



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Clinical Decision Making

Unit code: FN5Y 35

Superclass: AF

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to make candidates aware of the concepts and influences on clinical decisions. The candidate has to understand the processes and influences on judgements and decision that are made in the care context and why individuals do not always make the best decisions. What constitutes a 'good decision' is explored. The importance of effective clinical skills in assessing the service user should be discussed and the effects these have on the decision making process understood. The Unit investigates the rationality of decision making and the concept of satisficing to explain service user/practitioner decisions. Finally the candidate will analyse the use of algorithms in clinical decisions and their link to evidence based practice, and the barriers that relate to the implementation of best practice surrounding good clinical decisions.

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

- 1 Explain the processes of and influences on clinical decision making.
- 2 Discuss theories of decision making.
- 3 Analyse the use of algorithms in clinical decisions.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should have good communication skills, both written and oral, preferably through achievement of Higher English or a *Communication* Unit at SCQF level 6. Ideally the candidate should have achieved a relevant qualification equivalent to SCQF level 7 to ensure they have the underpinning knowledge to work at SCQF level 8. Exemplary candidates may still be considered through the completion of a pre-course interview part of which could take the form of a written assignment. The skills to undertake this Unit could also be demonstrated through an employer's reference or the process of application and interview in the absence of certificated learning.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits 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.*

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.

Assessment

The assessment for this Unit could take the form of closed-book extended response questions and a 'seen' case study.

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 process of and influences on clinical decision making.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Judgements, decisions and assessments
- ◆ Contributing factors
- ◆ Uncertainty in clinical decisions
- ◆ Informed decision making
- ◆ Barriers to informed decision making

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ describe how practitioners make judgements and decisions
- ◆ evaluate the importance of clinical skills-observation, practical skills in physiological measurements and assessment
- ◆ discuss the uncertainty in clinical decisions
- ◆ explain 'informed' decision making
- ◆ explore barriers to changing practice through informed decisions.

Assessment Guidelines

See Outcome 2.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 2

Discuss theories of decision making.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Rational decisions
- ◆ Satisficing
- ◆ Theories of decision making
- ◆ Intuition and care

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ discuss the concept of 'rational decisions'
- ◆ explore the factors which influence rational decisions
- ◆ explain 'satisficing' in a care context
- ◆ investigate theories of decision making
- ◆ discuss intuition and whether it is appropriate to use if to inform decisions in care.

Assessment Guidelines

The assessment for Outcome 1 and 2 could be combined into a closed-book extended response question paper that covers a sample of the Knowledge and Skills from each Outcome to demonstrate learning and understanding. This could be delivered as an online assessment providing the same criteria apply.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Clinical Decision Making

Outcome 3

Analyse the use of algorithms in clinical decisions.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Good decisions
- ◆ Algorithms
- ◆ Uncertainty in decision making
- ◆ Influencing factors
- ◆ Evidence based practice

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain what constitutes a 'good decision'
- ◆ discuss algorithms and their use in promoting good and effective decision making in care
- ◆ investigate a variety of commonly used algorithms
- ◆ justify the use of algorithms in promoting effective clinical decisions
- ◆ critically evaluate the link between algorithms and evidence based practice.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 3 could be assessed through a 'seen' case study which would be distributed to candidates 10 days prior to the assessment. The questions could then be delivered under closed-book conditions, either orally or written. The candidates should be able to bring 200 words of notes into the assessment, these should be checked by the supervising tutor.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Clinical Decision Making

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 80 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit will build on knowledge and understanding gained in Leadership and Decision making.

Outcome 1

Judgements and clinical decision.

The candidates will understand what judgements are and how individual practitioners make judgements. They will learn that judgements are based on a combination of the opinion and knowledge the practitioner has of the individual and the skills and experience of the practitioner. Based on this, the practitioner will then make an assessment of the individual and come to a decision regarding treatment. Different types of judgement should be introduced, ie casual judgement, descriptive judgement, evaluative judgement and predictive judgement. The accuracy of the assessment will be dependent on the accuracy of the information that the practitioner has gleaned from the client/service user. This accuracy will also depend upon the skills of the practitioner in observing and assessing the individual. If, for example, the practitioner has used the wrong size of blood pressure cuff to record a service user's blood pressure then any decision they make on the basis of that measurement will be flawed.

