



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

Unit code: H0YS 35

Superclass: RH

Publication date: March 2012

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 01

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop knowledge and understanding of normal behaviour in a range of companion animals and an understanding of the influence of external factors on the development of problem behaviours. Through the completion of the Unit, candidates will develop an ability to study animal behaviour and be able to summarise strategies for the correction of inappropriate behaviours in companion animals.

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

- 1 Explain the development and expression of normal behaviour in companion animals throughout their lives.
- 2 Evaluate the influence of external factors on the behaviour of companion animals throughout their lives.
- 3 Summarise techniques that may be applied to rectify inappropriate companion animal behaviour.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should have achieved passes in relevant level 7 Units in the HND Veterinary Nursing framework, or equivalent. Achievement of the Unit Veterinary Nursing: Companion Animal Health and Welfare would be particularly beneficial. Ideally candidates should have a sound working knowledge of animal behaviour gained in a veterinary practice environment.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit 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

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of *Communication* and the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components.

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. It is included in the framework of the HND in Veterinary Nursing.

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 development and expression of normal behaviour in companion animals throughout their lives.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Normal behaviour exhibited during developmental life stages, ie neonate, juvenile, adult and geriatric.
- ◆ Normal feeding, reproduction and rearing behaviours as appropriate to each life stage.
- ◆ How animals communicate, ie vocal, visual, olfactory and by touch.

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain the development and expression of normal behaviour in one companion animal.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

Outcome 2

Evaluate the influence of external factors on the behaviour of companion animals throughout their lives.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Nature versus nurture: the influence of genetics and environment on companion animal behaviour.
- ◆ The role of socialisation and habituation in companion animals.
- ◆ The influence of human interaction on animal behaviour.
- ◆ Anthropomorphism.
- ◆ Inappropriate behaviours including fears and phobias, inappropriate elimination, aggression and destructiveness.
- ◆ Behaviour in the veterinary practice environment.
- ◆ Behaviour as a symptom of a medical condition.

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ evaluate the influence of external factors on the development of an inappropriate behaviour in one companion animal. This evaluation must include the following factors as minimum requirement:
 - the influence of genetics and environment
 - the role of socialisation and habituation
 - the influence of human interaction on the development of the behaviour
 - an explanation of the behaviour and how it is manifested.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

Outcome 3

Summarise techniques that may be applied to rectify inappropriate companion animal behaviour.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The main theories of learning
 - classical and operant conditioning
- ◆ Behaviour modification techniques
 - habituation and socialisation
 - systematic desensitisation
 - counter conditioning
 - extinction
 - flooding
 - aversion
 - punishment
- ◆ Medical intervention
 - drug therapy
 - surgical neutering
- ◆ The behaviour consultation
 - history taking
 - the importance of client concordance in behaviour modification.

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ summarise appropriate techniques to rectify an inappropriate behaviour in one companion animal, including the following factors as minimum requirement:
 - a description of one learning theory.
 - a summary of two possible techniques for the resolution of the behaviour problem including a clear explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

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 designed to provide knowledge of basic animal behaviour, external factors that influence behaviour and how inappropriate behaviour can develop in companion animals. This will include the main theories of learning that relate to companion animals. It will also include common inappropriate behaviours, how they develop and how they can be rectified.

Although this Unit may be taken on a standalone basis by candidates in employment wishing to develop and/or enhance their skills, it is primarily intended for candidates who are studying towards the HND in Veterinary Nursing and the teaching and learning should be delivered in this context.

Outcome 1

This Outcome covers the stages of behavioural development from complete dependence on the parent or parents through the stages of learning from parents and experience; it will also extend to include the geriatric stage. Mention should be made of feeding, reproductive and rearing behaviours as appropriate to each life stage. This Outcome should also incorporate knowledge of how different companion animals communicate and the relative importance of the different methods to the different species.

Outcome 2

This Outcome develops the understanding of the influence of external factors on behaviour and the effect these factors have on the development of inappropriate behaviour. It could be beneficial to elaborate on the concept of human animal interaction and the effect of anthropomorphism on animal behaviour. As the Unit is to be delivered within the context of the veterinary environment, mention should be made of the effect of medical conditions on behaviour; this may include (but is not limited to) conditions like cognitive dysfunction, hyperthyroidism and pain.

Outcome 3

This Outcome looks at the different learning theories that are appropriate to companion animal learning. This could include examples of learned behaviour that is not of a formal nature (ie not deliberately taught) to aid the understanding of how different types of behaviour can develop.

