



Higher National Graded Unit specification

General information for centres

This Graded Unit has been validated as part of the HND Social Services (SCQF level 8). 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: Social Services: Graded Unit 2

Graded Unit code: F5LJ 35

Type of Graded Unit: Project

Assessment Instrument: Investigation

Credit points and level: 2 HN credit 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 Social Services (SCQF level 8):

- ◆ To develop research capabilities and apply to professional practice
- ◆ To develop skills and knowledge to conduct research on professional practice
- ◆ To examine, apply and evaluate a range of theoretical and practice based perspectives relating to assessment, planning, implementation and review, to specific areas of professional practice
- ◆ To critically evaluate the legislative and policy context of their professional practice
- ◆ To lead a process of change in professional practice

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:

F56X 35	<i>Childhood Practice and Social Services: Professional Development and Practice</i>
F56V 35	<i>Childhood Practice and Social Service: Applied Sociology</i>
F56T 35	<i>Childhood Practice and Social Services: Applied Psychology</i>
F5BN 35	<i>Childhood Practice and Social Services: Legislative, Policy and Protection Contexts</i>
F56W 35	<i>Childhood Practice and Social Services: Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of Professional Practice</i>
F56Y 35	<i>Childhood Practice and Social Services: Developing Leadership</i>

General information for centres (cont)

Core Skills: There may be 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.

Assessment: This Graded Unit will be assessed by the use of a research investigation of professional practice which will include:

- ◆ a plan of action
- ◆ an investigation report with conclusions and recommendations
- ◆ evidence showing evaluation of the investigation report
- ◆ a reflection of the candidate's role in the process

The investigation should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates she/he has met the aims of the Group Award that this Graded Unit covers.

The Social Services: Graded Unit 2 is a professional activity and practitioners have obligations to individuals, children and young people, to their employers, to one another, to colleagues in other disciplines and to society. To conduct research in professional practice, practitioners must conform to a Code of Ethics for social services research. The primary objective of a Code of Ethics in research is to express the values and principles which are integral to social services practice and to provide a code of ethical behaviour while completing the research activity.

Administrative Information

Graded Unit code: F5LJ 35
Graded Unit title: Social Services: Graded Unit 2
Original date of publication: March 2009
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History of changes:

Version	Description of change	Date

Source: SQA

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Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates

Graded Unit title: Social Services: Graded Unit 2

Conditions of assessment

The candidate should be given a date for completion of the investigation. 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, however this an independent piece of work. 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 and the level of support required to complete this.

The evidence for the project is generated over a specified period of 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.

Although the topic should be agreed with the tutor, the tutor's role is as a facilitator and so to achieve high marks candidates will need to demonstrate a high degree of autonomy throughout the project.

At this level, candidates should work independently. 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 project 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 topic for the investigation should be left to the candidate but the study must allow the candidate to integrate knowledge and/or skills from the Units that contribute to the Graded Unit. The topic for the investigation should focus on assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of professional practice. It must allow the candidate to integrate knowledge and/or skills from the Units that contribute to the Graded Unit and should reflect current best practice.

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

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

This project based assessment consists of three stages: planning; developing and evaluating and candidates will produce an action plan, an investigation report and an evaluation self reflection respectively.

The investigation will examine an aspect of assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation in their professional practice. The topic should clearly demonstrate the involvement of individuals throughout and can be investigated by means of secondary and primary research, using a variety of research methods and sources.

It is recognised that candidates will be working or on placement in a variety of contexts and that their experiences will be related to differing age groups between birth to old age.

Guidance on grading candidates

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.

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

Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the criteria for each of the three phases of the investigation (see below) are met to a high standard and the report clearly integrates these three phases ◆ the candidate has accurately matched all of the performance of the investigation to its aims and purpose ◆ the candidate has clearly understood and demonstrated the application of the social services research code of ethics ◆ contains necessary background details, the handling of data, interpretation and reporting of findings is accurate, comprehensive, well written and uses appropriate language. ◆ Summary and interpretation of data is presented in an accurate and technically appropriate fashion ◆ the candidate demonstrates a clear critical understanding of the knowledge and skills presented in the selected Units of the Group Award and is able to apply them to new situations. 	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the criteria for the three phases of the investigation are met but the relationship between the phases is not always clearly demonstrated ◆ the candidate has related the performance of the investigation to its aims and purpose though the investigation of some areas may not be as thorough. ◆ The candidate has generally understood and applied social service research code of ethics ◆ the report is generally accurate, clearly written and uses appropriate language ◆ the summarising of data or its interpretation may not reveal all the information expected. ◆ the candidate demonstrates a good understanding of knowledge and skills presented in the selected Units of the Group Award but does not always apply them to new situations.

