

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Communication: Writing Skills

Unit code: DP5A 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to equip candidates with the communication skills needed to present written information on complex vocational issues.

On completion of the Unit candidates should be able to:

- 1 Select and evaluate complex information from a range of sources.
- 2 Produce written information on a complex vocational issue.

Credit points and level: 0.5 HN Credit at SCQF level 7: (4 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.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre. However it would be beneficial if the candidate had competence in Communication at SCQF level 6. This may be evidenced by possession of a core skills Unit in Communication at Higher or similar qualifications or employment experience.

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. Further detail is provided in the Support Notes.

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.

Assessment: The Unit should be assessed holistically by a written document linking both Outcomes. Evidence requirements are given after Outcome 2. Evidence should be generated through assessment undertaken in controlled conditions.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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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

Select and evaluate complex information from a range of sources

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ skills in accessing complex information
- ◆ skills in selecting and organising information for retrieval
- ◆ techniques for identifying key information from written and/or oral sources
- ◆ skills in note taking
- ◆ analytical skills
- ◆ understanding of the effects of presentation, language and non verbal communication on communication
- ◆ evaluation skills

Outcome 2

Produce written information on a complex vocational issue

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ skills in selecting, analysing and collating relevant source materials
- ◆ understanding of the influence of purpose and readership on written communication
- ◆ skills in selecting content, style, register and language appropriate to purpose and readership
- ◆ how to structure information to a prescribed format
- ◆ accurate use of spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax
- ◆ skills in effective presentation of written communication

Evidence requirements for the Unit

Candidates will need evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by producing one, or a series of linked, document(s) analysing and presenting information and ideas on a vocationally related complex issue. The text — a minimum of 800 words — should be produced in controlled conditions, meet an agreed brief and be in an agreed format.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Communication: Writing Skills

The response should:

- ◆ analyse and select relevant complex information from a range of sources
- ◆ provide an outline of objectives
- ◆ collate and present accurate information effectively
- ◆ use a logical structure
- ◆ use style, language and register appropriate for purpose and readership
- ◆ use appropriate conventions of layout and format consistently
- ◆ use accurate spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax
- ◆ record information sources

Assessment guidelines for the Unit

There should be negotiation with the candidate in terms of the content, purpose and intended readership of the document(s), which should follow industry standard conventions. Reports or papers produced for other Units within an award may be appropriate for assessment purposes. Graphics may be used to support and supplement text. Although word processing is not mandatory, the text should reflect accepted practice in the vocational area. Dictionaries and/or spellcheck and other business software may be used to assist accuracy.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DP5A 34
Unit title:	Communication: Writing Skills
Superclass category:	KB
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Communication: Writing Skills

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 20 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

Where the Unit is delivered within a Higher National framework there may be the potential for some integration with other Units which involve analysing or producing complex written communication. In such a situation it is critical that candidates are aware of the need to achieve all the evidence requirements for the Units that are being assessed together.

The content of the Unit will vary according to the vocational discipline or interest of the candidate, but should encourage good practice in summarising and presenting complex vocational information in writing. Throughout the Unit the emphasis should be on communication practice relevant to the needs of the candidate.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Assessment approaches should be sufficiently flexible to allow for adaptation to the needs and situations of the candidates and their vocational discipline. Where candidates are part time, or where the Unit is delivered on a stand-alone basis, negotiation of content and delivery around employment needs and situations is recommended. The setting of precise remits and of deadlines which allow for evaluation and re-negotiation will be an important aspect of delivery and should reflect working practice. Although some written communication may be undertaken outside the centre, controlled conditions will be necessary to ensure authenticity; supervised production of drafts and the retention of outlines and plans signed by the candidate is recommended.

Candidates who are researching and summarising relevant information as a background to producing written communication, using a real or role-play situation, should be provided with support materials such as handouts or checklists of potential sources, evaluation criteria and model examples of complex written communication.

