

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Decision Making

Unit code: F0ED 35

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to enable candidates to develop an approach to decision making which will allow them to make effective decisions in routine and non routine settings likely to be encountered by those in promoted posts in a police organisation.

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

- 1 Analyse models of decision making
- 2 Develop an approach to making decisions
- 3 Evaluate the decision making process

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.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Candidates should have a good working knowledge of general procedures gained through experience of working in a police environment. They should be aiming towards a promoted police post within the police service. Candidates should have good communication and analytical skills which could be demonstrated by successful completion of units Contemporary Policing, Criminal Justice System in Scotland and Professional Knowledge in Policing.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 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.

Assessment: This Unit can be assessed holistically by means of a report based on a case study. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that they can develop a suitable approach to decision making in a police environment and apply, justify and evaluate this approach to the analysis of decisions and to suggesting decisions that could be taken. The report could be supplemented by oral questions to ensure all aspects of the evidence requirements are fully met.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Decision Making

Unit code: F0ED 35

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 models of decision making

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Types of decision
- ◆ Rational decision making model
- ◆ Alternative models of decision making
- ◆ Group decision making

Outcome 2

Develop an approach to making decisions

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Definition and diagnosis of the problem and/or issue
- ◆ Generating alternative solutions
- ◆ Deciding between alternatives
- ◆ Gathering acceptance and implementation
- ◆ Techniques of decision making

Outcome 3

Evaluate the decision making process

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Comparison with the rational model
- ◆ Criteria for evaluation
- ◆ Strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ Drawing lessons for the future

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

Unit title: Decision Making

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

Candidates must provide evidence which draws on knowledge and skills items from all three Outcomes to show that they can:

- ◆ use relevant concepts and theories to analyse routine and non-routine decisions, including a group decision, faced by first line managers working in a police environment
- ◆ use a suitable approach to taking decisions to suggest a decision which could be taken to solve a problem likely to be faced by first line managers
- ◆ justify the approach taken to decision making with reference to relevant concepts
- ◆ compare the events in the decision making process in a particular situation with the rational model of decision making and with alternatives to the rational model
- ◆ make use of suitable criteria to evaluate an approach to decision making in a particular situation
- ◆ draw conclusions from the comparison and the evaluation on the validity of the decision making approach and for the way in which they will approach decision making as first line managers

Candidates will be given a brief to which they have to respond. The brief will cover routine and non-routine decision making of the kind that would be faced by those working in a police environment. Candidates must obtain a mark of 50% or more, for their responses to the brief.

Assessment guidelines for the Unit

Assessment for this Unit can be undertaken holistically using a case study assessment. The case study can be a personal or a vocational scenario which covers routine and non-routine contexts. It could be presented in video format. It may be possible in some cases for candidates to make use of a case study based on actual police experience, including situations in which they have been directly or indirectly involved.

Candidates can present their evidence in the form of a report in which case it should be about 3,000 words long. It could be completed in their own time or during time allocated for the purpose during an integrated development session. A written report could be supplemented by oral questions to ensure all aspects of the evidence requirements are fully met.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F0ED 35
Unit title: Decision Making
Superclass category: AF
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Version	Description of change	Date

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Decision Making

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 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is intended for all police officers who are seeking promotion in the police service in Scotland. Candidates will normally be following a recognised training and development programme such as that developed by the Scottish Police Service.

The Unit is one of two units which make up Module 2 of the Professional Development Award: Diploma in Police Service Leadership and Management. The other is Professional Ethics in Policing and both are concerned with enabling those aspiring to promotion with the police service to manage dilemmas which they will face in a police environment. In many respects the two are closely related. This unit though also provides relevant skills which can be used throughout Modules 2, 3 and 4 of the Diploma. Some of these units, such as People Management, cover particular aspects of managerial work where decisions have to be made while others, such as Professional Ethics in Policing, deal with factors which can influence decision making. The two units in Module 2 of the Diploma are thus closely linked to each other.

