



Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Research Skills

Unit code: F60A 34

Unit purpose: This Unit is about developing the candidate's ability to access and evaluate information from a variety of primary and secondary sources by planning and reporting on a research investigation. It is aimed at those who need to access and analyse information as part of their course of study.

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

- 1 Plan a research investigation.
- 2 Access and analyse complex information from a range of primary and secondary sources.
- 3 Present findings of a research investigation.

Credit points and level: 1 HN credit 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. However, it would be beneficial if candidates had skills in Communication at SCQF level 6. This may be evidenced by the following:

- ◆ Higher English (C115 12) or its component Units
- ◆ Higher ESOL (C222 12)
- ◆ Communication Core Skill (D01B 12) or (F3GB 12)
- ◆ IELTS level 6
- ◆ Other similar qualifications or work experience

Core Skills: There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication*, *Problem Solving* and *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 6 and *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components. Further detail is provided in the Support Notes.

General information for centres (cont)

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 will be assessed holistically by an investigative report linking all three Outcomes. Tasks could be integrated with other elements of the award.

Assessment arrangements should be in place to assure the authenticity of all evidence submitted.

Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of Standards

Unit title: Research Skills

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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

Plan a research investigation.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Research objectives
- ◆ Research methods
- ◆ Ethical and legal considerations affecting research
- ◆ Identification and selection of resources
- ◆ Primary and secondary sources of information
- ◆ Library classification and cataloguing systems
- ◆ Contact methods
- ◆ Preparation of interview questions
- ◆ Project management timescales

Outcome 2

Access and analyse complex information from a range of primary and secondary sources.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Primary and secondary research techniques
- ◆ Contacts and networking
- ◆ Electronic information access and retrieval
- ◆ Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data
- ◆ Accuracy and precision in summarising and recording information

Outcome 3

Present findings of a research investigation.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Analytical and evaluative skills
- ◆ Conventions of research reporting
- ◆ Effective use of language, register and style
- ◆ Presentation skills

Higher National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Research Skills

Evidence Requirements for the Unit

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

- ◆ define research objectives appropriate to purpose
- ◆ plan a research investigation
- ◆ implement a research plan
- ◆ analyse information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- ◆ produce a referenced record of research activity and materials
- ◆ present findings based on accurate analysis and interpretation of data
- ◆ use a format appropriate to the chosen medium

Findings should be a minimum of 1,000 words or oral equivalent.

Assessment must be conducted in conditions where arrangements are in place to assure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

Assessment Guidelines for the Unit

Use of technology in sourcing, storing and presenting information is to be encouraged. Candidates may be provided with a planning pro-forma. Findings could be presented as a written or oral report, article, documentary or similar investigation. Referencing should be appropriate to the medium selected and could involve a log book, portfolio of notes, bibliography or credits.

Administrative Information

Unit code: F60A 34
Unit title: Research Skills
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Version	Description of change	Date

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Higher National Unit Specification: Support Notes

Unit title: Research Skills

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 may be taught as part of a Group Award or as a free-standing Unit. Although the Unit is expressed in generic terms, it should be related to a context that is familiar to candidates. If it is taught as part of a Group Award it is recommended that it should be taught within the subject area/context of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Outcomes 1 and 2

There are opportunities for integration with other Units which involve investigation and analysis. A planning log could be provided. The importance of working to a schedule should be stressed.

Candidates may be provided with a clear definition of primary and secondary sources appropriate to their investigation and reminded that they must access both types when they are carrying out their research. Information from primary sources could be obtained by personal, telephone and e mail interviews, surveys and observation. Candidates should be familiar with a range of interview types and techniques, adapting those relevant to their particular investigative research.

Candidates should be able to access electronic information sources and use library classification systems. Criteria to support critical evaluation of the accuracy, currency and reliability of data could be provided. The need for efficient systems of recording and referencing sources, including logs, should be emphasised.

