



Higher National Unit specification: general information

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

Unit code: H3LD 34

Superclass: PN

Publication date: March 2013

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 01

Unit purpose

This Unit is designed for people who are working in a setting with individuals with a learning disability. This Unit develops the candidate's knowledge of the interpersonal skills required to work with individuals with a learning disability and develops an understanding of the professional help and services available. It also develops the candidate's knowledge and understanding of current initiatives that support health and the referral process. Candidates will be required to identify and describe interpersonal skills in clinical practice, discuss current initiatives that support health and explain the role of the professional/specialist services available within Scotland.

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

- 1 Describe appropriate interpersonal skills used in support of individuals with a learning disability.
- 2 Investigate and discuss current initiatives which support the health of an individual with a learning disability.
- 3 Investigate professional and specialist learning disability support services within Scotland.

Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Candidates should have good communication skills, both written and oral. These can be evidenced either by the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications for example 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. In addition to this, candidates should preferably have undertaken some work experience, paid or voluntary, in a health care setting.

General information (cont)

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 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

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of:

- ◆ *Communication* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Working with Others* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5

in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill 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.

This Unit is included in the framework of the HNC/HND Care and Administrative Practice.

Assessment

Outcome 1 could be a case study with short response questions.

Assessment could take the form of an integrated case study generated from the candidate's work setting to cover Outcomes 2 and 3. If this Unit is delivered as part of the HNC/HND Care and Administrative Practice, the candidate's ability to apply theory to practice could be assessed through the Record of Achievement during clinical placement.

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 appropriate interpersonal skills used in support of individuals with a learning disability.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Limits/boundaries and professional practice.
- ◆ Codes of practice.
- ◆ Interpersonal skills and professional practice requirements for own role.
- ◆ Importance of good interpersonal skills for supporting individuals with a learning disability including — communication, listening, assessment, interviewing and negotiation.
- ◆ Importance of good interpersonal skills when working with other professionals.
- ◆ Appropriate interpersonal skills for support to families/carers.

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain limits/boundaries of own responsibility and when to refer to the appropriate practitioner
- ◆ explain the role of codes of practice in relation to professional practice
- ◆ discuss the interpersonal skills required for professional practice in relation to own role
- ◆ describe ways in which good interpersonal skills are required when working in a learning disability setting
- ◆ describe interpersonal skills required when working with other professionals
- ◆ describe interpersonal skills required to support families/carers of individuals with a learning disability

Assessment guidelines

Outcome 1 could be a short case study with specific questions to meet all of the Evidence Requirements.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

Outcome 2

Investigate and discuss current initiatives which support the health of an individual with a learning disability.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Definitions of health and health promotion.
- ◆ Dimension of health — social, physical, emotional, cognitive, cultural and spiritual.
- ◆ Health needs of individuals with learning disabilities.
- ◆ Current initiatives to improve health and wellbeing.
- ◆ The impact of current initiatives on the health and wellbeing of individuals.

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ explain what defines health and health promotion
- ◆ describe dimensions of health in line with current theories
- ◆ discuss current health and wellbeing opportunities and risks for people with a learning disability
- ◆ investigate and evaluate one current initiative to improve health and wellbeing

Assessment guidelines

Within Outcomes 2 and 3, the candidate should be assessed by the compilation of a case study of an individual from their work practice. The case study should be about 1,500–2,000 words, and should integrate Outcomes 2 and 3 from this Unit as they apply to a particular individual's need of health care. The case study will be anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

Outcome 3

Investigate professional and specialist learning disability support services within Scotland.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Range of professional and specialist support services.
- ◆ Roles of professional and specialist within the support services.
- ◆ The referral process and care pathway.

Evidence Requirements

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

- ◆ investigate and describe three types of support services that can aid individuals with a learning disability
- ◆ explain the role of a specialist professional service in meeting the needs of an individual with a learning disability
- ◆ describe the referral process and care pathway for an individual with a learning disability

Assessment guidelines

As that stated in Outcome 2. This Outcome should be integrated with Outcome 2 within the context of a case study.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

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

Outcome 1 — This Outcome is designed to provide candidates with an understanding of the importance of interpersonal skills when working with individuals with a learning disability. Candidates should investigate a range of codes of conduct and the roles of regulatory bodies for the different health care professionals. The need for such regulation should be discussed with candidates, in particular the need for protection of the public and issues of litigation should be explored. The parameters of professional practice including limitations, accountability, responsibility and supervision should be examined in relation to the candidate's own role. The ability to recognise one's own limitations of professional competence as being a central aspect of good professional practice should be discussed and explored in the context of the candidate's point in their own professional development.

Understanding the job role and responsibilities in relation to professional practice requirements should also be examined. The changing role of the learning disability nurse must be examined central to their role effectively identifying and meeting health needs. Candidates must also explore reducing health inequalities through the promotion and implementation of reasonable adjustments and promoting improved health outcomes and increasing access to (and understanding of) general health services, consequently enabling social inclusion. The learning disability nurse also has an important role in helping to keep people safe and in supporting decision-making around capacity to consent and best interests. The role of the learning disability nurse links with all three Outcomes.