The Unit recognises that decision making is influenced by many factors, one of which is the candidate themselves. For this reason the Unit is designed to enable candidates to develop an approach to decision making with which they are comfortable. This approach, however, has to be consistent with the model used in the Unit as this is the guarantee that effective decisions can be made. The Unit also stresses evaluation of decisions so that candidates get into the habit of reviewing decisions they have made and refining and developing their approach in line with their experience. It is predominantly an applied Unit and the focus is on decisions, both routine and non-routine, that first line managers in a police environment could take.

The following notes give some additional information on each Outcome.

Outcome 1

This Outcome could also cover what a decision is (a commitment to a course of action) and Simon's three elements in decision making (intelligence activity, design activity, choice activity). It may help also to clarify the distinction between a decision and a problem (a difference between an actual and a desired state) and the distinction between the actual problem and its symptoms. These can help to set the scene for the following:

Types of decision: in responses to a problem, crisis, opportunity (Mintzberg); simple and complex; programmed and non-programmed; strategic, administrative, operating (Ansoff)

Rational decision making model: problem definition; collect information; generate alternative solutions; compare each solution against pre-determined criteria; choose optimum solution; implement the solution; evaluation

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Decision Making

Alternative models of decision making: The various alternatives should cover process, political, organisational and societal influences. This is important as it will enable links to be made to other modules and the various factors that can affect decision making eg in ethics, leadership, organisation management. It is more important that candidates recognise that there are many alternatives to the rational model than that they know specific alternatives in detail.

Some possible alternative approaches include: intuitive; incrementalism (Lindblom); garbage can theory (Cohen); action rationality (Brunsson); Simon (bounded rationality and satisficing); Cyert and March (quasi resolution of conflict, uncertainty avoidance, problemistic search); influence of power (eg autocratic; democratic); organisational learning; heuristics. In a police context: Conflict Management Model, Conflict Resolution Model

Group decision making: Vroom-Jago model; groupthink (this represents a further alternative to the rational model based on group dynamics)

Outcome 2

This Outcome follows through the main steps of the rational model. However, the intention is to encourage candidates to tailor this to their own preferred style and to recognise that it needs to be used in a flexible and adaptive fashion. Some techniques may be valid at more than one stage of the process. Gathering acceptance for the solution and its implementation are dealt with more fully in other units and do not require detailed coverage. This can be linked to the various alternatives to the rational model.

Definition and diagnosis of the problem and/or issue: soft systems approach; why-why; fishbone diagram; SARA — scanning, analysis, response, assessment

Generating alternative solutions: board blasting; brainstorming lateral thinking; morphological analysis;

Deciding between alternatives: how-how; evaluation matrix

Gathering acceptance and implementation: setting SMART objectives; planning; stakeholder diagram

Techniques of decision making: decision tree; cost benefit analysis

Outcome 3

This Outcome is designed to encourage candidates to look back on decisions and the decision making process and consider how effective it was in producing a suitable outcome to the initial problem. On the basis of this they can then draw some lessons for their own approach eg what changes they would make in the light of the evaluation and why; what things they would not change in the light of the evaluation and why.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Decision Making

Candidates are expected to compare the decision with the rational model. Effectively, therefore, the extent to which the rational model has been followed amounts to a criterion for any and every evaluation. Other criteria for evaluation should be set in relation to each decision. However, they are likely to include some of the following: whether the problem recurred; the time taken to make the decision; whether the decision making approach was suitable for the problem; the costs of the decision making process; the nature of the solution (eg economy, equity); who was affected by the solution and in what ways; the extent to which the end justified the means; what alternative approaches could have been used.

The above should help candidates to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the decision and the decision making process and from this they can draw lessons which may help to develop and improve their approach to decision making in the future.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit can be delivered on a stand-alone basis or as part of a development programme for police staff seeking promotion.

Delivery of this Unit will involve ensuring that candidates do acquire the relevant underpinning knowledge to enable them to develop a robust approach to making decisions of the type that they will meet as holders of promoted posts within the police service. The underlying principle of the Unit is that candidates have to work out for themselves an approach to making decisions which they can use to make effective decisions in the police service. This must be consistent with the basic model of decision making used in the Unit and take into account the various techniques available to improve the quality of decisions. Candidates should also recognise the deficiencies inherent in the basic model and the difficulties of applying it in practice. All these issues demand a flexible and adaptable approach. In addition, the decision maker also influences the process of decision making. For these reasons, it is important that candidates work out for themselves how to tailor the basic model to their own individual situation.