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%

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

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

Evidence Requirements

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

The project consists of three stages: an action plan; an investigation report and an evaluation. Each task has a marking allocation. This is **30/30/40**. Marks cannot be redistributed between stages. There is a suggested distribution of marks in the Support Notes for each of the three stages.

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.

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 1 — Planning 30% of marks	The candidate must submit an Action Plan that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the title of the investigation ◆ the aims of the investigation ◆ the rationale for pursuing the investigation and the intended overall Outcome (purpose) ◆ the main research issues (or questions) that must be dealt with ◆ timescale for major stages of the research ◆ a brief literature review consisting of relevant, referenced titles (book, journal, magazine or internet sources) and a indication of their possible contribution to the investigation ◆ degree of autonomy shown by the candidate ◆ Statement of Social Services research code of ethics <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Planning stage.</i></p>
Stage 2 — Developing 30% of marks	The candidate must produce an Investigation Report that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ presents the information to a standard format as follows: title; contents or index; abstract; aims; introduction; methods; results; discussion; conclusions; references; appendices ◆ subjects the data gathered to summary and analysis to compile the results. (This is applicable to both numeric data and written information, such as, the answers to some questionnaire or interview questions). ◆ subjects the results to interpretation. <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Developing stage.</i></p>

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

Project Stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 3 — Evaluating 40% of marks	<p>The candidate must produce an Evaluative Report that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ briefly outlines the aims and purpose of the investigation ◆ summarises any changes that were made, gives the reasons for them and explains how the action plan was modified as a result – including the review of literature ◆ critically reflects on the application of social service research code of ethics ◆ assesses their use of research methods to generate reliable data ◆ assesses the completeness and accuracy of their interpretation of the data ◆ critical reflection of their own role in the complete process ◆ suggests further related areas of research that could be undertaken <p>As part of the evaluating stage the candidate must produce an abstract that should be placed after the action plan but before the investigation report as a summary of the work undertaken.</p> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Evaluating stage.</i></p>

Support notes

Below is a **suggested** marking scheme for each stage of this project which has been provided for guidance only and is not mandatory. Centres may prefer to devise their own scheme.

Please also consult Guidance on Grading table when deciding on overall grade for the candidate.

General guidance

The suggested overall word count for this investigation is 6,500–7,100 words. The suggested word count for each section is:

- 1 Stage 1 — Planning (2,000–2,200) including the literature review)
- 2 Stage 2 — Developing (2,000–2,200)
- 3 Stage 3 — Evaluating (2,500–2,700 including the abstract of about 200 words)

Candidates should not be constricted by this advice however they should be encouraged not to write significantly more or less than the suggested word count (within a margin of 10%). Candidates should indicate their actual word count at the end of each section. The word count does not include information that they may choose to put in an appendix or their reference section.

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

Suggested allocation of marks

Planning

This stage is worth **30 marks**. As part of the planning stage the candidate is expected to carry out a brief literature review. The candidate should be encouraged to draw on a variety of current and relevant sources and demonstrate evidence of actual reading. The length of the review should be proportionate to the mark allocated within the minimum Evidence Requirements for this section, about 500 words. Candidates should be encouraged to relate the literature discussed to the actual aims of the investigation.

The planning stage is assessed by a planning document and an individual interview. The tutor's role is as a facilitator and to gain high marks the candidate must demonstrate a high degree of autonomy in planning activities.

For the planning stage the marks could be allocated in the following way:

Up to 7 marks for a clearly stated purpose for the research that provides an explanation of:

- 1 The area from which the research will be drawn.
- 2 How it relates to your professional practice.
- 3 How it relates to the mandatory Units of the award.
- 4 What it intends to achieve.
- 5 How it will be conducted conforming to childhood practice research code of ethics.

Up to 10 marks for precise aims of the research, the research questions that arise from them and the methods that will be applied to answer these research questions. The timescale for the major stages of the project should also be established.

