



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

Unit code: H3LB 34

Superclass: PH

Publication date: March 2013

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 01

Unit purpose

The purpose of this Unit is to introduce candidates to the theory which underpins mental health nursing. It shall include the qualities that are required in mental health nursing and the communication skills required within the profession. Many people who develop mental health problems are discriminated against in society, and this Unit explores the theme of prejudice, the effects on the individual, and what the mental health nurse can do to protect vulnerable people from the effects of discrimination. The candidate shall be introduced to the concepts of health, safety and wellbeing and the nurse's role in protecting the service user.

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

- 1 Describe the qualities required of a mental health nurse.
- 2 Describe effective communication in a mental health care setting.
- 3 Explain how the mental health nurse protects the rights of individuals in a care context.
- 4 Explain how the mental health nurse promotes the health, wellbeing and safety of service users.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should have good written and oral communication skills, evidenced by either the achievement of a nationally recognised qualification, eg English higher or equivalent, or else by successful completion of a written assessment.

In addition to this, candidates should preferably have some work experience within a mental health care setting.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1.5 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 7: (12 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7*)

**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.

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

Describe the qualities required of a mental health nurse.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The values of a care professional
- ◆ Qualities of a care professional
- ◆ Engagement skills
- ◆ Self awareness
- ◆ Professional responsibility
- ◆ The reflective practitioner
- ◆ Personal development

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ describe the attributes of the mental health nurse.
- ◆ explain professional accountability and the limitations of own role.
- ◆ describe reflective practice and professional development in mental health nursing.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

Outcome 2

Describe effective communication in a mental health care setting.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Communication process/cycle
- ◆ Models of communication
- ◆ Barriers to communication
- ◆ Modes of communication: verbal; non-verbal; written; paralanguage; electronic; record keeping
- ◆ The importance of clear communication in mental health care
- ◆ Therapeutic interpersonal skills

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ describe the theories of communication.
- ◆ identify the barriers to clear communication in mental health care.
- ◆ Identify the range of likely communicants in mental health care and the importance of effective communication.
- ◆ describe the application of own therapeutic interpersonal communication skills.

Outcome 3

Explain how the mental health nurse protects the rights of individuals in a care context.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Recognising social diversity
- ◆ Individual rights of service users and others
- ◆ Social stigma, prejudice and discrimination
- ◆ Challenging inequality and promoting social inclusion
- ◆ Maintain valued social roles of service user
- ◆ The role of the advocate in a care context
- ◆ Practising ethically

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ identify the range of diverse social groups most likely to experience prejudice.
- ◆ explain how social diversity is respected by acknowledging the rights and choice of the service user.
- ◆ reflect on practice identifying situations in which the candidate challenged inequality, adopted the role of an advocate, promoted social inclusion and practiced ethically.

Outcome 4

Explain how the mental health nurse promotes the health, wellbeing and safety of service users.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Physical health promotion
- ◆ Delivery of best quality care
- ◆ The nursing process and aspirations of service user
- ◆ Working in partnership with other professionals, service users and others
- ◆ Promoting service user recovery
- ◆ Promoting safety and positive risk taking for service users and others
- ◆ Therapeutic management of aggression, and suicide intervention

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain how the physical health and mental well-being of service users can be promoted.
- ◆ explain the benefits of delivering evidenced based practice within a mental health setting.
- ◆ describe how the needs and aspirations and risks of service users could be assessed in a mental health setting.
- ◆ describe how care is planned, eg the nursing process.
- ◆ reflect on partnership working in promoting service user recovery.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

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 60 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is largely based on two documents that set care standards for mental health nursing: the national framework of Pre-registration mental health nursing programmes in Scotland (2008); the ten essential shared capabilities (2012).

The extent of knowledge that underpins mental health theory could not be covered in a 1.5 SQA credit Unit, so the delivery of this subject should focus on breadth rather than depth of material. It is only an introduction to this profession, and candidates shall build on this introductory knowledge later in their candidate course.

Outcome 1

Describe the qualities required of a mental health nurse.

