



## Higher National Unit specification: general information

This Graded Unit has been validated as part of the HND in Social Sciences. 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 Sciences: Graded Unit 2

**Graded Unit code:** FM68 35

**Type of Graded Unit:** Project

**Assessment Instrument:** Investigation

**Publication date:** July 2013

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 03

### Unit purpose

This Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following principal aims of the HND in Social Sciences:

- ◆ develop an in-depth understanding of different social science disciplines
- ◆ develop a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of social sciences to the modern world and human behaviour
- ◆ demonstrate that by combining perspectives from more than one subject, particular themes or aspects of human behaviour can be examined, explained and thereby understood in a more comprehensive manner
- ◆ develop an open-minded, critical and evaluative approach to study
- ◆ gain knowledge and understanding of different research issues
- ◆ develop investigation and independent research skills
- ◆ develop skills in managing and prioritising information
- ◆ analyse and evaluate competing views, perspectives, theories and evidence in one or two disciplines to enable the candidate to adopt a comprehensive social scientific approach

## General information (continued)

It is intended for candidates who wish to test their ability to integrate what they have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Their purpose is to add value to the Group Award, making it more than the sum of its parts, and to encourage candidates to retain and adapt their skills and knowledge.

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

- 1 Achieve an HND in Social Sciences, assuming the successful completion of all other required units.
- 2 Articulate into an appropriate undergraduate programme.
- 3 Enter the field of employment with a recognised and valued qualification.

## 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:

- ◆ Social Science: Research Issues
- ◆ Sociology C: Analysing and Evaluating Sociological Debates
- ◆ Sociology D: Specialist Study

**and a minimum of 3 credits from the following units:**

- ◆ Economics C: Applied Economics - The Global Perspective
- ◆ Economics D: Economics Today
- ◆ Geography C: Environmental Geography
- ◆ Geography D: Geography Today
- ◆ History C: Evaluating Topics within a Historical Period
- ◆ History D: Specialist Study
- ◆ Philosophy C: An Introduction to Logical Analysis
- ◆ Philosophy D: Normative Ethics
- ◆ Politics C: The United States and the European Union
- ◆ Politics D: Political Representation
- ◆ Psychology C: Analysis and Evaluation of Psychological Topics
- ◆ Psychology D: The Research Process in Psychology

## Credit points and level

1 HN credit at SCQF level 8: (8 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.*

## **General information (continued)**

### **Core Skills**

The achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following: Problem Solving at SCQF level 6.

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of the Core Skills in Numeracy and Information Communication and Technology at SCQF level 5 and Communication at SCQF level 6 in this Unit and these are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

### **Assessment**

This project-based Graded Unit will be assessed by the use of an Investigation. The developed Investigation should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates she/he has met the aims of the Graded Unit that it covers. The Investigation may employ one or two Social Science disciplines.

In line with the current Assessment Strategy, while the report on the Investigation could be written, it is also possible that the information could be presented as a portfolio, a reflective blog, a personal or learning journal or a DVD. The method chosen is at the discretion of the presenting Centre but whichever method is chosen a bibliography would be essential.

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

**Graded Unit title:** Social Sciences: 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. 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.

Re-assessment of this Graded Unit should be based on a *substantially different* project. The following reassessments, where all stages are undertaken, would be appropriate:

- ◆ the same topic, but a different research question
- ◆ the same topic, but a different discipline
- ◆ a new topic

In this case, a candidate's grade will be based on the achievement in the re-assessment, if this results in a higher grade.

The same topic(s) for the Investigation should not be used for two consecutive years. Topics should be rotated over a cycle of at least three years.

At this level, candidates should work independently. It is up to Centres to take reasonable steps to ensure that the investigation 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 investigation 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.

The evidence for the project is generated over time and involves three distinct stages, where each stage has to be achieved. Thus any re-assessment of stages could be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage.

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

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### **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 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

### **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)

**Graded Unit title:** Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2

Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ interprets and understands the topic in a way which demonstrates insight and clear understanding of issues and relationships</li> <li>◆ demonstrates a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of relevant information</li> <li>◆ investigation is logically structured and coherently expressed demonstrating consistent use of appropriate terminology</li> <li>◆ uses language and terminology of a consistently high standard in terms of level, accuracy and technical content</li> <li>◆ consolidates and integrates required knowledge and skills linking concepts and ideas and relating answers explicitly to the investigation</li> <li>◆ convincingly argues and shows links between discussions and conclusions demonstrating comprehensive knowledge and understanding as well as analytical and evaluative skills</li> <li>◆ provides evidence of possible alternative approaches and arguments as well as understanding of different interpretations</li> <li>◆ demonstrates a high level of independent learning</li> </ul>	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ interprets and understands the topic in a way which enables the candidate to meet the basic criteria required</li> <li>◆ demonstrates evaluation and explanation of the question and other relevant information</li> <li>◆ may be uneven but conveys understanding and some relevant points are made</li> <li>◆ is satisfactorily structured, language and use of terminology is adequate, in terms of level, accuracy and technical content</li> <li>◆ consolidates and integrates knowledge and skills but may lack continuity and consistency and links to concepts and ideas may not be explicit</li> <li>◆ argues and shows links between discussions and conclusions demonstrating knowledge and understanding</li> <li>◆ is likely to be more narrow in approach and shows adequate understanding of different interpretations</li> <li>◆ demonstrates independent learning</li> </ul>

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

### Graded Unit title: Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2

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, i.e. candidates must pass ALL stages of the project to achieve an overall pass.