The Unit is very closely linked to the other Module 2 unit, Professional Ethics in Policing, which covers critical factors which influence all stages of the decision making. Candidates can be encouraged to draw connections between the two units. Any approach to decision making must be built on a sound ethical foundation.

The Unit is well suited to distance learning because it can give candidates the opportunity to relate the underpinning knowledge, skills and techniques to situations with which they are familiar. Candidates can be given short case studies or examples of problems which require a decision where they can be asked to work through the decision making approach and decide on a suitable course of action. They could also be given case studies of decisions which have been taken and asked to work out the process of decision making and evaluate the decision in the light of this. These examples can assist candidates to develop their own approach.

They can be presented as self-assessment tasks and, as such, they can be used for assignments and for formative assessment. Candidates could, for example, write a brief report on a decision known to them. The report could include the process by which the decision was taken and an evaluation of the decision.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Decision Making

This type of approach should help to prepare candidates for the final summative assessment for which they will be required to respond to a brief on decision making. In particular, the formative assessment referred to above is likely to assist candidates to develop the skills and ability to analyse and evaluate the decision making process.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

All elements of the core skill of Problem Solving that is planning and organising, critical thinking, and reviewing and evaluating, will be developed and enhanced as candidates undertake the unit. Using a case study as stimulus, candidates undertake identification and assessment of all factors impacting on routine and non routine management decisions and justify approaches taken. Comparison with recognised models of decision making and the outlining of alternative approaches will involve a high level of critical and creative thinking.

Designing a range of strategies which allow on-going opportunities for review and adjustment will be integral to achievement. Identifying criteria for evaluation of approaches to decision making will support detailed examination of their validity and consideration of personal decision making as first line managers. Group discussion of issues during formative work may be useful to reinforce analytical evaluation although candidates should be independently able to identify and discuss effective decision making approaches.

Open learning

This Unit is particularly suitable for Open Learning as candidates should be able to acquire the relevant knowledge by working through the distance learning material which will be available for this unit. Appropriate arrangements would need to be made for assessment and quality assurance. For information on this, please refer to the SQA document *Assessment and Quality Assurance of Open and Distance Learning*, which is available on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk.

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 Outcomes for Units. 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.

General information for candidates

Unit title: Decision Making

This Unit forms part of Module 2 of the Diploma in Police Service Leadership and Management which is a Professional Development Award accredited by SQA. It has been designed to offer developmental opportunities to police officers who aspire to promoted posts.

The Unit enables you to develop a consistent approach to decision making which will cover both routine and non-routine situations. This should help you to decide on an effective course of action to tackle the kind of problem that you will meet as a first line manager in the police service in Scotland. The Unit introduces you to different models of decision making and takes you through the stages involved in making a decision. It also looks at evaluating decisions you have made which will help you to refine and develop your approach. This is particularly important in the police service where members of the service can be called to explain and justify publicly the decisions made in particular circumstances. It is an applied Unit and you will be expected to apply the underpinning knowledge and techniques in the Unit to situations where decisions have to be made.

Decision making is a fundamental part of being a manager and the approach you develop from this Unit can be applied in all the other units in Modules 2, 3 and 4 of the Diploma. Some of these units cover particular aspects of managerial work in which you will have to make decisions such as managing people which is part of Module 4. Other units deal with factors which can influence decision making. One example is Professional Ethics in Policing, the other Module 2 unit.

You will be given support material to help you work on this Unit on your own. It will give you the background knowledge and understanding that you need but will also involve you in reviewing your own experience and looking at case studies of decisions which first line managers may have to make. This will help you to develop the skills of analysis, selecting a course of action and evaluation which you will need for the assessment.

The assessment for the Unit is based on a case study which will cover both routine and non-routine contexts. You will be given questions on the case study and asked to provide a report which tests your ability to analyse a situation and select a course of action appropriate to the problem encountered. You will also be required to evaluate this response. Your report should be about 3,000 words long and you will be expected to achieve a mark of 50%, or more.

You will have succeeded in meeting all the requirements of this Unit if you pass this assessment.