



Higher National Unit specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Public Sector: An Introduction

Unit code: F3HN 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is designed to provide candidates with a basic knowledge and understanding of the public sector and the operations and functions of public sector organisations. The Unit also introduces the candidate to the various types of public sector organisations which operate and how these organisations are financed and held accountable. This is an introductory Unit which can also be studied by candidates who may wish to progress to more specialised public sector units.

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

- 1 Explain the role of the public sector and the different types of organisations which operate in the public sector.
- 2 Explain the elements of the public sector financial process and how accountability is achieved in the public sector.

Credit points and level: 1 HN credit(s) 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.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre but candidates should possess good written and oral communication skills.

Core Skills: There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards Core Skills in *Communication and Information Technology* 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: The Unit could be assessed by two separate Instruments of Assessment. Both Outcomes may be assessed by a home-based structured report based on stimulus material. Alternatively, both Outcomes could be assessed by a combined assessment.

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

Explain the role of the public sector and the different types of organisations which operate in the public sector.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Definition of public sector
- ◆ Nature of public administration and type of services
- ◆ Different types of public sector organisations
- ◆ Characteristics of the different types of public sector organisations
- ◆ Complexities of relationships between public and other sector organisations

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain the term public sector
- ◆ explain the nature and importance of public sector organisations and the types of service provided
- ◆ explain the roles and responsibilities of at least three different types of public sector organisations.
- ◆ explain the similarities and differences and relationships between:
 - public and private sector organisations
 - public sector and other sector organisations

The explanation must include at least one example for each category.

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome could be assessed by:

One structured open-book essay/report of 1,000 – 1,500 words. The assessment should be handed out at an appropriate point of delivery and submitted to a date set by the tutor. Candidates must provide evidence covering all the Evidence Requirements and a feedback session with the candidate should be arranged to ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

It is possible to combine the assessment of this Outcome with Outcome 2. Candidate evidence for the combined assessment would be approximately 2,000 – 2,500 words.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Public Sector: An Introduction

Outcome 2

Explain the elements of the public sector financial process and how accountability is achieved in the public sector

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Sources of funding
 - central
 - regional
 - local
- ◆ Budgetary process
- ◆ Financial accountability

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ Explain four sources of funding. Candidate evidence must include at least one source for each source of funding — central, regional and local.
- ◆ Describe the national budgetary process. The description must include spending plans, the budget statement and the role of parliament.
- ◆ Explain at least three methods of ensuring financial accountability within the public sector. The explanation must include the role of organisations or individuals involved in the three methods identified.

Assessment Guidelines

This Outcome could be assessed by:

One structured open-book essay/report of 1,000 – 1,500 words. The assessment should be handed out at an appropriate point of delivery and submitted to a date set by the tutor. Candidates must provide evidence covering all the Evidence Requirements and a feedback session with the candidate should be arranged to ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

It would be possible to combine the assessment of this Outcome with Outcome 1. Candidate evidence for the combined assessment would be approximately 2,000 – 2,500 words.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F3HN 34
Unit title: Public Sector: An Introduction
Superclass category: AC
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History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Public Sector: An Introduction

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 designed to develop a basic understanding of the British public sector. It is intended to introduce candidates to the nature and importance of the public sector and the types of services provided. The Unit looks at the various organisations that operate within the public sector, how they are financed and held accountable.

It is important that teaching materials and resources are current and reflect topical practice.

Outcome One

The purpose of this Outcome is to provide candidates with a basic understanding of the British public sector and the characteristics of the different types of public sector organisations. The public sector is a term used for all types of government controlled business, often described as ‘arms length’ or ‘indirect government’. Public sector organisations are involved in government business; they apply government policy, perform functions on behalf of central and regional governments and are in the main financed by government. In this Outcome, candidates should show an understanding of the nature and importance of public administration and the different forms of public sector organisations that perform functions on behalf of central and regional governments, namely, local authorities, quangos, government departments, executive agencies and public corporations. Candidates are encouraged to illustrate an understanding of the various types of services they provide and make a comparison between the public and private sector and the services they provide.

