



Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Facilitating Mindfulness Techniques with Young Adults
(SCQF level 8)

Unit code: H7KX 35

Superclass: PK

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Unit purpose

This Unit is designed to develop the candidate-facilitator's understanding and practice of mindfulness in order that they can communicate its core principles and facilitate mindfulness techniques with teenagers and young adults within a group setting. It is suitable for those who work with, or who expect in the foreseeable future to be working with teenagers and young adults in an educational, support or pastoral setting, such as teachers, lecturers or trainers, social workers and community support workers.

The Unit offers a bridge between introductory mindfulness courses (such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)) and the accreditation to teach courses offered at PgCert, PGDip and Masters level. The Unit also seeks to meet with guidelines for ethical, safe and effective mindfulness facilitation by ensuring that candidate-facilitators develop a substantial personal practice and, following facilitation training, continue to develop their practice through ongoing training and peer supervision. The Unit will focus on three broad areas of practice — mindfulness of body, feelings and thoughts. The Unit is not intended to equip candidate-facilitators with counselling skills, and will cover the boundary between mindfulness practice and counselling.

Evidence of competence as a mindfulness facilitator in this Unit will be obtained from working in small groups with peers on the course.

The Unit is also available as a single Unit Professional Development Award at SQA level 8.

Higher National Unit specification: General information (cont)

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Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the mindfulness facilitator will be able to:

- 1 Explain the underlying concepts of mindfulness practice drawing from current research evidence and personal experience.
- 2 Guide a range of mindfulness practices from mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feelings and mindfulness of thoughts.
- 3 Lead and facilitate post-practice inquiry suitable for a young adult group.

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

In order to fulfil the good practice requirements of an ethical mindfulness facilitator, the Unit will require that participating candidate-facilitators have completed, as a minimum, an eight week MBSR course or equivalent mindfulness training within their organisation. They must also be committed to sustained personal practice outwith the course framework. Other relevant experience will be at the discretion of the tutor.

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for 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.

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 candidate-facilitators 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.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

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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.

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. Candidate-facilitators 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 underlying concepts of mindfulness practice drawing from current research evidence and personal experience.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Describe the Buddhist origins of mindfulness practice as a philosophy that identifies the psychological basis of experience
- ◆ Identify the development of secularised courses since the 1970s (including Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy) as recognised and validated practices within therapeutic, educational and healthcare approaches
- ◆ Outline the key areas of research evidencing the benefits of mindfulness (including impacts on attention, wellbeing and esteem) and its cognitive components.
- ◆ Explain and reflect upon insights and techniques emerging from one's own personal mindfulness practice

Outcome 2

Guide a range of mindfulness practices from mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feelings and mindfulness of thoughts.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Present moment awareness practice
- ◆ Breathing techniques
- ◆ Body scan
- ◆ Mindful movement
- ◆ Mindfulness of eating
- ◆ Mindfulness of feelings: simple awareness
- ◆ Mindfulness of positive feeling
- ◆ Mindfulness of negative feeling
- ◆ Compassion practices (self and other)
- ◆ Mindfulness of thoughts practice

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Outcome 3

Lead and facilitate post-practice inquiry suitable for a young adult group

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Asking appropriate open, focused questions
- ◆ Awareness of privacy and sensitivity to participants' experience
- ◆ Handling questions
- ◆ Handling conflict and distress in an appropriate, safe and ethical way

Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Candidate-facilitators will need to submit both knowledge and performance evidence of being able to guide at least two mindfulness practice sessions from the 10 mindfulness practices listed in Outcome 2, appropriate to a young adult group; of being able to lead post practice inquiry; and of being a self-reflective mindfulness practitioner able to work ethically with young adults.

The performance evidence will take the form of two (audio or video) recorded guided mindfulness practices of about 15 minutes each. In addition, one recorded post-practice inquiry will be submitted for assessment

Candidate-facilitators will also submit a self-reflective essay in either written or other appropriate format of approximately 1,200 words (+/- 100). The essay should illustrate their knowledge of the principles of mindfulness and explore how they have developed and applied mindfulness practice in their own lives during the course of this Unit.

Evidence of knowledge which cannot be inferred from the performance evidence submitted may be sampled by the tutor/assessor in the form of short answer questions.

Satisfactory achievement of the Unit will consist of:

(a) for the self-reflective essay:

- ◆ Explain concisely the principles behind and evidence supporting mindfulness practice.
- ◆ Provide a minimum of three examples where the candidate-facilitator has illustrated application of, and insights deriving from, mindfulness practice in their own lives during the course of this Unit.