Up to 10 marks for a literature review as detailed in the minimum Evidence Requirements.

Up to 3 marks for the degree of autonomy shown by the candidate in the development of the action plan.

Developing

This stage is worth **30 marks**. The candidate must achieve all of the minimum Evidence Requirements specified above to pass the developing stage. Assessment is based on a written report of the activity.

Up to 10 marks for presenting the report in the standard format specified (minimum Evidence Requirements) to produce a complete and coherent account.

Up to 5 marks where application of the methods has been appropriate and has generated sufficient, reliable data for interpretation.

Up to 5 marks for the clear presentation of raw data as summarised results.

Up to 10 marks for the valid interpretation of the results that also places them in the context of current thinking and other research in that area, and that allows the candidate to draw clear conclusions.

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

Evaluating

This stage is worth **40 marks**. As part of this stage the candidate is expected to produce an abstract of approximately 200 words. This abstract should be placed before the Investigation Report as a summary of the work undertaken. Candidates could be shown examples of abstracts from other pieces of research or from academic journals. The abstract should be objective, concise and reflect the scope of the work.

As part of the evaluation process, the candidate is expected to discuss further areas of study that may have arisen from the investigation. They are required to identify likely methodological approaches and give an indication of relevant literature. They are not expected to carry out another literature review and it is sufficient for candidates to indicate possible referenced titles from a variety of sources.

The evaluating stage is assessed by a written evaluation that may be embedded in the discussion section. The marks for this stage should be allocated in the following way:

Up to 15 marks for the abstract and evaluating the investigation against its initial aims to establish the degree to which the aims have been achieved.

The evaluation against the aims should include:

- 1 The candidate's application of the method(s) to generate sufficient and reliable data.
- 2 Any limitations to their interpretation of the data (see stage 2 above).
- 3 The reasons for any changes, if necessary, in the action plan.

It is essential that the aims and the purpose of the investigation be re-presented as bench marks for the evaluation. Also evaluation that lacks critical reflection should be penalised in the marking of this section.

Up to 10 marks for critical self reflection on the:

- 1 Justification of method(s) of research chosen to identify and address questions around social service research code of ethics.
- 2 Process to involve service users in the research project.

Up to 10 marks for discussing further areas of study that could be undertaken, following the conclusion drawn in the investigation report. This should not be limited to a statement of topics but should give some indication of the research issues, likely methodological approaches needed and brief literature search. Candidates may acknowledge further study that arises from unforeseen difficulties in the original work.

Up to 5 marks for identifying knowledge/skills from the mandatory Units of the Group Award that have been applied/developed during the investigation.

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

Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements

General information for candidates

This Unit has been designed to allow you to integrate your learning across a range of Units in the HND Social Services. You should be able to draw upon your learning and assignments from the mandatory Units and your workplace experience. The investigation will examine an aspect of assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation in your professional practice. The topic should clearly demonstrate the involvement of individuals throughout and can be investigated by means of secondary and primary research, using a variety of research methods and sources.

You should be aware that any references to the individual(s), must be anonymised and the permission of that individual(s) obtained. In addition you must demonstrate the application of the social services research Code of Ethics. You will have the opportunity to discuss and agree on the content of the investigation to be undertaken with your tutor prior to carrying out the investigation. You should make arrangements to discuss and agree project aims, objectives and proposed method(s) of research with your supervisor or manager and with the individual(s).

On completion of this Graded Unit, you will be able to demonstrate that you have achieved the following principal aims of the HND Social Services:

- ◆ To develop research capabilities and apply to professional practice
- ◆ To develop skills and knowledge to conduct research on professional practice
- ◆ To examine, apply and evaluate a range of theoretical and practice based perspectives relating to assessment, planning, implementation and review, to specific areas of professional practice
- ◆ To critically understand the legislative and policy context of your professional practice
- ◆ To lead a process of change in professional practice

The project consists of three stages: an action plan; an investigation report and an evaluation. Each task has a marking allocation.

Stage	Activity	Marks allocated
Stage 1: Planning	You must complete and submit an Action Plan	30 marks
Stage 2: Developing	You must complete and submit an Investigation Report	30 marks
Stage 3 : valuation.	You must complete an Evaluative Report	40 marks