescribed business situation	*40 marks
Applying financial concepts Purpose and analysis of financial statements – profit and loss; balance sheet; cash flow statements. Users of financial information – purposes for which require information; sources of relevant information. Sources of finance.	Apply knowledge and understanding to explain and analyse financial information relating to a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to draw reasoned conclusions about relevant financial matters in a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to identify actual and/or potential advantages and disadvantages of financial issues in a prescribed business situation. [Preparation of financial statements and calculations are not required.]	15 marks
Applying economic concepts Markets – demand, supply and elasticity. Government policy to address market failure.	Apply knowledge and understanding to identify, explain and analyse economic factors relevant to a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to make reasoned predictions about a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to identify actual or potential advantages and disadvantages of actions by economic agents in a prescribed business situation. [Calculations of elasticity are not required.]	15 marks

<p>Applying organisational and managerial concepts Organisational goals, objectives and policy Stakeholders Internal and external environment How organisations are managed – measures of managerial effectiveness Division and grouping of activities – contingency model</p>	<p>Apply knowledge and understanding to identify, explain and analyse organisational and managerial factors relevant to a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to draw reasoned conclusions about organisational and managerial issues in a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to identify actual or potential advantages and disadvantages of particular organisational and managerial aspects of a prescribed business situation. Apply knowledge and understanding to suggest and justify possible organisational and/or managerial actions in a prescribed business situation.</p>	<p>15 marks</p>
<p>Applying marketing concepts Marketing mix Product mix Promotion Market research Relationship between marketing and other business functions</p>	<p>Apply knowledge and understanding to identify, explain and analyse marketing factors relevant to a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to draw reasoned conclusions about marketing issues in a prescribed business situation. Use knowledge and understanding to identify actual or potential advantages and disadvantages of particular marketing activities in a prescribed business situation. Apply knowledge and understanding to suggest and justify possible marketing activities in a prescribed business situation.</p>	<p>15 marks</p>

*The marks for integration and problem solving will be obtained through questions based on one or more of the other four topic areas.

To ensure a suitably integrated approach, some questions will cover more than one topic. In these cases, precise attribution of questions to a particular topic may not be possible. The weightings above, therefore, are approximate and should be seen as strong guidelines on the proportion of total marks which will relate to each topic.

The examination will be marked out of 100. Assessors will aggregate the marks achieved by the candidate to arrive at an overall mark for the examination. Assessors will then assign a grade to the candidate for this group award Graded Unit based on the following grade boundaries:

- ◆ A = 70% – 100%
- ◆ B = 60% – 69%
- ◆ C = 50% – 59%

The following table describes how overall performance at each grade will be determined.

Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
Recognition of the main elements of a question	Substantial awareness of main elements of a question but may be implicit	Explicitly addresses the main elements of a question
Uses some relevant terminology but in a vague manner	Uses relevant terminology in a relevant and precise way but is not always consistent	Consistent and precise use of relevant terminology
Responses lack a coherent structure and may be repetitive	Responses have a clear structure but may not always be coherent and may lack some clarity of expression	Responses have a logical structure and are coherently expressed
Limited application of concepts to the case study – tendency to repeat learned general notes	Some direct application of concepts to the case study but may lack precision and consistency	Concepts accurately and precisely related to the circumstances of the case study
Some relevant factors from the case study are identified but not always consistently or accurately	Relevant factors from the case study are identified but may be limited and not entirely accurate	Consistent, accurate identification of relevant factors from the case study
Reasons given are not related to relevant business concepts and convey limited understanding	Reasons are given but may not always be linked to relevant business concepts and may sometimes betray a lack of understanding	Reasons are supported by relevant business concepts explained in a manner which conveys understanding of the concepts
Some conclusions but with little justification in terms of the case study	Some justification of conclusions in terms of the case study but justification may be limited or non-specific	Clear justification of conclusions with reasons drawn from the case study
Predictions and suggestions are made but lack reasoned justification and credibility in terms of the case study	Some predictions and suggestions are supported by suitable reasoning but not all are realistic, practical or credible in terms of the case study	Predictions and suggestions are supported by relevant reasons and are realistic and practical in terms of the case study.
Answers give either advantages or disadvantages but not both or those suggested are not valid in terms of the case study	Answers cover both advantages and disadvantages but they may be limited and not all may be valid in terms of the case study	Answers give both advantages and disadvantages which are valid in terms of the case study
Identification, explanation and analysis of situations in the case study are based on topics related to only one business discipline	More than one business discipline is used to identify, explain and analyse situations in the case study but the use is biased towards one discipline and/or ignores some relevant disciplines.	A range of business topics drawn from several disciplines are used to identify, explain or analyse situations in the case study