



## Higher National Unit specification

### General information

**Unit title:** Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

**Unit code:** H6MA 35

**Superclass:** DE

**Publication date:** March 2014

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02

### Unit purpose

The purpose of this Unit is to enable learners to identify the various aspects of decision making that are to be undertaken as a supervisor. Exploration of models pertaining to decision making and the ethical nature of these should encourage learners to consider their role responsibilities further in order to manage dilemmas which they will face in their working environment. The Unit will assist learners to develop an approach to decision making which is consistent with their organisation's approved model(s) and which ensures they are able to make appropriate, effective and defensible decisions.

This Unit is aimed at individuals aspiring to a supervisory position within organisations where ethical behaviour is a significant part of the decision making process.

### Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit learners will be able to:

- 1 Explain processes for effective decision making in organisations.
- 2 Analyse ethical dilemmas in an organisational environment.
- 3 Evaluate Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8) in practice.

### Credit points and level

2 Higher National Unit credits at SCQF level 8: (16 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8)

### Recommended entry to the Unit

It is recommended that learners undertaking this Unit possess a qualification to at least SCQF level 7 or experience at an equivalent level.

## Higher National Unit specification: General information (cont)

**Unit title:** Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

### Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skills            None

Core Skill component(s)        Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit Specification.

### 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.

### Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

**Unit title:** Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

### Outcome 1

Explain processes for effective decision making in organisations.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Situations where a decision is required
- ◆ Recognise various types of decision
- ◆ Levels of decision making
- ◆ Compare and contrast decision approaches/processes
- ◆ Apply a rational decision process
- ◆ Consider alternative models of decision making
- ◆ The strengths and weaknesses of decision processes
- ◆ The nature of group decision making

### Outcome 2

Analyse ethical dilemmas in an organisational environment.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Define and diagnose the problem and/or issue
- ◆ Apply ethics and morals
- ◆ Principles of ethics
- ◆ Theories of ethics
- ◆ Relationship between justice, law and morality
- ◆ Recognise types of ethical dilemmas — personal, professional, moral
- ◆ Apply analytical model(s) to ethical dilemmas

### Outcome 3

Evaluate Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8) in practice.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Generate alternative solutions
- ◆ Decide between alternatives
- ◆ Gather acceptance and implementation
- ◆ Apply techniques to assist the decision making process(es)
- ◆ The responsibility of managers in decision making
- ◆ Apply appropriate criteria for evaluation of a decision process and its outcome(s)

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

### Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners are expected to provide evidence that they can apply decision making processes, and evaluate the effectiveness of them; to address a problem within an organisational environment; and to recognise and consider ethical issues/dilemmas surrounding such problems.

The evidence will take the form of:

- (a) a portfolio of evidence from the learner's workplace practice to confirm their development in relation to considering alternative models of decision making, analysing an ethical dilemma and applying a relevant code of ethics. The evidence portfolio must be presented in a format agreed with the tutor.

The evidence portfolio should encompass more than one objective source, to corroborate the learner's competence. Suitable evidence sources may include:

- ◆ Witness testimony from a relevant observer/s
- ◆ Written evidence of decision making processes applied to decisions made by the learner (both acting alone and together with others)
- ◆ Learning log/s, recording the learner's application of decision making process/es

and

- (b) a written management report of 3,000 words or the equivalent if presented orally, eg as a video presentation. Supporting evidence included within the portfolio should be referenced within the management report.

The management report will require learners to apply their knowledge to a practical situation within an organisation with which they are familiar, or to a case study scenario provided by their assessor. The practical situation must include a problem and address both routine and non-routine aspects of decision making in an organisation, or in collaboration with other organisations. The focus of the decision making will be those aspects normally expected to be taken by supervisors (or managers).

Learners will be required to:

- ◆ analyse a problem within an organisation and appropriately consider the strengths and weaknesses of alternative decision processes which may be applied.
- ◆ select and apply at least two appropriate decision models/processes to the problem.
- ◆ apply an appropriate model/process to analyse the ethical issues/dilemmas surrounding the problem.
- ◆ apply a relevant tool or technique to assist the decision process.
- ◆ appropriately consider the implications of relevant ethical principles, moral and/or ethical codes.
- ◆ generate alternative solutions to the problem and select an appropriate option.

## Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

### Unit title: Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

- ◆ evaluate the chosen decision process and the selected option.
- ◆ use relevant concepts to provide valid and coherent justification to support all evaluation, analysis and conclusions including possible implications and consequences.

Satisfactory achievement of the Unit will consist of:

The portfolio clearly identifying the learners' Knowledge and/or Skills development, demonstrating their ability to draw on the theory and practices that they have studied during the course of the Unit to evaluate the effectiveness of decision processes and the impact of ethical issues/dilemmas; and

The Management Report including evidence which is:

- ◆ valid in relation to the organisation.
- ◆ authentic in relation to the learner's position/experience.
- ◆ reliable in that it is supported by appropriate testimony or relevant workplace evidence; and
- ◆ consistent in that the learner has clearly understood the depth and breadth of competence required by the organisation.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

**Unit title:** Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and 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 is intended for anyone seeking a supervisory position in an organisation which serves the public. It is concerned with enabling those aspiring to supervisory positions to manage dilemmas which they will face in their working environment.