The core nursing values should be introduced which are fundamental to good care, as identified in the National Care Standards (Scottish Executive 2001); the respect for the worth and dignity of every individual, and; according social justice and promoting the social welfare of every individual. From these core values are derived the six principles of care: respect for dignity, privacy, choice, promoting safety, realising the potential of the client, promoting equality and respecting diversity.

The value base for mental health nursing (Scottish Executive 2006a) is also delineated as: Relationships, Rights, Respect, Recovery, Reaching out and Responsibility, and these concepts could also be investigated and applied to care practice.

The programme may then turn to the type of person most likely to hold these values, and the qualities that an ideal carer should have; patience and tolerance, respect, acceptance and empathy: sensitivity and discretion; reliability, dependability and flexibility, developing a positive attitude, cheerfulness and willingness, politeness and kindness, honesty and humility, autonomy and teamwork, self awareness, readiness to learn and to take a share in carrying out unpleasant tasks (Miller and Gibb 2007). Each one of these qualities forms a base on which to build the remainder of the course material. One of the main interpersonal skills to develop is that of engagement, to facilitate a relationship to develop between nurse and service user and others. This is essential in mental health nursing.

The importance of reflective practice cannot be understated. The questioning individual who strives to improve, who is aware of her strengths and weaknesses is the ideal mental health carer. Personal development means ensuring that practice is evidence based and that there is a professional obligation to keep oneself updated with new developments in care delivery.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

The professional responsibility is to the service user, their employer and is guided by local policies, legislation and the NMC code of conduct (2004).

Outcome 2

Describe effective communication in a mental health care setting.

This Outcome is largely self explanatory and there is a plethora of material on the subject in most nursing textbooks. The barriers to effective communication could be explored in some depth, especially with reference to some features of service users with mental disorders that may affect attention, comprehension and retention of information. It is therefore essential that the service user and/or others understands the message being delivered by the health professional, so appropriate feedback should be established.

The modes of communication should be explored in some depth: verbal; non-verbal; written; language; electronic. The ethical and legal importance of accurate record keeping should be covered in the 'communication' section, and consideration should be given to the range of potential communicants (receivers of the message).

The therapeutic interpersonal skills could also be addressed in this section of the Unit, perhaps using the counselling models of active listening skills and the expression of warmth, interest and empathy could be covered in role-play exercises.

Outcome 3

Explain how the mental health nurse protects the rights of individuals in a care context.

As a sizeable proportion of people with mental health problems belong to minority groups who are discriminated against within society, it is important that the mental health nurse does not reinforce any form of prejudice in her/his practice, and s/he should promote social inclusion where possible, if this is desirable to her/his client. The nurse should be aware of differences in culture or lifestyle and supports the autonomy of the service user where possible. The service user must therefore feel intrinsically valued, respected and safe within the care environment. Where this freedom might be restricted in a care setting, the candidate should be prepared to adopt the role of the client advocate.

The mental health nurse should ideally have some theoretical knowledge of the issue of discrimination within society, why it exists, what forms it can take (eg Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* 1979 identifies 'levels of prejudice') and the consequences for victims and society as a whole.

As a citizen, the ethical nurse has a moral responsibility to challenge prejudice and discrimination if s/he encounters it within society and within the workplace, Anti-discriminatory practice is supported by legislation and workplace policy.

This range of skills is covered in the 10 ESC categories: Respecting diversity; Practising ethically; Challenging inequality and; identifying people's needs and strengths.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

Outcome 4

Explain how the mental health nurse promotes the health, wellbeing and safety of service users.

This Outcome relates to best practice within mental health care and is really the application of theory into care delivery. So care needs should be assessed, planned, implemented and evaluated as part of a care plan package, eg the nursing process. The candidate should briefly describe the measuring tool used for assessing the needs of the service user. Validated and reliable assessment tools specific to mental health assessment must be explored for example, single shared assessments, CAMCOG and the Hospital Anxiety and Depression (HAD) Scale. The care delivered should be evidence based, so justifiable and the intended goals should realistic and in accordance with the service users wishes.

