



Higher National Graded Unit specification

General information for centres

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

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Graded Unit Code: DW7P 35

Type of Graded Unit: Project

Assessment Instrument: Practical Assignment

Credit points and level: 2 HN Credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*).

**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 Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following principal aims of the HND in Environmental Sciences:

- ◆ to select and demonstrate effective research skills both in the laboratory and in the field
- ◆ to enhance skills in Good Laboratory Practice and use practical laboratory skills
- ◆ to place research findings into the broader context of 'Sustainable Development' and interpret findings holistically
- ◆ to demonstrate critical thinking, analytical and evaluative skills
- ◆ to develop a range of contemporary vocational skills
- ◆ to provide the candidate with a deeper underpinning knowledge in environmental science

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 the above specific aims prior to undertaking this Graded Unit:

Appropriate HNC Applied Sciences Units:

- ◆ DP4Y 34 *Environmental Chemistry*
- ◆ DN36 34 *Earth Science*
- ◆ DP4X 34 *Terrestrial Ecosystems*
- ◆ DP4V 35 *Aquatic Ecosystems*
- ◆ DT4X 35 *Environmental Sampling and Analysis*
- ◆ DN37 34 *Ecology and Ecosystems*
- ◆ DN38 34 *Sustainable Development*
- ◆ DV0N 35 *Plan an Environmental Management System*

Higher National Graded Unit Specification

General Information for Centres (cont)

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

Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

Planning and Organising at SCQF level 6

Reviewing and Evaluating at SCQF level 5

Assessment: This Graded Unit will be assessed by the use of a Practical Assignment which includes a scientific report. The developed Practical Assignment should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates she/he has met the aims of the Graded Unit that it covers.

An assessment exemplar pack has been produced to provide centres and candidates with clear guidance as to the National Standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

Administrative Information

Graded Unit Code: DW7P 35

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Original date of publication: August 2005

Version: 05 (May 2012)

History of Changes:

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Revision of Unit Specification to include Grading checklist and Marking schedule.	02/01/07
03	Revision of Unit specification to update grading checklists, Marking schedule and formatting.	30/04/07
04	Minor layout/spelling adjustments.	13/07/07
05	Amendments made to pages 9 – 13.	11/05/12

Source: SQA

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2005, 2007, 2012

This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part for educational purposes provided that no profit is derived from reproduction and that, if reproduced in part, the source is acknowledged.

Additional copies of this Graded Unit specification if sourced by the Scottish Qualifications Authority can be purchased from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. Please contact the Customer Contact Centre for further details, telephone 0845 279 1000.

Higher National Graded Unit Specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Conditions of Assessment

The candidate should be given a date for completion of the practical assignment. However, the instructions for the assessment task should be distributed to allow the candidate sufficient time to assimilate the details and carry out the assessment task. During the time between the distribution of the assessment task instructions and the completion date, assessors may answer questions, provide clarification, guidance and reasonable assistance. The assessment task should be marked as soon as possible after the completion date. The final grading given should reflect the quality of the candidate's evidence at the time of the completion date.

The evidence for the project is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, where each stage has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. Thus any reassessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage.

If a candidate fails the project overall or wishes to upgrade, then this must be done using a *substantially different* project, ie all stages are undertaken using a new project, assignment, case study, etc. In this case, a candidate's grade will be based on the achievement in the re-assessment, if this results in a higher grade.

At this level candidates should work independently, ie without undue assistance from the assessor. It is up to Centres to take reasonable steps to ensure that the project is the work of the candidate. For example, Centres may wish to informally question candidates at various stages on their knowledge and understanding of the case study on which they have embarked. Centres should ensure that where research etc, is carried out in other establishments or under the supervision of others that the candidate does not receive undue assistance.

Instructions for designing the assessment task

The assessment task is a project. The project undertaken by the candidate must be a complex task which involves:

- ◆ variables which are complex or unfamiliar
- ◆ relationships which need to be clarified
- ◆ a context which may be familiar or unfamiliar to the candidate

The assessment task must require the candidate to:

- ◆ analyse the task and decide on a course of action for undertaking the project
- ◆ plan and organise work and carry it through to completion
- ◆ reflect on what has been done and draw conclusions for the future
- ◆ produce evidence of meeting the aims which this Graded Unit has been designed to cover

Higher National Graded Unit Specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Guidance on grading candidates

The project will be marked out of 100. Assessors will mark each stage of the project, taking into account the criteria outlined. The marks will then be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for the project. Assessors will then assign an overall grade to the candidate for this graded Unit based on the following grade boundaries.

