

Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Photography: Critical Study

Unit code: F1SY 36

Unit purpose: This Unit offers candidates the opportunity to engage with key ideas, concepts and personalities in the debates surrounding how photographs are made, used and understood. Candidates will identify, research and critically evaluate a specialist area of critical thinking that may relate to their particular photographic interest or practice.

On completion of the Unit candidates should be able to:

- 1 Research and critically evaluate the ideas and concepts expressed by a range of contemporary and/or historical photographic commentators.
- 2 Develop a specialised area of research and produce a formal critical response to a negotiated title.

Credit points and level: 1 HN credit at SCQF level 9: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 9*)

**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 well developed visual communication and inter-personal skills and be able to demonstrate the ability to think analytically and creatively. Candidates should be able to work independently and have competent technical photographic skills and aesthetic judgement, preferably having already achieved an HND in Photography. Candidates with a similar qualification and/or relevant professional experience may also be considered.

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skill of Communication at SCQF level 6, Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 and Information Technology at SCQF level 6, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components in this Unit.

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.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: For Outcome 1, candidates should research examples of the work of at least **five** different photographic commentators and collate the research in an annotated workbook. Candidates will provide a critical evaluation of their research findings to the group through a presentation or discussion led by the tutor. For Outcome 2, candidates will develop a specialised area of research identified in Outcome 1 and produce a formal response to a title negotiated with their tutor.

The response may take the form of an illustrated report (of approximately 3,000 words) or an alternative method of presentation (by prior agreement with their tutor).

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

Research and critically evaluate the ideas and concepts expressed by a range of contemporary and/or historical photographic commentators

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Research skills
- ◆ Critical evaluation skills
- ◆ Presentation skills

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ research the ideas and concepts expressed by at least five different published photographic commentators
- ◆ research and collate relevant information from a range of sources
- ◆ summarise the key issues, ideas and concepts associated with an individual commentator's work
- ◆ critically evaluate agreement and differences in the work they have researched
- ◆ design and deliver a presentation of their findings

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates should produce workbooks that contain a synopsis of the key issues discussed by each commentator and evidence of candidates' critical evaluation of their research. Commentators may also include published photographic practitioners.

Candidates should make a formal presentation of their research findings to the group and contribute to seminar discussions led by the tutor. An alternative method of presentation may be negotiated with their tutor.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Photography: Critical Study

Outcome 2

Develop a specialised area of research and produce a formal critical response to a negotiated title

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Research skills
- ◆ Communication skills
- ◆ Critical evaluation skills
- ◆ Critical reflection
- ◆ Referencing

Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that, with reference to Outcome 1, they can:

- ◆ research an identified area of interest
- ◆ critically evaluate material gathered from a range of sources
- ◆ produce a formally structured critically reflective personal response to a negotiated title
- ◆ accurately attribute references and quotations for all source material
- ◆ compile a full bibliography of source materials

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates should develop the specialised area of research identified in Outcome 1. This may be an area of particular interest to candidates or relevant to their own photographic practice. Candidates should negotiate a title with their tutor and produce a formal critical response. Responses should balance critical evaluation and original critically reflective thoughts, with accurately attributed quotations and references, and a comprehensive bibliography of source material.

The response may take the form of an illustrated report (of approximately 3,000 words) or an alternative method of presentation (by prior agreement with their tutor).

Illustrations should be included whatever form the assessment takes.

Administrative Information

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Unit title: Photography: Critical Study
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Photography: Critical Study

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 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is suitable for candidates who have a comprehensive knowledge and skills in photography and is intended for candidates who have achieved an HND in Photography, have a relevant visual art qualification or relevant work experience. The Unit may be appropriate to candidates in relevant employment who wish to develop and/or enhance their skills as a form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

This Unit offers candidates opportunities to engage with key ideas and concepts in critical thinking about photographic practice, what photography is (has been, and can be), what photography does (has done and can do), what photographs mean, and what photographers have to say. These ideas affect practitioners in all areas of photography: fine artists, photojournalists, portrait photographers, still-life photographers and the advertising industry, to name just a few. Commentators on photography may also be practitioners. This Unit will help candidates to understand that photography is more than a means of mechanical reproduction and will place conceptual ideas into historical and contemporary context.