Outcome 3

The practicalities of collating and presenting all relevant data will depend on the remit which has been agreed. The format and style will reflect the medium selected.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

Although the Evidence Requirements combine all three Outcomes it is recommended that tasks are undertaken in stages. Some integration with assessment tasks for other Units in the award will provide a context for delivery. Research plans for a range of topics may be usefully evaluated using peer discussion, with particular attention being paid to definition of terms and clarity of language. Skills in analysis may be further developed through consideration of research and investigative reports from the Creative Industries in different formats, with the candidate being asked to identify trends and significant variations.

Accessing a range of web sites as part of gathering information is an essential skill, particularly when other primary and secondary sources are used to support analysis and critical evaluation. Candidates could be encouraged to think critically as they examine domain, authorship, publisher and currency.

Higher National Unit Specification: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Research Skills

Additional sites or links could be checked and evaluated. Editing and collating appropriate data may involve the submission of drafts for assessor feedback.

Candidates should be advised on questionnaire design, sampling methods and procedures and interview skills. Candidates could practise designing interview questions and questionnaires for a range of purposes and should be encouraged to evaluate these in peer group sessions in terms of relevance to purpose and practicability.

Some work will be undertaken outside the centre, and agreed conditions will be necessary to ensure the originality of work submitted. Retention of draft work, and of any tracking records or e mail exchanges between staff and candidates, can be a valuable aspect of quality assurance, mark progress and help to minimise plagiarism.

The context and conduct of oral work, including radio and television reporting, should be to an acceptable professional standard. Ideally there will be recording of oral presentations to support internal and external verification procedures.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop Core Skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components.

- ◆ Communication at SCQF level 6
- ◆ Problem Solving at SCQF level 6
- ◆ Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 6
- ◆ Numeracy at SCQF level 5

As they undertake investigative research candidates analyse and summarise a range of complex primary and secondary sources such as Internet sites, journals, articles and programmes/podcasts. Critical evaluation of all information accessed would include checks on currency, authority, accuracy and balance. Candidates will be aware of the influence and impact of purpose and intended recipient on the language and format of their research report. Findings which express essential ideas and information accurately, coherently and concisely, using a structure, style and format appropriate to medium and context is integral to achievement. Active listening skills and reflective non-verbal communication techniques will be developed as candidates undertake interviews and surveys.

Candidates analyse and seek solutions to a range of theoretical and practical problems as they undertake the Unit. They identify and consider the variables in research processes and analyse the significance of each before planning and implementing a research plan. Critical Thinking underpins all research activities, enhancing problem solving skills. Evaluation at all stages of research activities will be critical to the accuracy of findings.

Effective access to and retrieval of information from electronic sources is an essential skill. Resources available will include appropriate software packages to support the interpretation of data as well as the storage and presentation of information to professional standards.

Higher National Unit Specification: Support Notes (cont)

Unit title: Research Skills

Formative opportunities to interpret information in numerical, statistical and graphic forms will enhance skills in Using Number and Graphical Information. Accuracy in calculations and effective presentation of data could be supported by access to appropriate software.

Open learning

This Unit could be delivered by distance learning provided suitable arrangements can be agreed for assessment conditions to ensure authenticity. Delivery could be by online or distance learning, with assessor input and support at all stages of draft.

If research is to be presented orally candidates may be assessed in the presenting centre, use interactive communication links or submit recorded material.

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

Unit title: Research Skills

This Unit is about developing the skills to access, analyse and evaluate information from a variety of sources and to use this ability in the planning, carrying out and reporting of a research investigation.

You will look at how to access and use information from a variety of primary sources, such as interviews and surveys, and secondary sources such as articles, programmes and the Internet. You will plan, carry out and report on the results of all your research.

Assessment will be on the final investigative report that you produce, and you will have to show that you can:

- ◆ define research objectives appropriate to your purpose
- ◆ plan a research investigation
- ◆ implement a research plan
- ◆ analyse information from a range of primary and secondary sources
- ◆ produce a referenced record of research activity and materials
- ◆ present findings based on accurate analysis and interpretation of data
- ◆ use a format appropriate to the chosen medium

Your report must be a minimum of 1,000 words or oral equivalent.

There may be opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication, Problem Solving, Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 6 and *Numeracy* at SCQF level 5 as you undertake the Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components.