Linking the underpinning knowledge and skills for the Unit Outcomes reinforces the development of writing skills. The range of sources accessed should be appropriate to the vocational discipline of the candidate. Candidates could evaluate and summarise information from a range of sources such as, for example, textbooks, professional journals, relevant web sites, observation of practical work and/or oral source materials such as in depth interviews, discussions or meetings. Materials could be organised and stored in paper or electronic form, in notes, or formally written as, for example a minute of a meeting or case notes, or may be audio recorded. The method of organising information source materials should allow efficient retrieval, and be accessible to assessors, for authentication purposes.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Communication: Writing Skills

The format and style of the written communication presented should reflect the needs of the candidate. A research or review report or a case study or care plan could be considered. For some vocational disciplines a proposal or a design specification could be more appropriate. Information and associated papers, such as letters, records of meetings or graphic materials could also be formally written up and contribute to the assessment evidence as appendices. Materials to be included in the word count must be produced by the candidate.

Outcome 1

A useful approach to developing skills in gathering information is for candidates to negotiate a relevant writing task on an appropriate work related issue, to set objectives and to be supported as they access and evaluate a range of potential source materials. The vocational area will determine the most appropriate primary and/or secondary sources, but these could include textbooks, journals, training materials, case studies and oral reporting. Induction to appropriate learning resources is essential. Providing a log or diary for an electronic or written record of materials and a brief rationale for evaluation decisions and the final selection would be good practice and helpful for the candidate who may require familiarity with the conventions and standards of an academic essay. Although the storage and organisation of materials is not assessed directly, assessors may wish to emphasise that any information used needs to be accessible for checking.

A set of criteria which could be provided by centres- for judging the value of a source could include the consideration of the following: the authority of the author — the author's professional background, qualifications, publications, bias or special interest; the date on which the material was created and the last update; the authenticity of the source; the tone/balance of the writing; the accuracy of the source — the number of other sources or authorities quoted, the elimination of the possibility of plagiarism; the relevance of the source — consideration of the purpose of the source (eg educational, campaigning, advertising) and the intended readership, whether specialist or general.

Outcome 2

The task of the candidate is to produce a structured, formal piece of written communication on a complex work - related issue in an agreed format. It should follow the conventions of formal written reporting in the selected discipline. An outline of objectives could be included in an abstract, an executive summary.

Whatever the format selected there should be full discussion with the candidate about the purpose and intended reader's expectations and needs in order to ensure appropriate structure, format and terminology. Simple and direct language may be the most appropriate way of conveying complex ideas. The use of bullet points, text boxes, summaries, as well as diagrams, photographs, trace charts and tables may be the most effective way to convey or clarify information to the reader. Referencing and any bibliographical details should be complete, accurate and follow accepted conventions.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Communication: Writing Skills

Opportunities for developing Core Skills in Communication and Information Technology

The practical skills developed and assessed in this Unit should have links with other aspects of vocational work and for both delivery and assessment an approach which is integrated with other elements of a course, or with a workplace situation, will be helpful in reducing workload and developing practical competence in the core skills of Communication and Information Technology. Checklists to support evaluation of source materials and to indicate requirements for the format and style of written documents for the vocational discipline of the candidate are recommended as an aid to developing skills in reading and writing complex communication. In cases where candidates lack the formal recommended entry requirements a discrete assessment approach which develops skills, and includes additional core skills support over an extended time may be beneficial. If research involves personal interviews or surveys, additional training in oral communication including questionnaire design, non verbal communication strategies and empathic Listening skills will be particularly beneficial.

Training and support in the use of technology could be particularly useful. Developing competence in the use of technology for the organisation, filing and presentation of materials is to be encouraged, although it is not mandatory, and candidates without access to such resources should not be penalised. The use of technology is standard practice in many industries. The ability to access and abstract information from relevant websites is a valuable research tool which assures a range and currency of information sources. Candidates could also be taught how to edit and collate materials to a required style and be given reasons to avoid plagiarism and the uncritical acceptance of web information. The use of business software packages and pro forma can support the production of materials to professional standards.

Open learning

The Unit is suitable for Open and to Flexible Learning approaches, such as on-line and distance learning, with tutor input support at all stages of draft. Centre-devised supervision agreements should detail controlled conditions to ensure authenticity of evidence.

Candidates with additional support needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on the SQA website www.sqa.org.uk.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Communication: Writing Skills

Effective writing skills are essential to good communication and best working practice in a business environment.

This Unit will focus on the skills needed for written communication in the workplace. You will access a range of source materials on a complex vocational issue and learn how to evaluate and select relevant information. You will summarise and collate information to produce a substantial piece of written communication such as a report, proposal or case study on a vocational issue as agreed with your assessor. The skills developed in this Unit will be useful to you during your course and in employment.