## 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.

**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
<p>Stage 1 — Planning</p> <p>16 marks, including 3 marks for time management</p>	<p>An analysis of a complex task which involves a large number of variables, unfamiliar contexts or relationships.</p> <p>Development of an approach or strategy to carry out the project ie a plan of action that identifies the factors involved and assesses their relevance – these factors should include variables and the relationships between them, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the aims and objectives of the project including research, development and evaluation</li> <li>◆ timescales for achieving these aims and objectives</li> <li>◆ the rationale for selecting the topic to be researched if choice has been allowed</li> <li>◆ identification of the main issues for research</li> </ul> <p>Identification of the resources required to carry out the project eg sources of information, selection of texts based on preliminary analysis, procedures to be followed, people, equipment and other physical resources. Resources should be wide ranging and some should be unfamiliar to the candidate.</p> <p>Evidence of obtaining these resources — the candidate may need to do some searching.</p> <p>Justification of the chosen approach eg by referring to key factors, the resources and time available, comparison with other possible approaches. <i>This is very important.</i></p> <p>This could be evidenced by written material <b>and</b> an in depth personal interview or substantial contribution to an extended discussion; where information is presented clearly and accurately.</p> <p><b>Sixteen marks will be allocated to this stage, including 3 marks for time management. This mark may be revised at the time of the final submission.</b></p>
	<p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Planning stage.</i></p>

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

**Graded Unit title:** Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2

### Evidence Requirements (continued)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
<p>Stage 2 — Developing</p> <p>5 marks for introduction and background</p> <p>5 marks for conclusions drawn</p> <p>10 marks for references, bibliography and use of appropriate terminology</p> <p>44 marks for discipline/topic, including quality of response and coherency</p>	<p>A written report or agreed alternative of approximately 2,500-3,000 words or equivalent which investigates a social science theme or aspect of human behaviour. This investigation must incorporate the knowledge and skills gained in relevant C and/or D units. The report should also demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the techniques are appropriate to the writer’s purpose and audience and are used consistently and effectively</li> <li>◆ all essential ideas/information contributing to the main purpose of the communication are expressed accurately, coherently and in a logical and effective order</li> <li>◆ structure takes account of purpose and audience and clearly defines the points it presents</li> <li>◆ spelling, punctuation and syntax are consistently accurate; sentence structure, paragraphing and vocabulary are varied to suit purpose and audience</li> <li>◆ a recognised system of referencing should be employed throughout</li> </ul> <p>The following evidence should also be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ collection and collation of data</li> <li>◆ interpretation/analysis of data</li> <li>◆ summary of the findings and conclusions drawn</li> </ul> <p><b>Five marks will be allocated for the introduction and background.</b>  <b>Five marks will be allocated for conclusions drawn.</b>  <b>Ten marks for references, bibliography and use of technical language.</b>  <b>Forty-four marks will be allocated for the discipline/topic which must include analysis and evaluation.</b></p> <hr/> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Developing stage.</i></p>

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### Evidence Requirements (continued)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
<p>Stage 3 — Evaluating</p> <p>20 marks</p>	<p>An evaluation of the effectiveness of the approach taken that includes all stages of the activity, ie analysis of the project, the planning and organisation of the project, carrying the plan through to completion and the outcome of the project.</p> <p><i>NB It is the process that is being evaluated not the findings.</i></p> <p>The evaluation should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ reference to any modifications to the approach during the course of the project or to alternative approaches considered</li> <li>◆ identification and gathering of appropriate evidence eg use of qualitative/quantitative methods, comparisons with other systems/products, impact studies, product testing or market research</li> </ul> <p>Conclusions and recommendations should be presented coherently and include all major aspects of the project. The recommendations should be drawn from all of the conclusions and could include suggestions for improvement to a product, process, system or event, for further work, for further investigation, for additional evidence gathering or for use of an alternative strategy.</p> <p>This stage should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ identification of any skills which have been gained and/or developed</li> <li>◆ assessment of the effectiveness of the research methods used</li> <li>◆ assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the main body of the investigation report</li> </ul> <p><b>Twenty marks will be allocated to this stage.</b></p>

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## Support notes

### Choice of topics

It is at the discretion of the Centre as to whether all candidates attempt an investigation of the same topic or are given some degree of choice, eg one topic out of three. The wider the choice given to candidates, the more problematic it becomes when tracking Investigations to ensure that topics are not repeated too soon.