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

Candidates who meet the minimum Evidence Requirements will have their achievement graded as C — competent, or A — highly competent or B somewhere between A and C. The grade related criteria to be used to judge candidate performance for this Graded Unit is specified in the following table.

Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The project brief accurately specifies the project in both technical and non-technical terms and is prepared in a clear and concise manner. ◆ The project objectives accurately and fully reflect the long term project targets. ◆ The initial project plan contains a comprehensive list of project activities and timings. The information in the initial plan is used to assess if the project can be completed within timescales. The schedule is monitored on a regular basis to inform on-going project planning and development. ◆ The candidate develops a substantial knowledge base to support the demands of the project. ◆ The candidate undertakes the project with the minimum of supervision. Where the candidate feeds back to his/her supervisor it is on a proactive basis, updating the supervisor on progress made and actions for the next stage of the project. ◆ The candidate identifies all known project risks, categorises them in terms of their likely level of occurrence and identifies actions for minimising such risks. 	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The project brief includes accurate information about the main technical and non-technical requirements of the project. ◆ The project objectives identify the key long term project targets. ◆ The initial project plan shows all essential project activities and timings. Evidence that the plan has been monitored on a number of occasions during the life of the project to inform on-going project planning and development should be available. ◆ The candidate develops a sound knowledge base to support the demands of the project. ◆ The candidate undertakes the project with interventions from the project supervisor, to ensure the project remains on track. ◆ The candidate identifies all risks that are likely to occur during the progress of the project and identifies main actions for minimising such risks.

Higher National Graded Unit Specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Grade A	Grade C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The candidate undertakes all practical activities according to current Health and Safety requirements and applies good laboratory practice to a high standard. ◆ Demonstrates appropriate use of one or more types of instrumentation/equipment to a complex level and a high standard (eg using the more advanced features of the equipment competently). ◆ Analysis of results is accurate and comprehensive, takes account of all known sources of error and is either substantiated in terms of known theory and/or identifies limitations in theory. ◆ The diary is regularly maintained and provides a detailed, informal record of results, candidate's thinking as the project develops including reflective comments. ◆ The project report is well structured, contains only relevant information, is technically accurate, uses clear and correct English and has clear and accurate conclusions and recommendations. ◆ The project report includes a full analysis of results, and a comprehensive evaluation of the project against project objectives. ◆ The candidate identifies clear and full details of the new knowledge and skills she/he has developed as a result of doing the project such as project management skills, keeping to deadlines, recognising limitations of knowledge — approaching expert sources. ◆ The candidate demonstrates a high level of self motivation throughout the project. ◆ The candidate undertakes additional research beyond that demanded by the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The candidate undertakes all practical activities according to current Health and Safety requirements and applies good laboratory practice to a standard regarded as acceptable in a scientific setting. ◆ Demonstrates appropriate use of one or more types of instrumentation/equipment to a standard that is acceptable within a scientific setting. ◆ Analysis of results is sufficiently accurate and detailed and takes account of main sources of error and establishes key relationships between results and theory. ◆ The diary contains a sufficient level of details about project ideas, results and progress and there is evidence that entries have been made on a number of occasions during the life of the project. ◆ The project reports meets acceptable standards in terms of structure, technical accuracy, use of English and has accurate conclusions and recommendations. ◆ The project includes an analysis of results, an evaluation of the project against the project objectives. ◆ The candidate provides a number of examples of new knowledge and skills she/he has developed as a result of doing the project. ◆ The candidate demonstrates an acceptable level of motivation throughout the project. ◆ The candidate undertakes research demanded by the project.

Important Note: Centres **must** complete the following Graded Checklist for each Environmental Sciences Project. Completed checklists will be used as part of the external verification process to ensure the accuracy and consistency of grading between candidates in the centre and across the centres.

Notes of completion of the Grading Checklist are shown on page 9.