As there is a connection between mental health and physical health, then any carer has a duty of care to advise/ assist the service user attain good physical health, so may be advising (and supporting) the individual to make changes to smoking or alcohol use, dietary indiscretion and physical exercise routine.

Good mental health care requires the input from a range of people with different expertise and these sources should be used according to the identified needs and agreed plan of care. Candidates should be familiar with the roles and skills of fellow professionals; psychiatric and medical staff, occupational therapists, social workers, community mental health workers, etc. There has recently been an acknowledged role for the peer support worker in mental health settings and this is a positive direction for mental health care to move in. The role of the service user and family, friends and others should be emphasised, and that the client is central to the care process.

The trend in mental health nursing is not about 'curing' the client (it may be argued that the psychiatric profession has never 'cured' anyone). For many service users, the best Outcome they may achieve is to recover some of their previous function, and this is what the Recovery Model of care is about. It is person-centred and the care team facilitate the return to a previous social role, or as near as can be achieved (see the work of Phil Barker, eg The Tidal Model (2009), and also the activity of the Scottish Recovery Network www.scottishrecovery.net).

The mental health care environment is subject to health and safety regulations, and the mental health nurse has a duty of care for the safety of the service user. Potential harm to self or others would be identified in the assessment of needs and the care management would be planned accordingly. Practical safety would involve the administration of medication, monitoring the client's mental health but also being aware of sources of danger/harm in the care environment. This would include the therapeutic management of aggression and violence, applying diligence where there is a risk of suicide, and minimising this risk.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

Service users who are recovering are in the process of returning towards a previous social role and relationships, and they cannot achieve this within the confines of the care setting. The individual must be encouraged to take steps back into society, and with this comes certain risks. The risk of relapse, failing to achieve a goal, etc must be recognised, negotiated, agreed and accepted as part of the process, and the service user should be reassured of the support of the mental health care team.

Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

Mental Health Nursing: an Introduction is an optional Unit for candidates who are in the process of completing the first year of the HNC Care and Administrative Practice, and who intend to move into Year two of the university Bachelor of Nursing, Mental Health Nursing course.

As these are additional Units and there is not teaching provision allotted into the programme of the HNC Care and Administrative Practice, then candidates would have to complete this Unit along with the companion Unit *Mental Health and Mental Disorder* in some format outwith the regular programme, to be arranged by the college.

The Unit could be offered electronically, as a distance learning package, along with support from a facilitator. The candidate shall undertake a work placement in a mental health setting and the theory covered in the Unit should guide her conduct within the work placement. S/he is then encouraged to reflect on her/his experience and to evaluate her/his interactions with service users and others. This reflection shall make up the main body of the assessment.

Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

The assessment could take the form of one reflective essay, where guidelines are given, and the candidate recounts how she was able to apply the theoretical material into a care environment. This should be referenced, so that empirical evidence is sought to justify the practise, and the candidate uses these skills in interactions with service users.

This is therefore demonstrating the 'reflective practitioner' implementing 'evidence based techniques'.

Assessment Guidelines

The assessment guidelines are structured around the evidence required for each of the four Outcomes. This could take the form of one piece of work in the form of a reflective log or diary of events. A 'tick list' could be constructed for each piece of evidence required, with an opportunity for the candidate to add comments, reflection, etc.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

There is no specified word count recommended as long as each point in the Evidence Requirements is addressed. This log should cover the theoretical material, and then describe how the theory was applied in a care setting. If the candidate does not have the opportunity to experience a sufficient range of situations in a clinical setting that means that s/he is unable to meet an Evidence Requirement, it would be acceptable to construct a hypothetical scenario, if s/he demonstrates that s/he can apply the theory to practice. As candidates are expected to read widely around the subject then the sources of their reading should be acknowledged in an academic reference section.

Each of the points in the four Evidence Requirement sections for the Unit should be covered.