An exemplar instrument assessment and marking guidelines have been produced to provide examples of the kind of evidence required to demonstrate achievement of the aims covered by this Graded Unit and to indicate the national standard of achievement required at SCQF level 8.

Centres are encouraged to develop guides to direct the work of the candidates. The candidates 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 and provide clarification, guidance and reasonable assistance. 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. It should be recognised that in practice this whole process is very time-consuming and candidates should be allowed adequate amounts of time to complete it successfully.

The Planning section is worth 16 marks and the Evaluation section is worth 20 marks.

### Planning (16 marks)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rationale for investigating this topic, including main issues</li><li>• Clear aims</li><li>• Objectives including research, development and evaluation</li></ul>	4 marks
Research question or hypothesis	2 marks
Discipline	1 mark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statement on methodology, resources, sources and types of data</li><li>• Evidence of obtaining and/or identifying resources and sources including literature search as bibliography</li></ul>	4 marks
Justification for taking the chosen approach	2 marks
Time management, including timescales for achieving the aims and objectives	3 marks

## Evaluation (20 marks)

Strengths	6 marks
Weaknesses	6 marks
Skills gained	4 marks
Improvements	2 marks
Overall conclusion	2 marks

## Core Skills

**Problem Solving at SCQF level 6** is embedded within this Unit.

**There are also further opportunities to develop the following Core Skills:**

**Numeracy at SCQF level 5** — through the statistical analysis of data identified or created during the course of the Investigation.

**Information Communication Technology at SCQF level 5** — skills in the independent use of *ICT* are fundamental to effectively identifying, accessing, retrieving and applying a complex range of information and source materials. Effective use of technology will complement the professional presentation of all materials — IT skills will be evident in the final word-processed version of their submission. Security in the use of equipment and software and consideration for other users will be routine practice.

**Communication at SCQF level 6** — this will be demonstrated by:

- ◆ the reading and understanding of complex information relating to the area of the investigation, with analysis and evaluation of key concepts and terminology.
- ◆ the production of a well-structured document containing complex information.
- ◆ the ability to discuss a complex issue through an interview and during discussions and negotiations with the tutor.

## Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to place learners at the centre of the curriculum and develop their capacities as Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. Graded Unit 2 contributes towards learners developing in all four capacities.

This unit will develop the literacy and communication skills of the learners by way of formative and summative assessments. Independent learning is required throughout this unit, whilst the opportunity is available for group learning through formative tasks. The social sciences demand independent thinking and through reasoned evaluation encourage learners to reach satisfactory conclusions. Further opportunity is offered to develop technological skills by way of researching via the internet. Collectively these skills contribute towards the creation of a **Successful Learner**.

Time management skills should improve during the delivery of this Unit, as should the ability to relate to others through formative tasks. The preparation required for the Examination in Graded Unit 2 should allow the learner to develop their own thoughts of the world around them, and they will be given the opportunity to express these views within the classroom setting. This should lend to the emergence of a **Confident Individual**, particularly if they gain success in the achievement of the Unit.

Graded Unit 2 can also contribute to learners becoming **Responsible Citizens** by allowing the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of why people behave the way they do. Furthermore, informed, ethical views of complex issues can be developed, as can an understanding of different cultures.

Learners can become **Effective Contributors** to society by learning to work together effectively in teams within the class setting. This can be achieved through group-work where they can apply critical thinking within new contexts. In planning group tasks, evaluating data and presenting their findings, learners will also develop problem solving skills. Both oral and written communication skills will also be developed. This can be achieved through written work, and oral presentations and discussions. All these skills can be developed within the Unit.

### 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](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Recommended prior knowledge skills amended from 2 to 3 credits. Planning and Evaluation tables added to Support notes.	15/11/12
03	Marks breakdown now 16/64/20.	12/07/13

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## General information for candidates

### Graded Unit title: Social Sciences: Graded Unit 2

This Unit is intended to test your ability to investigate a topic using the skills you have learned while working towards the Units of the Group Award. Much of your time in this unit will be taken up in working on your own to carry out this investigation. You will, however, have regular meeting with your tutor to discuss your progress through the three staged of this Project.

In line with the current Assessment Strategy, while the report on the Investigation could be written, it is also possible that the information could be presented as a portfolio, a reflective blog, a personal or learning journal or a DVD. The method chosen is at the discretion of the presenting Centre but whichever method is chosen a bibliography would be essential.

Reassessment of this Graded Unit should be based on a *substantially different* project. The following re-assessments, where all stages are undertaken, would be appropriate:

- ◆ the same topic, but a different research question
- ◆ the same topic, but a different discipline
- ◆ a new topic

In this case, your grade will be based on the achievement in the re-assessment, if this results in a higher grade.

This unit is one of the units within the mandatory core of the HND Social Sciences awards and must be achieved before gaining the awards. The grade achieved in this unit may determine articulation opportunities into undergraduate programmes.

The Core Skill of Problem Solving at SCQF level 6 is embedded within this unit. There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of Communication at SCQF level 6 and Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5.

You will also be given opportunities throughout the Unit to develop as a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.