Using interpersonal skills to establish relationships with individuals with a learning disability is an important method of communication, particularly when other forms of communication may be affected by the individual's needs and level of communication skills. We can use interpersonal skills to exchange information, meaning and feelings through verbal and non-verbal communication. In this context, how information is conveyed to another individual is as important as the content and this 'non-verbal' communication will include facial expressions, gestures/body language, tone of voice, pace of delivery, etc. This non-verbal communication facilitates interaction and is useful for picking up cues from individuals who have difficulty in expressing themselves. Exploring the signals given by non-verbal communication and body language, the importance of movements and gestures, facial expression, eye contact and posture can provide the practitioner with an opportunity to interpret hidden, unarticulated thoughts and facilitate insight into what people are really thinking and feeling but may be unable to express verbally. It can be very difficult for the practitioner to establish a bond with an individual with additional needs and displaying empathy, demonstrating respect for the individual and showing that their needs and wishes are being taken into account are vital to supporting that individual.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

The skill of active listening is also very important and is different to hearing — it demonstrates that the individual is paying attention and trying to interpret messages being conveyed. Being able to listen and absorb information is a Core Skill — it underpins a communication system which assumes that you are trying to understand messages from the person who is speaking. It also assumes that you have respect for the speaker and are interested in what they have to say; making someone feel that they have a contribution to make, and that their contribution is valued, is particularly important when establishing a working relationship with individuals.

Candidates should be encouraged to consider their listening skills style, and think about how they can demonstrate that they are 'actively' listening to people and absorbing the information they receive and use this to develop their practice. Because of the closely interrelated nature of many interpersonal skills, active listening can often best be demonstrated when the listener both gives and receives non-verbal messages and uses questioning techniques to show empathy. Candidates must be made aware that interpersonal skills are also an important tool in dealing with conflict and challenging situations. People with good interpersonal skills can generally control and often deflect the feelings that emerge in difficult situations, and respond appropriately instead of being overwhelmed by emotion — feelings of frustration, anger or helplessness. Candidates must also explore the skills of assessment, interviewing and negotiation.

Candidates are asked to explore the characteristics of an effective team, eg the need for clear objectives, willingness to address issues and resolve conflict, etc and to use that knowledge to analyse their effectiveness in the workplace team. The diversity of teams that may be encountered and the variety of experience amongst their members emphasise the need for clear and effective communication in different settings. In addition, effective communication and team working skills for working with colleagues within the candidate's own workplace/placement as well as with those in receiving agencies should be covered in some depth. The candidate must examine their role and responsibility within the health care team.

This Outcome also focuses on the role and responsibilities of the practitioner in relation to supporting the individual with a learning disability, their family/carers/significant others. The candidate will explore interpersonal skills specifically required to meet the needs of families, carers or significant others, and case studies could be used as a teaching resource. Issues relating to confidentiality of information, ethical decision making, etc should also be explored. Throughout this Outcome a range of interpersonal skills should be discussed, and these contextualised to the learning disability environment.

Outcome 2 — Within this Outcome, candidates will be asked to investigate a variety of definitions of health to include personal, lay and professional. This will involve the study of the various dimensions of health, and the relative value placed on each. Candidates will investigate different experiences that may be responsible for shaping lay definitions of health, and the fact that health can be multi-faceted.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

As a person's health and wellbeing is affected by many different factors, candidates will be expected to examine various dimensions of health — physical, emotional, social, spiritual, cognitive and societal (inequalities in health). The concepts of health that are linked with people's eco-social, environment and cultural influences should be identified. A range of different health resources will be studied looking at historical perspectives and the emergence of current official approaches to health in particular the move towards a more holistic approach to health care. Health promotion and access to health provision will be explored in detail.

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can evaluate the potential health and wellbeing opportunities and risks for people with a learning disability. Through further reflection on practice, candidates should describe and discuss the influence of the physical cultural and social and environmental factors on the life of people with a learning disability.

There is a range of complex and interrelated factors that impact on health and wellbeing. The interrelationship between personal characteristics and external detriments of health can produce diverse health outcomes, which may lead to health inequalities for certain cohort groups such as people with learning disabilities.

As disability is identified as a personal characteristic that can shape health outcomes, it is important to assess the health needs especially in terms of identifying how external factors such as social networks facilitate the achievement of positive health outcomes.

A number of studies have confirmed that people with learning disabilities experience greater health inequalities, including higher mortality rates, when compared to the general population. Candidates must explore what conditions individuals with a learning disability are at risk of, eg mental health problems, and then research and investigate current initiatives that improve the health and wellbeing of individuals with a learning disability.