Learners will normally be following a recognised training and development programme. It may be delivered as part of a Group Award (eg The Diploma in Police Service Leadership and Management).

The Unit recognises that decision making is influenced by many factors, one of which is the learners themselves. For this reason the Unit is designed to enable learners to develop an approach to decision making with which they are comfortable. This approach, however, has to be consistent with any approved model used by a learner's organisation as this is the guarantee that appropriate, effective and defensible decisions can be made. The Unit also stresses evaluation of decisions and the processes by which they are made so that learners get into the habit of reviewing decisions they have made, and refining and developing their approach in line with their experience. It is predominantly an applied Unit and the focus is on decisions, both programmed and non-programmed, that managers in a police environment could take.

The following notes give some additional information on each Outcome.

#### Outcome 1

This Outcome should cover what a decision is (a commitment to a course of action) and Herbert Simon's three elements in decision making (intelligence activity, design activity, choice activity). It may help also to clarify the distinction between a decision and a problem (a difference between an actual and a desired state) and the distinction between the actual problem and its symptoms/issues. These can help to set the scene for the following:

- ◆ Situations where a decision is required — problem, crisis, opportunity
- ◆ Types of decision: programmed and non-programmed; routine and non-routine; adaptive and innovative; descriptive, normative and prescriptive decision making
- ◆ Levels of decision making, eg Individual, Group, Organisation; Strategic, Tactical, Operational

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

### Unit title: Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

- ◆ Alternative models of decision making: The Unit must address any decision model approved by the relevant organisation (eg the National Decision Model for the Police Service of Scotland) and should also address the rational decision making model. Various other alternatives should cover process, political, organisational and societal influences. This is important as it will enable links to be made to other Units and the various factors that can affect decision making (eg Units such as Leadership; Managing Teams; Plan, Lead and Implement Change). It is more important that learners understand there are alternatives to the approved model and the rational model than that they know specific alternatives in detail.
- ◆ Group decision making; Nature and impact of Groupthink

### Outcome 2

This Outcome examines the nature of ethical dilemmas. It should address:

- ◆ definition(s) of an ethical dilemma.
- ◆ the importance of identifying the ethical dilemma as opposed to the issues surrounding it by applying an analytical model or approach.
- ◆ theories of ethics (ethical formalism, utilitarianism, virtue, care, absolute — Plato/Kant, consequentialist — Aristotle/Bentham, pragmatism).
- ◆ relationship between justice, law and morality.
- ◆ types of ethical dilemma (personal, professional, moral).
- ◆ relevant codes of ethics (eg the Code of Ethics for Policing in Scotland).
- ◆ public trust and probity (eg various Public Inquiries into the conduct of media, politicians, police, etc).
- ◆ corruption (eg Leveson Inquiry — role of press and police in 'phone-hacking', Operation Elveden — Corrupt payments by journalists to police).
- ◆ discretion.

### Outcome 3

This is a wide ranging Outcome which requires learners to apply the principles and concepts from the first two Outcomes to evaluation of action taken in response to an incident. Ideally, it should be based on practical situations which will be meaningful to learners. It should focus on how key decisions are approached and should include:

- ◆ Definition of a critical incident
- ◆ Theoretical application of the rational decision making model and/or a model approved by a relevant organisation (eg National Decision Model for the Police Service of Scotland)
- ◆ Decision making tools and techniques, which may include:
  - diagnosis of problem and/or issue (eg soft systems approach; why-why; fishbone diagram; SARA — scanning, analysis, response, assessment)
  - generating alternative solutions (eg board blasting; brainstorming; lateral thinking; morphological analysis)
  - deciding between alternatives (eg how-how; evaluation matrix)
  - gathering acceptance and implementation: (eg setting SMART objectives; planning; stakeholder diagram)
  - general techniques of decision making (eg decision tree; cost benefit analysis)

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

- ◆ Evaluating potential responses for ethical compliance, by application of a relevant model (eg PLANE)
- ◆ Consideration of organisational values (eg Police Scotland Values, Consent Ratio and Circle of Consent)
- ◆ Responsibilities of managers:
  - Equality and Diversity
  - Organisational risk and reputation
  - Maintenance of organisational professional standards (eg Conduct and Performance Regulations)
- ◆ Appropriate criteria for evaluation of both the process and the outcome
- ◆ Strengths and weaknesses of the decision making process
- ◆ Drawing lessons for the future

### Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

This Unit is suitable for a blended learning approach with the accent on self-directed learning. Tutorial support is important to introduce the Unit to learners and to explain key concepts (rational decision model, any approved decision model). The bulk of learner study should be conducted by distance learning with remote tutor advice and support.

If delivered as part of the Group Award, Diploma in Police Service Leadership and Management, it is recommended that it this Unit be delivered alongside the complimentary Unit, *Policing, the Criminal Justice System and Human Rights*.

### Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

To assist learners in developing analytical skills and the ability to draw conclusions, they can be given investigative assignments which could act as formative assessments, eg learners could be asked to consider the potential or actual decision processes which were, or could have been, applied in a real or simulated situation where a police manager made decisions. Some or all of these investigations should address situations where there are ethical issues surrounding police action. Accounts of these investigations should be included within the evidence portfolio.

This Unit may be assessed in conjunction with Outcomes from other Units, as part of an award. Relevant Units may include those relating to leadership; managing teams; and partnership working/collaboration.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

### Unit title: Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

If delivered as part of the Group Award, Diploma in Police Service Leadership and Management, it is recommended that this Unit be assessed wholly, or in part, in conjunction with the complementary Unit, *Policing, The Criminal Justice System and Human Rights*.

The Management Report could consider existing stated case studies of problem(s) within an organisational environment which relate directly to the current, previous or anticipated role performed by the learner, and could include a reflection on their ability to draw on the theory and practices that they have studied during the course of the Unit.

Learners are expected to be proactive in their approach to learning and to seek feedback from course tutors at key milestones.

The mode of assessment encourages the submission of evidence in electronic format.

Since the Component of Critical Thinking at SCQF Level 6 is embedded in this Unit, it is strongly recommended that you follow the assessment guidelines given. If you wish to use a different assessment model, you should seek prior verification of the assessment instrument(s) you intend to use to ensure that the Core Skill is still covered.

### Opportunities for 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 social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at [www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment).

### Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

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

All elements of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* — Critical Thinking, Planning, Organising, Reviewing and Evaluating — are naturally developed as learners analyse a situation in a particular organisation, selecting and applying a relevant decision model to an ethical dilemma arising as part of an incident. Identification and assessment of all factors impacting ethical decision making will require in-depth awareness of the strengths and potential weaknesses of decision models. Designing strategies with opportunities for review and adjustment will involve knowledge of appropriate tools and techniques to support the process. Analytical evaluation and review will be integral to determining the effectiveness of decisions selected.

Although skills in written communication are not formally assessed, learners will develop their skills as they research, summarise and evaluate a range of complex information. They will present key information and ideas accurately, to occupational standards, using a formal structure and recognised format.

## Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

### Unit title: Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

Understanding of Skills for Learning, Life and Work including sustainable development, health and wellbeing will underpin all learning experiences.

This Unit potentially provides evidence of competence for the many of the performance indicators, and knowledge and understanding items, in the following component of the Policing Professional Framework:

SFJ BE101	Assess the risk of serious harm to victims, survivors and witnesses
SFJFA103	Receive detained persons into custody
SFJ CD101	Supervise the response to critical incidents
SFJ CI105	Supervise investigations and investigators
SFJ HB6	Provide leadership in your area of responsibility
SFJ CB3	Conduct Intelligence driven briefings
SFJ CA1	Use law enforcement actions in a fair and justified way
SFJFA104	Authorise and manage police detention
SFJ CC5	Identify and manage operational threats and risk
SFJ CC7	Prepare for, monitor and maintain, law enforcement operations

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Core Skills Component Critical Thinking at SCQF level 6 embedded.	31/03/14

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## General information for learners

### Unit title: Ethical Decision Making (SCQF level 8)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This is a 2 credit Unit (16 SCQF credit points) at SCQF level 8 and is designed to enable you to develop the skills required for decision making in an organisational environment. It will enhance your understanding of decision making theories and also help you to give practical advice on how to make decisions which are robust, ethical and defensible.

The Unit will therefore contribute to your development as a manager. If you have current management experience it will help you explore and reflect on suitable approaches to decision making. If you have not already worked as a manager but hope to do so in the future, the Unit will help you to prepare for your new role and to meet its challenges and demands. Also, if you have worked as a manager in the past but have not done so for a little while, the Unit can help you review your experience and update it in the light of recent developments.

The Unit has three Outcomes:

The first Outcome focuses on explaining processes of effective decision making. It enables you to understand the fundamental aspects which must be present in any reliable decision making model while also appreciating that there are significant differences between models. It also encourages you to think about the type of decision making environments for which each model may be most appropriate.

The second Outcome is about helping you to recognise ethical dilemmas in situations where decisions are required. You will learn how to analyse ethical dilemmas in order to understand them and therefore be able to propose appropriate responses to them.

The third Outcome concerns evaluation of possible responses to incidents, taking into account how decisions are made and how any ethical dilemmas are addressed. You will learn how to apply criteria to determine whether your decision is ethical, defensible and in the best interests of your organisation.

The content of the Unit will be kept relevant through the appropriate use of examples and by focusing the areas of study on organisations that are relevant to you. This should provide you with the flexibility required to study, as appropriate, organisations of different size, public and private organisations, and those operating in different markets.

For successful completion of this Unit, you will be required to provide evidence that you can apply decision making models, appropriately analyse ethical dilemmas and both suggest and evaluate potential responses to incidents. You will be expected to apply the concepts you have learned during the Unit to an incident or incidents. You may be required to present this evidence in a variety of ways such as a personal blog, management report or performance during a simulated incident. You may well be able to generate suitable evidence from your learning and your workplace as you work through the Unit. Your tutor will explain exactly what is expected of you.