(b) for the guided practice sessions:

- ◆ Explain the mindfulness practices using simple and clear language.
- ◆ Lead each of the two guided mindfulness practice sessions using appropriate structuring of time (guidance and silence), clear language, appropriate tone, vocabulary, and effective use of silence.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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(c) for the post practice inquiry:

- ◆ Effectively establish the privacy and safety of the inquiry space.
- ◆ Lead post-practice inquiry with appropriate opening and follow-up questions.
- ◆ Demonstrate an inclusive approach which embodies the principles of kind and curious attention to experience.
- ◆ Demonstrate an awareness of potential underlying sensitivities when leading inquiry, if appropriate, by naming behavioural cues such as discomfort, anger, anxiety etc and bringing attention to this with gentle questioning.
- ◆ Respond to participants' questions in ways that are concise, honest and practical.
- ◆ Respond to potential conflict and distress in ways that embody the values of mindfulness; by being present, being aware of one's own experience and being sensitive to the needs of the group and individuals.



Higher National Unit Support Notes

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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

The Unit is designed to develop candidate-facilitators' experience and knowledge of mindfulness as a basis for facilitating mindfulness training with young people. On completion of the Unit, candidate-facilitators should have gained a practical insight into mindfulness practice in daily life, the theoretical and research basis which underpins it, and the methods for introducing, guiding and facilitating effective post-practice inquiry with young people. The Unit offers a bridge between introductory mindfulness courses (such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)) and the accreditation to teach courses offered at PgCert, PGDip and Masters level. The Unit will focus on three broad areas of practice: mindfulness of body, feelings and thoughts.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

In order to meet ethical guidelines for mindfulness based teaching approaches, the Unit should only be taught by tutors with an extensive personal mindfulness practice and with some formalised accreditation in facilitating mindfulness. A core component of mindfulness facilitation is that the tutors embody the practice in delivery by employing a facilitating approach that is present, gentle and responsive to the needs of the group. Individual sessions should therefore combine theory and instruction with practice and inquiry, allowing for thought and discussion as well as simple awareness and silence.

Since mindfulness is, above all, a practical learning, this Unit will largely be delivered face-to-face, combining instruction, discussion and various mindfulness practices.

The Unit could be delivered through a mixture of appropriate authoritative sources (such as the work of Thich Nhat Hahn, John Kabat Zinn, Mark Halliday, Christopher Germer and others as well as the relevant findings of the scientific community); personal examples drawn from the tutors' own experience of practice and teaching and those of any guest speakers; through hypothetical teaching scenarios and group discussion; through practical tasks such as guiding practices and leading post-practice inquiry and through peer feedback and self-reflection activities.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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In Outcome 1 it may be helpful to offer tutor instruction on the Buddhist origins of mindfulness, its recent history of secularisation and salient research findings — particularly pertaining to the cognitive and affective impacts of mindfulness practice. Candidate facilitators will also benefit from hearing the particular experience and understanding of the course tutor in developing a personal mindfulness practice of their own and the ways in which they have taught this to young people in educational and other pastoral settings. Group discussion will allow candidate-facilitators to clarify their understanding and to reflect on their own personal practice and how this might be communicated to young adults.

In Outcome 2 it will be necessary to spend a good deal of time in practical sessions, developing candidate-facilitators' experience of each of the practices. Candidate-facilitators will also be required to find ways to explain these practices in their own words, suitable to their young persons' audience — and this can be rehearsed and developed in peer group settings with peer and tutor feedback. Similarly, candidate-facilitators will be asked to develop their own ways of guiding each of the practices — and this too can be rehearsed and developed in peer settings with the opportunity for feedback.

In Outcome 3 it may be helpful to offer tutor instruction on the key components of guiding post-practice inquiry; asking open but concrete questions, allowing space, handling questions appropriately and being present with the possibilities of conflict and distress. It may be useful to discuss hypothetical scenarios and employ role-play before candidate-facilitators each practice facilitating their own post-practice inquiry with peers and with peer-feedback.

Teaching sessions can be structured to follow the progression of practice from mindfulness of body, through mindfulness of feeling to mindfulness of thought. Alongside this, teaching may introduce a series of areas of focus and inquiry, such as how to adapt the practice to different needs or addressing potential emotional issues arising from mindfulness practise.