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Evidence Requirements

The project consists of three stages: planning; developing; and evaluating. The following table specifies the minimum evidence required to pass each stage.

Note: The candidate must achieve **all of the minimum evidence** specified below for each stage of the project in order to pass the Graded Unit.

Candidates failing to achieve any of the minimum Evidence Requirements for all three sections should be offered the chance to re-submit the outstanding evidence. Re-submitted work should be awarded marks using a scale based on 50% of the original marks available.

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 1 — Planning	<p>Planning Report which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the project brief ◆ the candidate’s development of the brief ◆ a summary of background theory and principles ◆ a set of project aims/objectives ◆ aims of the practical assignment ◆ identification of materials and resources required and how they will be accessed ◆ identification of the steps involved in the practical and write up phases of the development stage and the timescales for completion of each stage ◆ identification of appropriate Health and Safety procedures and requirements <p><i>The candidate must address all of the above in order to pass the Planning stage, and also meet the overall minimum pass mark for that stage. This will account for 20% of the total mark.</i></p>
Stage 2 — Developing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ output (scientific report) of the practical activity <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ record of the processes underpinning the activity eg logbook/diary and progress report <p><i>The candidate must address all of the above in order to pass the Planning stage, and also meet the overall minimum pass mark for that stage. This will account for 60% of the total mark.</i></p>

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
<p>Stage 3 — Evaluating</p>	<p>Evaluation Report which should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ contain an abstract ◆ review and update the action plan in light of experience ◆ summarise any unforeseen events and how they were handled ◆ identify knowledge and skills which have been gained and/or developed ◆ assess the strengths and weaknesses of the output of the Practical Assignment ◆ determine to what extent the assignment met the original brief ◆ suggest potential development themes for the project <p><i>The candidate must address all of the above in order to pass the Planning stage, and also meet the overall minimum pass mark for that stage. This will account for 20% of the total mark.</i></p>

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Support notes

Centres may provide additional comments in support of their grading decisions. A candidate may be awarded less than the mark allocation for a grade C in appropriate circumstances.

Grading checklists

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements	Maximum mark	Mark Grade C	Mark awarded
Planning	<p>The project brief Accurately specifies the project in both technical and non-technical terms and is prepared in a clear and concise manner.</p>			
	<p>◆ The candidate’s development of the brief</p> <p>Evidence of analysing and interpreting what is involved in the practical project brief and presenting it in a clear and concise manner.</p>	3		
	<p>The identification of the key factors influencing the project and their interrelationships.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ A summary of background theory and principles clarifying and exemplifying the brief, with identification of information sources</p>	3		
	<p>◆ Set of project aims/objectives Accurately and fully reflect the long term project targets.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ Identification of materials and resources required and how they will be accessed Evidence that the candidate has identified the material/resources required to complete the project, and where they can be accessed.</p>	3		
	<p>• Identification of the steps involved in the practical and write-up phases of the Development Stage</p>	2		

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements	Maximum mark	Mark Grade C	Mark awarded
Planning continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The timescales for completion of each stage (project plan) The initial project plan contains a comprehensive list of project activities and timings. The information in the initial plan is used to assess if the project can be completed within timescales. The schedule is monitored on a regular basis to inform on-going project planning and development. 	2		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identification of appropriate Health and Safety procedures and requirements Identifies all known project risks, categorises them in terms of their likely level of occurrence and identifies actions for minimising such risks. <p>The candidate must address all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the planning stage and achieve at least 50% of the total marks available. If the assessor forms the view that the work finally submitted by the candidate is so weak as to prevent the candidate progressing to the next stage, the candidate may receive additional assistance (over and above the norm). In this event, the assessors will record this fact and the candidate may receive no more that half (10) of the available marks for this stage.</p>	3		
		Total 20	Minimum 10	
Developing	<p>Output (scientific report) of the practical activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Title, contents page ◆ Introduction, aims and objectives of the practical project. The aims and objectives should be developed and enhanced from those in the original plan in light of experience 	1		
		4		