In Outcome 2, candidates should be encouraged to explore reports such as:

- ◆ Edinburgh Napier University (2011) Enhancing the Public Health Role of Local Area Co-ordinators in Scotland: An Evaluation
- ◆ NHS Health Scotland (2004) Health Needs Assessment Report: People With Learning Disabilities In Scotland
- ◆ NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (2006) Best Practice Statement: Promoting Access to Healthcare for People with a Learning Disability
- ◆ NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (2009) Tackling Indifference: Healthcare Services for People with Learning Disabilities National Overview
- ◆ Scottish Executive (2002) Promoting Health, Supporting Inclusion
- ◆ Scottish Government (2007) Equally Well: The Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

Outcome 3 — In this Outcome, candidates should explore the support services and networks that are available and are important to the people with a learning disability they are working with. They should consider these in relation to the role in promoting people's independence and in meeting their needs. Candidates must investigate a diverse variety of types of provision from the statutory and non-statutory sectors.

This should include:

- ◆ agencies and organisations in the public, voluntary and private sectors
- ◆ roles and responsibilities of such agencies and organisations — these should be explored and any obligations imposed by legislation discussed
- ◆ multi-agency approach — the advantages of multi-agency working should be explored in a general sense
- ◆ referral — standard referral processes of various agencies should be covered
- ◆ referral procedures within the candidate's own workplace/placement should also be discussed in order to provide a practical context. The candidate will require to develop a more in-depth knowledge of the purposes and roles of support agencies. The provision/availability of specific services for a range of purposes, eg social, emotional, cognitive and vocational, should be explored.
- ◆ resources issues, including any financial constraints should be covered

The following areas could be considered:

- ◆ support services and strategies (statutory agencies) occupational therapy, physiotherapy, medical, social work, education and equipment
- ◆ professionals — learning disability nurse, physiotherapist, doctor, health visitor, teacher, early education and childcare professionals, psychologist and speech therapist
- ◆ voluntary/local agencies, eg Barnardo's, National Autistic Society and Enable
- ◆ role of professionals and multi-disciplinary teams
- ◆ coping with strategies for parents/carers/extended family/educators

When looking at the processes involved, candidates should be made aware of the different support services and structures required for the individuals with a learning disability:

- ◆ day care services
- ◆ respite care
- ◆ home care/home schooling
- ◆ supported living accommodation services
- ◆ special schools
- ◆ independent living
- ◆ educational psychology service
- ◆ careers advisory services
- ◆ voluntary organisations
- ◆ primary care team

Delivery should cover the importance of good communication and interpersonal skills for working with the individual with a learning disability, particularly in the context of providing advice and support to the individual through the referral process.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

Candidates should be made aware and understand how to recognise the limits of their own responsibility, and how to refer on to other professionals or specialist services. The importance of the maintenance of confidentiality should be emphasised, as should the importance of accurate record keeping. Case studies of individuals care pathways should be discussed within the classroom setting.

Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

The Unit should offer candidates the opportunity to take classroom theory to the workplace and to apply this within a real situation. The Unit will be assessed by means of a case study with questions and an integrated case study, which must cover all the necessary skills and knowledge and provide appropriate evidence to support this.

If this Unit is delivered as part of the HNC/HND Care and Administrative Practice the candidate's ability to apply theory to practice could be assessed through the Record of Achievement during clinical placement.

Guidance on the assessment of this Unit

Outcome 1 — could be a case study with short response questions.

Outcomes 2 and 3 — Assessment could take the form of an integrated case study generated from the candidate's work setting. The case study should be about 1,500–2,000 words, and should integrate Outcomes 2 and 3 as they apply to a particular individual's need of health care. The case study will be anonymous to ensure confidentiality. If this Unit is delivered as part of the HNC/HND Care and Administrative Practice, the candidate's ability to apply theory to practice could be assessed through the Record of Achievement during clinical placement.

Online and Distance Learning

This Unit could be delivered by distance learning. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate's evidence.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

There are opportunities to develop the Core Skills of:

- ◆ *Communication* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Working with Others* at SCQF level 5
- ◆ *Information and Communication Technology* at SCQF level 5

in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

Communication — will be evidenced via the candidate's work with individuals and groups as well as within written assessments.

Problem Solving — critical thinking, planning and organising, reviewing and evaluating will be evidenced through supervision in the candidate's workplace and within written assignments.

Working with Others — will again be evidenced in the candidate's workplace via their ability to interact, communicate and negotiate with those with whom they come into contact.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) — could be evidenced by the use of standard applications to obtain and process information and data for assignments.

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: Learning Disability: Current Policy Issues In Care

This Unit will develop your knowledge about the interpersonal skills required to work with individuals with a learning disability. You will also learn about current initiatives that support health, and how to refer service users to professional and specialist services. This Unit has three Outcomes.

In Outcome 1 you will gain an understanding of the importance of interpersonal skills and how to develop these to enable you to support an individual with a learning disability.

In Outcome 2 you will learn what health promotion is then you will investigate health promotion strategies to promote the health of individuals with learning disabilities.

In Outcome 3 you will learn about the roles and responsibility of professional and specialist services currently available within Scotland. You will also learn about the referral process.

There are two assessments for this Unit, the first is case study with questions. The second is a case study based on an individual in your placement. You will require to adhere to the principle of confidentiality when undertaking this.