This Outcome should progress from an explanation of learning theories to develop knowledge of contemporary techniques employed in the treatment of inappropriate behaviour. The levels of success and the level of owner compliance should be addressed.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

Although this Unit may be delivered on a stand-alone basis, it has been designed as part of the HNC/HND in Veterinary Nursing. It is recommended that candidates are familiar with the influences on animal behaviour. This may be developed through their experiences in dealing with animals in their work placement and through completion of the SCQF Level 7 Unit *Veterinary Nursing: Companion Animal Health and Welfare*.

Delivery could involve practical observation of animal behaviour within the context of the work placement or within the college environment. Candidates may also explore a range of behavioural issues and corrective techniques currently used throughout the animal care and veterinary industries. The delivery could also include the use of problem-based learning, staff and candidate experience, field trips, video/DVD, visits from trainers and animal behavioural therapists.

Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

This Unit could be assessed holistically. Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 could be assessed jointly by a project which could be based on a case study. The project must provide the opportunity for candidates to meet the Evidence Requirements of all three Outcomes.

Assessment Guidelines

Outcome 1

The assessment of this Outcome could be combined with assessments for Outcomes 2 and 3. Details of this combined assessment are presented at Outcome 3.

Outcome 2

The assessment of this Outcome could be combined with Outcomes 1 and 3. Details of this combined assessment are presented at Outcome 3.

Outcome 3

This Outcome could be assessed jointly with Outcomes 1 and 2. It could take the form of a project based on a case study. Candidates should select one suitable companion animal (with, if required, the permission of the owner), which is exhibiting a significant inappropriate behaviour. Candidates will require to conduct a study of the behaviour, exploring and explaining the early development and environment of the animal, and should include information on the animal's history and development. They should then investigate the external factors which have influenced the normal behaviour of the companion animal and how this has manifested into a behaviour problem. They should record personal observations. Candidates should then evaluate the information collected and summarise appropriate techniques to rectify this behaviour.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

Online and Distance Learning

If this Unit is delivered by open or distance learning methods, additional resources will be required for candidate support, assessment and quality assurance. For further information and advice, please refer to the SQA guide: *Assessment and Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning* (www.sqa.org.uk).

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of *Communication* and the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6 in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills Components.

The response to the case study for Outcomes 1–3 may provide the opportunity to develop the written component of the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6. Alternatively, if this response is presented orally this may provide the opportunity to develop the oral component of the Core Skill of *Communication*.

Where case studies are used (eg for Outcomes 1–3), these may develop candidates' critical thinking skills. A case study could require candidates to identify causes of behavioural issues and to make recommendations to remedy these. This would provide the opportunity to develop the Critical Thinking component of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* 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: Veterinary Nursing: Applied Animal Behaviour

This Unit is designed to provide you with knowledge of basic animal behaviour, external factors that influence behaviour and how inappropriate behaviour can develop in companion animals. This will include the main theories of learning that relate to companion animals, common inappropriate behaviours and how these develop, as well as the techniques applied to rectify inappropriate behaviour.

It would be beneficial for you to have successfully achieved the SCQF Level 7 Unit *Veterinary Nursing: Companion Animal Health and Welfare* before starting this Unit. This Unit is ideally placed within the HND Veterinary Nursing and is relevant for those who work in the veterinary or allied industries.

The Unit comprises three Outcomes:

Outcome 1

This Outcome covers the stages of behavioural development from complete dependence on the parent or parents through the stages of learning from parents and experience; it will also extend to include the geriatric stage. As part of the study of each life stage, reference will be made to feeding, reproductive and rearing behaviours and the way in which companion animals communicate.

Outcome 2

This Outcome covers the influence of external factors on behaviour and the effect these factors have on the development of inappropriate behaviour. It includes the concept of human animal interaction and the effect of anthropomorphism on animal behaviour. This will be extended to explore the effect of medical conditions on behaviour with reference to conditions like cognitive dysfunction, hyperthyroidism and pain.

Outcome 3

This Outcome looks at the different theories that are appropriate to companion animal learning. Main learning theories will include classical and operant conditioning and other complex issues. An understanding of the learning theories will be developed into an understanding of contemporary techniques employed in the treatment of inappropriate behaviour.

Assessment

In order to complete this Unit successfully you will be required to achieve a satisfactory level of performance. Outcomes 1–3 will be assessed as a case study that requires you to study behavioural situations and make recommendations to remedy behaviour. You will require to identify causes of behavioural issues and to make recommendations to remedy these.

There may be opportunities to develop Core Skills in this Unit. The response to the case study for Outcomes 1–3 may provide the opportunity to develop the written component of the Core Skill of *Communication* at SCQF level 6. Alternatively, if this response is presented orally this may provide the opportunity to develop the Oral Communication component of *Communication*. The case study may also provide the opportunity to develop the Critical Thinking component of *Problem Solving*, at SCQF level 6.