In the context of this Unit, the word ‘critical’ should be understood to mean questioning, challenging, comparing and critically evaluating the strengths, weaknesses and merits of a chosen area of study.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This Unit can be used in a free standing capacity, though it forms a part of the SQA Professional Development Award in Professional Photography at SCQF level 9, and would be suitable for candidates who have considerable experience and knowledge of photography.

In this Unit candidates will research and critically evaluate the ideas and concepts expressed by at least five published historical and contemporary photographic commentators. Research initially should be directed by questions and debates initiated by the tutor in presentations and discussion seminars. Tutors may choose to make a number of texts or authors compulsory, encouraging candidates to research complementary or opposing viewpoints.

The ideas expressed by a selection of key photographic commentators should be explained by the tutor in presentations and opened to group discussion. Tutors may choose to exemplify with reference to particular texts and/or a number of commentators in order to guide the direction and scope of candidates’ research. Alternatively, if candidates demonstrate suitable strengths and abilities, tutors may choose to encourage self-directed research from the beginning. Research could include, but not be limited to, historiography, reading images, semiotics, representation of the human form, documentary strategies, media and the message, aesthetics, and technologies. Candidates may choose to place their research within a wider context by considering the significance of factors such as the gender, age, nationality and overt political leanings of historical and/or contemporary commentators.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Photography: Critical Study

Assessment of Outcome 1 offers opportunities for candidates to engage critically with the ideas and concepts they choose to research. Candidates will present their findings to their peer group. Tutors may encourage questions from the peer group during and/or after presentations and elicit personal conclusions from each candidate, to avoid regurgitations of undigested 'facts'.

Assessment of Outcome 2 requires candidates to identify and research a specialised area of critical thinking about photography that relates to their own particular interests or photographic practice. Candidates should be critically evaluative and also formulate and express original critically reflective conclusions in conjunction with appropriate references and quotations from their research.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This Unit provides candidates with the opportunity to develop the Core Skills of Communication, Information Technology and Problem Solving (particularly in the area of critical thinking) at SCQF level 6. Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6 can be developed through candidates' analysis of developing trends within their own professional field.

At SCQF level 6, candidates can develop their Written Communication skills as they are required to read and critically evaluate complex material such as that related to their chosen area of critical writing. They may also develop this Core Skill through the production of workbooks and using research and bibliographical skills. Oral Communication may be developed at the same level through critically evaluative and critically reflective presentations made to their tutors and peers.

Information Technology may be developed at SCQF level 6 through utilisation of the Internet to research information. Also, producing reports or workbooks will develop this Core Skill, not least where digital imaging, for example, is used to illustrate candidates' assessment evidence. Using Information Technology, such as PowerPoint will also help to develop Information Technology at SCQF level 6.

Open learning

If this Unit is delivered by open learning methods, additional resources will be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance.

For further information and advice please refer to the SQA document *Assessment and Quality Assurance for 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. Further advice can be found in the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (www.sqa.org.uk).

General information for candidates

Unit title: Photography: Critical Study

This Unit is designed to introduce you to key ideas, concepts and personalities in the discussion of what photography is (has been, and can be), what photography does (has done and can do), what photographs mean, and what photographers have to say. These ideas affect fine artists, documentary makers, portrait photographers, still-life photographers and the advertising industry, to name just a few. It will help you understand that photography is more than a means of mechanical reproduction and will place commentators and their ideas in historical and contemporary context. You will be expected to undertake the research activities and critical evaluation listed below:

- ◆ Source and accurately reference ideas and concepts from a range of contemporary and historical commentators
- ◆ Research the ideas and concepts expressed by at least five different published photographic commentators
- ◆ Critically evaluate ideas and concepts from contemporary and historical commentators
- ◆ Plan and present the findings of your research and critical evaluation
- ◆ Select a specialised area for extended in-depth research and critical evaluation
- ◆ Produce a personal critically reflective response based on your specialised research to a title negotiated with your tutor

In Outcome 1 you will be expected to source and document information from a range of historical and contemporary photographic commentators. You will critically evaluate your research and present your findings to your peer group.

In Outcome 2 you will develop a specialised area of interest or relevance to your own practice from your research for Outcome 1. You will produce a critically reflective formal response to a title negotiated with your tutor. The response may take the form of an illustrated report of approximately 3,000 words or an alternative form of presentation, by negotiation with your tutor. Your response will demonstrate that you can research and critically evaluate your chosen area of interest, and that can construct an original argument with appropriate referencing to reinforce and support your own personal thoughts.