It is also important to clarify with candidate-facilitators, particularly those working in a pastoral role with young people, that while mindfulness has a therapeutic impact, it remains discrete from counselling. In working with young people in distress, it can be helpful to make a distinction between 'process' and 'content'. In other words, the role of the mindfulness facilitator is to help young practitioners bring awareness to what is happening in their bodies, the experience of the feelings (agitated, restless, tense, inhibited, etc: and perhaps the colour/texture/sensation of these feelings) and the kinds of thoughts appearing in the mind ('I shouldn't be feeling this'; 'I want this to go away', etc). The focus of inquiry between the facilitator and the young person is therefore upon *felt* experience and what is observed by bringing close attention to it. This is distinct from the content or 'story-line' of the experience. Facilitators will use their individual and professional discretion in listening to a young person but, as a guideline, if an inquiry or post-practice meeting moves into the arena of 'listening work' where the young person is sharing the particulars of their personal experience and emotions surrounding this, at this stage they are best referred for professional counselling. Facilitators should avoid giving advice on areas of the young person's life, which can foster a sense of dependency upon the insight of the facilitator. Instead, a good mindfulness facilitator will help a young person to strengthen their own mindful awareness and insight so that they are increasingly able to rely upon these practices as part of their own autonomous self-support system.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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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 facilitators.

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

Outcome 1 — Explain the underlying concepts of mindfulness practice, drawing from current research evidence and personal experience

Assessment may be submitted as an essay of around 1,200 words detailing the underlying concepts of mindfulness, its secular development and research evidence and its application in an educational or other pastoral setting. The essay should also include a statement of the candidate-facilitator's personal reflection upon their own mindfulness practice during the course of this Unit.

Reflection on one's own practice is an essential aspect of mindfulness facilitation and assessors should look for clear and concrete examples of how the candidate-facilitator has applied mindfulness in their own life and what they have learned from their practice. Examples might include awareness of the body; insights into stress behaviour; insights into particular feelings and/or emotional reactions and ways of bringing awareness to this or particular ways in which the candidate-facilitator has developed mindfulness practice of their own or adapted a practice in a way that supports their everyday life. The integrity and authority of the mindfulness facilitator emerges from a felt sense of how that individual embodies mindfulness and communicates a living practice — and the candidate-facilitator must be able to draw from their experiences and insights in facilitation with young people.

It should be noted that the course teaching will not typically provide opportunities for candidate-facilitators to work directly with young people. Practical learning in explaining and guiding mindfulness practices and leading post-practice inquiry will therefore be conducted in a peer-learning setting, with other candidate-facilitators on the course, and assessed for effectiveness and appropriateness to a young adult audience by the class tutor.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Outcome 2 — Guide a range of mindfulness practices from mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feelings and mindfulness of thoughts

Assessment may be submitted as an audio or video recording of two guided practices from the ten practices taught in the Unit (each of around 15 minutes' duration). Candidate facilitators may elect to record one of the guided practices that they have offered as part of class teaching time or during the end-of-Unit-mindfulness day. They may also record their guided practices at home for submission. There may be some candidate-facilitators already offering mindfulness practices to young people in their work-place setting and, with the permission of these young people, they might also choose to record two of these guided sessions for assessment. Successful completion of this assessment is on the basis of two clearly led mindfulness practices, using appropriate structuring of time (guidance and silence), tone of voice and vocabulary.

Outcome 3 — Lead and facilitate post-practice inquiry suitable for a young adult group

As with Outcome 2, assessment may be submitted as an audio or video recording of one post practice inquiry session, drawn either from peer-inquiry in class teaching time or during the end-of-Unit-mindfulness day. Candidate-facilitators already offering mindfulness practices with young people in their work-place setting might also choose to record a post-practice inquiry, with the permission of the young people taking part.

Successful completion of this assessment is on the basis that the candidate-facilitator has effectively established the privacy and safety of the inquiry space (for example that information is not shared outside of the group; that speakers should not be interrupted; that no-one is compelled to speak). In leading inquiry with young people, the candidate-facilitator should demonstrate that they are using simple and direct questioning (open ended questions such as 'what did you notice in that session?' appropriate for adult inquiry, tends to inhibit young people). In responding, the candidate-facilitator should also demonstrate an inclusive approach which embodies the principles of kind and curious attention to experience: every experience should be 'allowed' (be it boredom, anger, frustration) through a process of inquiry, simply asking 'what does that experience feel like?'

