



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Essential Academic Skills

Unit code: FN6A 35

Superclass: HC

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Unit purpose

The Unit is designed to increase the candidate's skills in academic writing, research and presentation. The candidate will investigate the skills necessary for independent learning and development of retrieval and analysis of information through the research process. Throughout, the candidate will be expected to make use of Information and Communication Technology to both access and present information. The candidate will also demonstrate an awareness of learning strategies which encourage the integration of theory and practice learning.

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

- 1 Investigate the skills necessary for independent learning.
- 2 Select and evaluate complex information from a range of sources.
- 3 Identify learning strategies which encourage the integration of theory and practice learning.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Access to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, however it is recommended that candidates undertaking this Unit possess good written and oral skills and also competence in numeracy and information technology.

It is further recommended that the candidate has undertaken the Research Unit which is part of the HND Care and Administrative Practice, or has an equivalent qualification prior to undertaking this Unit.

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

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill	None
Core Skill component	Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

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

Context for delivery

This Unit is delivered as part of HND Care and Administrative Practice and it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Assessment

There are three assessments attached to this Unit. It is suggested that they take the following format in order to properly reflect the candidate's learning; an action plan, an annotated bibliography and an academic argument.

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

Investigate the skills necessary for independent learning.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Learning styles
- ◆ Models of Learning
- ◆ Reflective Practice
- ◆ Action Plans

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ investigate different learning styles
- ◆ evaluate a variety of models of learning
- ◆ demonstrate an understanding of 'Reflective Practice'
- ◆ devise, implement and evaluate an action plan
- ◆ take responsibility for own learning.

Assessment Guidelines

The candidate should produce a personal action plan of approximately 1,500 words, which includes references to all the knowledge and skills and identifies their goals and how they will take responsibility for their learning. This should be created through personal reflection and discussion with the tutor or mentor. An appropriate date for submission should be agreed with the tutor.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Essential Academic Skills

Outcome 2

Select and evaluate complex information from a range of sources.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Accessing complex information
- ◆ Selecting and organising information for retrieval
- ◆ Analytical skills
- ◆ Evaluation skills

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ source and access two pieces of complex information relevant to practice or work related topic and make reference to within the assessment
- ◆ select retrieve information and apply consistently where appropriate within the assessment
- ◆ discuss techniques for identifying key information from written and/or oral sources
- ◆ identify and evaluate two analytical skills.

Assessment Guidelines

The candidate should produce a short bibliography of relevant academic papers on a practice or work related topic selected by the candidate. This should be appropriately written and referenced. The bibliography should be submitted by the candidate at an appropriate date during the Unit delivery.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Essential Academic Skills

Outcome 3

Identify learning strategies which encourage the integration of theory and practice learning.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Learning strategies
- ◆ Evidence based practice
- ◆ Practice learning

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ investigate learning strategies
- ◆ discuss evidence based practice in relation to learning
- ◆ evaluate practice learning
- ◆ experiential learning.

Assessment Guidelines

Candidates could produce a focused academic argument of 1,500–2,000 words on a relevant practice/work related topic selected by the candidate. This submission should meet all of the Outcome requirements. This work should be submitted towards the end of the Unit delivery to ensure the candidate has covered all the academic content relevant to this assignment.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Essential Academic 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 is part of the HND Care and Administrative Practice Award although it can be taken as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit aims to increase the candidate's skill in academic writing, research and presentation.

Furthermore in order to study successfully at higher level the candidate should understand how they learn so a variety of learning styles will be explored. Throughout, the candidate will be expected to make use of Information and Communication Technology to both access and present information

Outcome 1

Within this Outcome the candidate will explore learning and learning styles in order to better understand how they learn. This will involve looking at learning styles and theories put forward by, for example; Honey and Mumford, Gardiner and Kolb as well as looking at learner characteristics such as self reliance, awareness of strengths and weaknesses and motivation. The candidate should understand that reflection is part of being an effective learner and they need to explore the use of reflection in learning. This could include looking at Schon's theories on reflection and Reflection in Action. Action plans are a useful tool in identifying motivation, goals and action necessary to achieve those goals and so candidates will be asked to formulate their own action plan. They should include reflection in their action plan in order to identify areas of knowledge/learning or practice that require further study or effort. Through creating the action plan candidates should describe how they are going to accept responsibility for their own learning and how this relates to independent learning.