To meet the criteria for Outcome 1 candidates should therefore:

- ◆ describe the attributes of the mental health nurse and give evidence of this applied in a care setting.
- ◆ describe reflective practice in mental health nursing, supported by personal anecdotal evidence.
- ◆ explain professional accountability and give an example from own practice.
- ◆ describe what is meant by professional development, and give an example of own personal professional development.

To meet the criteria for Outcome 2 candidates should:

- ◆ describe the theories of communication, and give examples of own experience of delivering effective communication in a health care setting (one intra-professional example and one service user/other example).
- ◆ identify the barriers to clear communication in mental health care, and give an example of two barriers to effective communication encountered in a mental health care setting, demonstrating how these barriers were overcome.
- ◆ Identify the range of likely communicants in mental health care.
- ◆ evaluate the candidate's therapeutic interpersonal communication skills, by giving three examples of effective interpersonal communication.

To meet the criteria for Outcome 3 candidates should:

- ◆ identify the range of diverse social groups who may be subjected to prejudice and explain why this may occur.
- ◆ explain how the candidate respected social diversity by acknowledging the rights and choice of the service user.
- ◆ give two examples where candidate supported the rights and wishes of a client and/or others who may have been subjected to discrimination in wider society.
- ◆ give two examples where the candidate openly challenged inequality and adopted the role of an advocate in a social setting and/or in a care setting (if there are no such occurrences in the candidate's clinical experience, the examples can be hypothetical).

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

To meet the criteria for Outcome 4 candidates should:

- ◆ discuss the relationship between physical health and mental wellbeing, and identify two examples of how the candidate promoted the physical health of a service user.
- ◆ explain the benefits of evidence based care in a mental health setting for a service user, and give two examples of evidence based practice that the candidate participated in.
- ◆ describe how the needs and aspirations and risks of service users could be assessed in a mental health setting.
- ◆ describe how care is planned using the stages of the nursing process.
- ◆ reflect on partnership working in promoting service user recovery.

Online and Distance Learning

The Unit could be offered electronically, as a distance learning package, along with support from a facilitator.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There is no automatic certification of the Core Skills, however assessment of this Unit will assume the development of Core Skills necessary in the performance of tasks at this level. For example, assessments are likely to include the use of appropriate information technology and the demonstration of skills required to undertake presentations written and oral which will include the use of complex information.

Candidates will have the opportunity to develop the following Core Skills:

Communication at SCQF level 5

Problem Solving at SCQF level 5

Working with Others at SCQF level 5

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at SCQF level 5

Communication: written and verbal communication will be developed and evidenced through a range of activities including class and small group plenary discussions. It could also be developed through recording, reporting and presenting throughout the assessment process.
Problem Solving: can be developed as candidates collaborate on group investigations and research information.

Working with Others: can be developed as certain activities will require candidates to collaborate with each other, as well as mentors in the candidates placement to research concepts. It could be developed through team meeting and interaction with staff and individuals involved in service delivery.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): could be evidenced through maintaining records, preparing reports, the submission of assessment evidence in an electronic format.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

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: Mental Health Nursing: An Introduction

In this Unit you shall be introduced to the craft and skills of mental health nursing. You shall explore the qualities that are required in mental health care and, as you will be working in a health care environment, you shall have the opportunity to develop these qualities in yourself.

Much of care involves communication in many different forms. The members of the care team, the service user and his/her friends and family all work together to promote the recovery of the individual, and this requires good communication. So you shall study this theory and learn about the elements that can obstruct the communication process. In your workplace you will be expected to evaluate your own communication skills and develop these where necessary.

You shall study the subject of prejudice, and investigate the contribution that social inequality plays in the development of mental disorder, and also how people who have mental health problems are frequently discriminated against in society. As a mental health nurse, but also as a citizen you have a duty and a moral responsibility to treat people fairly. Again, within your work place you shall have the role of protecting the service user against discrimination.

You shall develop your knowledge regarding health and safety in a mental health environment and learn about the risks to the individual that are specific to mental disorder including preventing suicide.

This is accompanied by the Unit: *Mental Health and Mental Disorder*, and together these should provide you with a good introductory knowledge base upon which to build a career in mental health nursing.