



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

Unit code: FN5W 35

Superclass: HC

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to encourage independent learning by enabling the candidate to undertake a small scale research project on a current initiative in care. This will involve generating a research idea. The candidate will then plan the research by considering; the ethical and legal implications of the planned research, research timetable, literature review, selection of research methods and choice of resources. Thereafter the candidate will conduct the research, process the results and present their findings. This activity will reinforce the concept of 'best practice' based on evidence based practice, the candidate will then consider the implications for practice.

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

- 1 Plan and carry out a research project relevant to a current initiative in care.
- 2 Present findings of the research including the application of data handling techniques.
- 3 Outline the implications of these findings for 'best practice'.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

It is recommended that candidates have undertaken the Unit Evidence Based practice and research prior to undertaking this Unit. Candidates should have good communication skills, both written and oral. These can be evidenced either by the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications, successful completion of the HNC Care and Administrative Practice, Higher English or a qualification equivalent to SCQF level 6, or by the completion of a pre-course interview, part of which could take the form of a written assignment.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National 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.*

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill 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.

This Unit is in the framework of HNC/HND Care and Administrative Practice. It should be taught and assessed within the subject area of this Group Award to which it contributes. The Unit can also be delivered as a free-standing Unit and may provide a source for Continuing Professional Development.

Assessment

This Unit will be assessed holistically by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes.

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

Plan and carry out a research project relevant to a current initiative in care.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Research proposal
- ◆ Research Investigation
- ◆ Sources of Information
- ◆ Data collection methods
- ◆ Validity and reliability of collected data

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ define research objectives appropriate to purpose
- ◆ prepare and justify proposal for research which is practical and feasible
- ◆ plan a research investigation with agreed timescales and objectives
- ◆ implement a research plan
- ◆ conduct a literature review appropriate to the study
- ◆ select and critically evaluate sources of information
- ◆ explain data collection methods
- ◆ evaluate the validity and reliability of data collected.

Assessment Guidelines

See Outcome 3.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

Outcome 2

Present findings of the research including the application of data handling techniques.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Analytical and evaluative skills
- ◆ Conventions of research reporting
- ◆ Data handling techniques
- ◆ Interpret key information
- ◆ Presentation skills

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ apply data handling techniques
- ◆ correctly interpret information
- ◆ present findings based on accurate analysis and interpretation of findings
- ◆ draw and justify conclusions based on an analysis of all the data collected and the evaluation of it.
- ◆ produce an academically written and appropriately referenced record of research activity and materials.

Assessment Guidelines

See Outcome 3.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

Outcome 3

Outline the implications of these findings for 'best practice'.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Best practice
- ◆ Current guidelines and protocols
- ◆ Implications for practice

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ understand 'best practice'
- ◆ explain the importance of research and evidence based practice
- ◆ discuss the relevance of current guidelines and protocols
- ◆ analyse implications for changes in practice
- ◆ reflect on learning and relate it to the personal application of 'best practice'.

Assessment Guidelines

To achieve this Unit candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and/or skills for Outcomes 1, 2 and 3.

This Unit will be assessed holistically by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This could take the form of an appropriately written and referenced research report of 2,000 words which identifies implications for best practice both from an individual and organisational perspective.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

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 a mandatory Unit in the Group Award HND Care and Administrative Practice.

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 reflective non-verbal communication techniques will be developed as candidates utilise a variety of research methods. 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.

Outcome 1

Plan and carry out a research project relevant to current initiative in care.

It is expected that the candidate will have undertaken the Evidence Based Practice and research Unit prior to this Unit and will therefore be familiar with the terminology and concepts relating to research. The candidate will therefore be able to build on skills already acquired in the previous Unit. For this Outcome the candidate will propose and plan a small scale research project around a current initiative in care, this could be; Dignity champions, Living and Dying Well, Hospital Acquired Infections or any other relevant initiative. This will involve justifying the research proposal and ensuring that it is practical and feasible and producing and working to an agreed timescale with specific objectives. The candidate will then determine what sources of information they will access in order to carry out the research effectively; this will involve evaluating different sources of information and critically analysing the information itself. This could perhaps involve the candidate in evaluating research that has already been carried out on their topic. The candidate will then have to look at a variety of methods of data collection and determine which method/s is/are most suited to their research project. Again this could involve using an evaluation of previous research and the data collection methods used to identify which methods have produced good data and are therefore likely to be successful again.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

The candidate will understand the concepts of reliability and validity and will therefore be able to apply them to their own study. The candidate will then carry out the research.

Outcome 2

Present findings of a research investigation including the application of data handling techniques. For this Outcome the candidate has to be able to 'pull together' all of the data collected through the research project. This will involve being able to apply data handling techniques appropriately and being able to interpret the collected data accurately; the candidate should therefore understand critical analysis and be able to apply it to the data. Thereafter the candidate should be able to draw conclusions from their findings. These findings should then be presented in an appropriately written and referenced format.

Outcome 3

Outline the implications that the research findings have for 'best practice' provision.

The candidate has to understand the concept of 'best practice' and the part that research plays in ensuring that the care delivered is in keeping with evidence from current research. In order to maintain or apply standards in practice, the candidate has to be familiar with and understand the use of current protocols or guidelines that are relevant to their research project. This could include Government initiatives, organisational guideline and protocols or National Institute for health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) guidelines. The candidate should then be able to relate their research findings to these current protocols and guidelines and identify any discrepancies or gaps. The candidate should then be able to evaluate any implications the research findings have for possible change in practice. To ensure 'best practice' the candidate should reflect on their learning and any implications not just for organisational practice but personal professional practice too.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

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.

Independent Learning and research is a Unit in the HND Care and Administrative Practice. It is essential that candidates are aware that they need to achieve all Evidence Requirements for the award. It can however, be taken as a stand-alone Unit.

Outcomes should be taught and assessed in an integrated manner to provide a holistic approach to assessment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

Open learning

The Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would have to be made to ensure that the assessment was conducted under supervision.

Opportunities for the use of e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or e-checklists. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all candidate evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. Further advice is available in *SQA Guidelines on Online Assessment for Further Education (AA1641, March 2003)*, *SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools (BD2625, June 2005)*.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities for developing Core Skills of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6, *Communication* at SCQF level 6, *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* SCQF level 6 although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components

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.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Independent Learning and Research

This Unit is about using research 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 an identified research investigation relevant to health and social care.

You will select and use appropriate research methods, assessing the validity and reliability of any collected data.

You will select and use appropriate research methods, assessing the validity and reliability of any collected data.

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
- ◆ identify ant implications for practice both from a personal and organisational perspective.