Outcome Two

The purpose of this Outcome is for candidates to develop an understanding of the elements of the public sector funding process and how the public sector can be held accountable. Government spending plans are announced each year in the budget statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The statement explains how the government intends to raise the money it needs to run the country during the following year but government spending plans and taxation must be approved by Parliament before government can raise taxes or spend any money.

Candidates should show an understanding of the budgetary process and the various sources of government funding (direct and indirect taxation, borrowing and the Barnett Formula based on population and need). Regional governments receive a block grant from the budget to provide public services and in turn the regional governments will provide local authorities and other public sector organisations with the resources they need to help provide public goods and services. The public sector is in the main financed by taxation and as such is accountable to the political organisations that pay for them but ultimately government is accountable to the electorate/consumer. Accountability comes in many forms, for example, statutory, political, ministerial, judicial review, ombudsman, national audit office, public accounts committee, performance indicators, to name but a few. Therefore, candidates should be aware of the roles of regional and local government in financing the public sector and the various ways in which the public sector can be held accountable.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Public Sector: An Introduction

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Centres are recommended to follow the sequence of Outcomes which will provide the candidate with an introductory understanding of the nature and importance of the British public sector

The delivery of this Unit should be candidate-centred and the approach may vary to suit the needs of the group. A variety of teaching and learning approaches could be utilised throughout this Unit, for example, tutor explanation, class and group discussion, news articles and internet research, individual and small group research, study visits and guest speakers are all appropriate for developing knowledge and skills. Candidates will be expected, as much as possible, to demonstrate their ability to relate the theoretical and practical position to the assessments.

It is important that prior to assessment, the tutor should provide candidates with formative work including handouts, information leaflets, practical exercises, websites, tutor led class discussions, study visits, guest speakers and guidance on self directed learning.

Wherever possible, Centres should adopt a proactive approach towards the teaching of this Unit and likewise, candidates should be encouraged to read broad sheet newspapers, access relevant websites, listen to and view the wide range of documentary and current affairs programmes broadcast on radio and television. Candidates should also be encouraged to use these sources as discussion topics in the classroom environment.

As stated in the General Information for Centres, this Unit can be assessed by use of two separate assessment events.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

Skills in accessing, analysing and evaluating complex information on the functions, organisation and finances of the Public Sector should be developed, in order that candidates read in depth and in detail current reference materials from a range of specialist paper based and electronic sites. Checklists could be developed by centres to support and encourage analytical evaluation of information researched; these could include criteria to check on relevance, currency, and accuracy. The need to develop efficient systems of recording, coding and storing research data for ease of reference should be emphasised. Candidates should develop skills in the use of Information Technology as they undertake and manage the practical aspects of research and summarise relevant facts to produce formal written responses to a professional standard.

Written Communication skills are not discretely assessed but candidates should be advised on the need to present analytical written responses which are formally expressed and technically accurate. Discussion of issues within the class group and interaction with guest speakers will provide opportunities to develop skills in Listening, including essential abilities in summarising and note taking, as well as to practise effective oral techniques which will support professional communication with others.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Public Sector: An Introduction

Open learning

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional resources will be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. For further information and advice please refer to the SQA guide: Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning (A1030, February 2001)

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: Public Sector: An Introduction

The Unit provides an introduction to the public sector. You will gain an understanding of the role of the public sector and the different types of organisations that operate within it. You will also gain an understanding of the public sector funding process

- ◆ In Outcome 1 you will learn about the nature and importance of the public sector and the roles and responsibilities of the different types of organisations that operate within it. You will also gain an understanding of the complexities of relationships that exist between public and other sector organisations, such as the NHS and voluntary organisations.
- ◆ In Outcome 2 you will learn about the various sources of funding. The Outcome looks at central, regional and local funding within public sector organisations and the various methods used to ensure financial accountability.

During the course of this Unit you will take part in such activities as class and group discussions, group and individual research, study visits and self directed learning. You will be encouraged to read broadsheet newspapers, access relevant websites, listen to and view the wide range of documentary and current affairs programmes broadcast on radio and television.

This Unit may be assessed by two separate reports based on stimulus material. Alternatively, both Outcomes could be assessed by a combined assessment. Your tutor will advise you as to which approach is being taken by your centre.

There may be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in Communication at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components.