Once the assessment has been made the practitioner will then make an evaluation and decision based on the integration of all the acquired information. In clinical practice the aim is to make an accurate evaluation which results in an appropriate decision and action being taken. It must be understood that however good the assessment and evaluation is of the client/service user there will always be uncertainty when making decisions and planning action because the practitioner is dealing with a unique individual who may respond in unpredictable ways. So how do we reduce the uncertainty in decision making? The candidate has to look at the influencing factors that is; the importance of the limitations of one's own knowledge or role, knowing when to refer to a senior practitioner, appropriately trained staff, communication skills, effective questioning, access to computers and knowledge of research, understanding physiological assessments and investigation results, being able to identify what is relevant information, prejudices, use of protocols and guidelines, heurtisics, evidence based practice and the role it plays in the decision making process. The candidate has to be aware of the sort of information that is used to inform decision making, this could be text books, drug reference manuals, protocol manuals, personal experience or colleagues. If the practitioner is using research to help with decision making then properly structured electronic searches should be used. Research has shown that nurses for example, will only infrequently access professional journals to inform their professional practice Cogdill (2003) the barriers behind this should be discussed.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

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For example, if the research shows that the practice in the workplace is not in keeping with the evidence then how does that individual practitioner change the workplace practice? There are questions here of organisational attitude, the individual's authority and position within the organisation, relationship with colleagues and individual's self and professional confidence that should be discussed.

Outcome 2

The candidate will explore the concept of 'rational decisions' and look at why the individual does not always decide on the optimum path but will instead take the decision that produces a lesser Outcome. This is called satisficing and the candidates should understand the reasons for this in order to understand the decisions that service users and care workers make. The candidate will investigate a variety of decision making theories such as; normative, descriptive and prescriptive theories. This investigation should also include a discussion on the part intuition plays in decision making and appropriateness and accuracy of its use in care.

Outcome 3

This Outcome will enable the candidates to understand the concept of a 'good decision', it is based purely on Outcome and therefore can only be determined with hindsight?

This candidate will then explore the use of algorithms and their relevance to clinical decisions. The candidate will understand the concept of algorithms and understand their use in the care context in trying to promote good and effective decisions. This will involve exploring a variety of algorithms that are commonly used in the care context such as: the Liverpool Care Pathway, Malnutrition Universal Screening Tools (MUST), Modified Early Warning Score (MEWS), Waterlow Scale, Glasgow Coma Scale, McGill Pain Questionnaire, Apgar score, Fraser Guidelines and the Edinburgh Post-natal Depression Scale. The use of these, what they are trying to achieve and whether they reduce or eliminate the uncertainty surrounding decision making in care should be discussed. The factors or variables the uncertainty surround decision making in care should be discussed. The factors or variables which limit the success of these algorithms should be investigated in so far as a 'tool is only as good as the individual who operates it' so if the practitioner does not understand the need for assessment, nor the implications of the findings then the use of these algorithms will be of limited value. The link between algorithms and evidence based should also be understood by the candidate.

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

This is a mandatory Unit in the HND Care and Administrative Practice. In order to achieve this Unit, candidates are required to present sufficient evidence that they have met all the knowledge requirements for each Outcome within the range specified. Details of these requirements are given for each Outcome. The assessment instruments should follow the guidance offered by the SQA assessment model and an integrated approach to assessment is encouraged.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Clinical Decision Making

Accurate records should be made of the assessment instruments used showing how evidence is generated for each Outcome and marking schemes should also be provided. Records of candidate achievements should be kept and these records will be available for external verification.

Open learning

This Unit requires candidates to take responsibility for their own learning. If it is to be delivered by means of open learning it will be necessary to ensure candidates have access to relevant material to enable them to assimilate the underpinning concepts and knowledge.

Candidates will also need access to guidance and support throughout the learning and development process. However, this would require to be managed effectively with the organisation to ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

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 to develop the Core Skills of:

Communication at SCQF level 6

Problem Solving SCQF level 6

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at SCQF level 6

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: Clinical Decision Making

This Unit will take you through the processes involved in decision making and the importance of being able to accurately assess the service user through observation, physiological measurement and interaction. The Unit explores the influencing factors on decisions and looks at a variety of decision making theories including the role intuition plays in decisions. Finally the Unit investigates the use of algorithms in clinical decisions, here you will research commonly used algorithms. You will then link the use of these algorithms to best practice and again explore the influencing factors that determine whether the algorithms themselves are enough to improve clinical practice.

There are two assessments in this Unit, the first is a closed-book extended response assessment and the second is a 'seen' case study which will be given to you ten days before the assessment. You will be allowed to take 200 words of notes into the assessment with you and your tutor will check these before the assessment starts.