Outcome 2

A useful approach to developing skills in gathering information is for candidates to negotiate a relevant writing task on an appropriate work related issue, to set objectives and to be supported as they access and evaluate a range of potential source materials. The vocational area will determine the most appropriate primary and/or secondary sources, but these could include textbooks, journals, training materials, case studies, oral reporting, ebooks and online journals. Induction to appropriate learning resources is essential. Providing a log or diary for an electronic or written record of materials and a brief rationale for evaluation decisions and the final selection would be good practice and helpful for the candidate who may require familiarity with the conventions and standards of an academic essay. Although the storage and organisation of materials is not assessed directly, assessors may wish to emphasise that any information used needs to be accessible for checking.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Essential Academic Skills

A set of criteria which could be provided by centres- for judging the value of a source could include the consideration of the following: the authority of the author — the author's professional background, qualifications, publications, bias or special interest; the date on which the material was created and the last update; the authenticity of the source; the tone/balance of the writing; the accuracy of the source — the number of other sources or authorities quoted, the elimination of the possibility of plagiarism; the relevance of the source — consideration of the purpose of the source (eg educational, campaigning, advertising) and the intended readership, whether specialist or general. As the preferred assessment is an annotated bibliography it is essential that the candidates are taken through the process of creating an annotated bibliography prior to the assessment.

Outcome 3

With the knowledge gained from the previous Outcomes the candidate can now investigate a range of learning strategies such as group discussion, note taking, diaries, feedback and reflection that help promote learning and independent learning. Candidates should be able to identify learning strategies and that can promote integration of theory and practice, this can be linked to evidence based practice. The role evidence based practice plays in the promotion of continual reflection, continuing professional development and lifelong learning must be emphasised and the candidate must understand its importance in linking theory and practice. The candidate should also consider the value of practice and experiential learning in the promotion of learning. As the proposed assessment is an academic argument it is necessary that the centre ensures that the candidate understands how to construct such an argument.

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. Essential academic Skills is a mandatory 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.

The assessment for Outcome 1 is the creation of a personal action plan. This should identify existing skill and/or areas in which the candidate has to develop skills in order to be an effective independent learner. The candidate should discuss the action plan with the relevant tutor/mentor to ensure the candidate understands the process.

The suggested assessment for Outcome 2 is an annotated bibliography and it is advised that the centre ensures that the candidate understands the process of creating an annotated bibliography and its place in academic research. For Outcome 3 the preferred assessment is an academic argument and it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the candidate understands how to construct such an argument. For all three Outcomes appropriate submission dates should be agreed with the candidate.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Essential Academic Skills

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This Unit has the Problem Solving component of Critical Thinking embedded in it. This means that when candidates achieve the Unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to show they have achieved Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6.

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of:

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) SCQF level 6 can be evidenced through the candidate's use of ICT throughout the Unit both for accessing and retrieving information and for presenting that information. The candidate is required to exercise appropriate academic judgement in the sources they access throughout their research for this Unit.

Communication SCQF level 6 can be evidenced through the written submissions required for the assessments and through the research required for the annotated bibliography and the academic argument. All written submission should be appropriately written and referenced and presented in a logical manner using, where relevant, appropriate domain specific language. Discussion with tutors/mentors should reflect the complexity of the topics and the required tasks. Further information regarding the requirements of Core Skills at SCQF level 6 can be assessed in the SQA document *Core Skills Framework: an introduction*

Open learning

If this Unit is delivered by open learning methods, additional planning resources may be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance.

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)*.

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
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6 embedded.	02/12/11

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General information for candidates

Unit title: Essential Academic Skills

This Unit is intended to encourage you to look at learning and through the use of learning models decide what sort of a learner you are and the implications this has for the way you approach your own learning. You are expected to recognise that in order to be a successful learner at a higher level you need to take responsibility for your own learning. So the Unit looks at learning strategies and learner characteristics in order to identify positive characteristics that you may well recognise in yourself. You will explore the use of action plans in identifying goal, motivations and strategies you need to adopt in order to meet those goals. This will include looking at reflection as a learning tool and way of identifying areas that need to be developed. The use of ICT is implicit throughout the Unit and you are expected to be able to access and retrieve appropriate information that relates to an area of practice or study, this will then be developed into an annotated bibliography. During this you must consider what constitutes a good source of information and how to determine how reliable the information is.

Finally the Unit will link learning strategies to theory and practice and will consider the merit of experiential learning.

There are three assessments for the Unit and these comprise; an action plan, an annotated bibliography and an academic argument. You should have on-going discussions with the tutor/mentor during the planning stage of the action plan to ensure that you understand the process and all of the Outcome requirements are being met. Then a date for submission should be agreed. The same process should be applied to the assessment for Outcomes 2 and 3.