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements	Maximum mark	Mark Grade C	Mark awarded
Developing	<p>◆ Resources/materials and methods Demonstrates appropriate use of a range of types of instrumentation/equipment and/or techniques to a complex level and a high standard</p>	4		
	<p>◆ Performs a range of laboratory or field work and methods commensurate with ca. 40 hours of lab/field time</p>	10		
	<p>◆ Collation of data Collection of data and appropriate quality.</p>	6		
	<p>◆ Presentation of data Clear and well structured.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ Analysis/interpretation of data Contains a full analysis of results is accurate and comprehensive.</p>	8		
	<p>◆ Sources of error Takes account of all known sources of error and is either substantiated in terms of known theory and/or identifies limitations in theory.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ Conclusion and discussions The report has clear and accurate conclusions and recommendations.</p>	5		
	<p>◆ Bibliography/references The candidate develops a substantial knowledge base to support the demands of the project evidenced by a wide range of information resources.</p>	4		
	<p>◆ Health and Safety Requirements Appropriate Health and Safety Assessments (eg risk, COSHH, Manual Handling). Undertakes all practical activities according to Health and Safety requirements (shows evidence of following risk assessment guidelines) and applies good laboratory practice (record keeping/waste disposal/calibration of equipment) to a high standard.</p>	4		

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements	Maximum mark	Mark Grade C	Mark awarded
Developing continued	<p>◆ Level of motivation and initiative Demonstrates a high level of self motivation throughout the project, as evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Consistently demonstrating initiative. — Sourcing extra information. — Willingness to learn new techniques <p>The candidate undertakes additional research well beyond that demanded by the project.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ Presentation The report is clear and well structured, contains only relevant information, is technically accurate and uses clear and correct English.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ Level of supervision The candidate undertakes the project with the minimum of supervision. Where the candidate feeds back to her/his supervisor it is on a proactive basis, updating the supervisor on progress made and actions for the next stage of the project.</p>	2		
	<p>◆ Record of the processes underpinning the practical activity, eg logbook, diary, progress report The diary is regularly maintained and provides a detailed record of results and candidate's thinking as the project develops including reflective comments.</p>	4		
	<p>The candidate must address all of the minimum evidence specified above and achieve at least 50% of the total marks available in order to pass the developing stage. This will account for 50% of the total mark. If the assessor forms the view that the work finally submitted by the candidate is so weak as to prevent the candidate progressing to the next stage, the candidate may receive additional assistance (over and above the norm). In this event, the assessors will record this fact and the candidate may receive no more than half (30) of the available marks for this stage.</p>	Total 60	Minimum 30	

Higher National Graded Unit specification: Instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements	Maximum mark	Mark Grade C	Mark awarded
Evaluating	Evaluation Report which should:			
	◆ Contain an abstract (outline of the assignment)	3		
	◆ Summarise any unforeseen events and how they were handled Candidates who did not encounter any unforeseen events should make reference to this in the evaluation.	4		
	◆ Identify knowledge and skills which have been gained and/or developed Includes a self-evaluation for what the candidate has learned from undertaking the project. The candidate identifies clear and full details of the new knowledge and skills he/she has developed as a result of doing the project (project management skills, keeping to deadlines, recognising limitations of knowledge — approaching expert sources).	5		
	◆ Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the output of the Practical Assignment	2		
	◆ Determine to what extent the assignment met the original brief	2		
	◆ Suggest potential development of the project/recommendations for the future	4		
	The candidate must address all of the minimum evidence specified above and achieve at least 50% of the total marks available in order to pass the Evaluating stage. This will account for 20% of the total mark.	Total 20	Minimum 10	

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 alternative assessment arrangements. 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 SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

General Information for Candidates

Graded Unit Title: Environmental Sciences: Graded Unit 2

This Unit is project based and is assessed by an investigation that you will carry out using a variety of research methods and tools and the report of that investigation. The topic of research will be left to your choice with advice from your Tutor. This enables you to find out more about an area that interests you particularly and may reflect some developing fields or an interest at your employment.

The project will be marked out of 100. To pass the Graded Unit you must achieve 50% of the total marks and all minimum Evidence Requirements for each of the three sections.

If you achieve an overall percentage of between 50–59% for the Unit you will be awarded a Grade C.

If you achieve an overall percentage between 60–69% for the Unit you will be awarded a Grade B.

If you achieve an overall percentage between 70% and over for the Unit you will be awarded a Grade A.