Candidate-facilitators demonstrating an awareness of the potential underlying sensitivities emerging from practice should be able to pick up on and, if appropriate, name behavioural cues such as discomfort, anger, anxiety, etc. It is often helpful for the mindfulness facilitator to bring attention to this, with gentle questioning. The aim is not to get the young person necessarily to change their behaviour (ie a young person sitting with their arms crossed or giggling during meditation) but to bring their attention to it and begin to inquire into the experience ('how does it feel in the body?', 'what are you feeling when x happens?'). The candidate-facilitator thus models an approach of acceptance and curiosity rather than attempting to control the experience of the young person (arms crossed may indicate difficult feelings around the body or emotions, giggling often indicates embarrassment).

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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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.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

Working with Others

The Unit provides opportunities to naturally enhance skills in all components of the Core Skill of *Working with Others* at SCQF level 6. Co-operative working with peers and young adults in complex interactions is integral to achievement. Defining the nature and scope of goals, roles and responsibilities candidate-facilitators must ascertain diverse needs as well as share and disseminate relevant information. Acceptance of the physical and emotional responses of groups and individuals will support negotiation through shared activities. Encouraging the principles of mindfulness, listening sensitively and responding effectively will enable working to the strengths of all involved in the process. Strategies to promote co-operative relationships with identification, management and resolution of any potential conflict or distress in ways that embody the values of mindfulness will underpin practical work, as in professional practice. Post-practice inquiry considers the impact of activities on attention, wellbeing and esteem; reflections on insights and techniques emerging from personal mindfulness practice provide further opportunities for critical evaluation.

Communication

Although skills in *Communication* are not formally assessed, demonstrating effective and appropriate communication with peers and young adults is integral to achievement. Background research requires consideration, analysis and critical evaluation of complex information and authoritative source materials. In all Outcomes the written/oral presentation of complex information is presented in the most appropriate structure and format to meet the needs of purpose and audience. Leading, attending and listening during practical group sessions requires using sophisticated verbal and non-verbal communication techniques, including use of silence, to meet diverse needs in sensitive settings.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Problem Solving

All elements of the Core Skill of *Problem Solving* — Critical Thinking, Planning, Organising, Reviewing and Evaluating — will be naturally developed and enhanced as candidate-facilitators plan, implement monitor and review practice and post-practice inquiry. All factors impacting on achievement will require be critically analysed and available resources considered drawing from experiences and insights of facilitation with young people. Implementation will include strategies to ensure the privacy and safety of the inquiry space and appropriate structuring of time. Evaluation will consider strategies selected in terms of the theories and concepts of mindfulness practice.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Use of *ICT* in researching and presenting written evidence is not mandatory but will enhance existing skills. Accessing, using and storing electronic data will reflect professional approaches to working practice. Efficient systems of recording and storing information for ease of reference and access will be required. The responsible and secure use of equipment and software applications will be routine practice. E-assessment or use of e-portfolios or social software may be practical.

The Unit enhances skills for learning, life and work and there is a particular emphasis on wellbeing and employability.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for candidate-facilitators

Unit title: Facilitating Mindfulness Techniques with Young Adults (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.

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This Unit is designed to develop your experience and understanding of mindfulness practice so that you can embody and facilitate it to teenagers and young adults. The Unit examines the philosophical origins of mindfulness, its secular development and research evidence and focuses on three primary areas of practice: mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feelings and mindfulness of thoughts.

The Outcomes of this Unit are:

- ◆ Explain the underlying concepts of mindfulness practice drawing from current research evidence and personal experience
- ◆ Guide a range of mindfulness practices from mindfulness of body, mindfulness of feelings and mindfulness of thoughts
- ◆ Lead and facilitate post-practice inquiry suitable for a young adult group

On completion of this Unit, you should have deepened your own personal practice of mindfulness as well as your understanding of its theory and application. You will have had the opportunity to practise how to introduce and guide a range of mindfulness practices, appropriate to young adults, and be aware of how to approach and facilitate post-practice inquiry.

The Unit may be assessed both via written work on the background and application of mindfulness in education and through performance assessment of your explanation, guidance and facilitation of inquiry into the practices you lead.

The Unit may be taught using a range of exposition from existing research and tutor personal experience, as well as further reading and online resources on the subject of mindfulness and teaching mindfulness to young people. You will also be encouraged to undertake extensive mindfulness practice, both in each session and as homework and may be invited to participate in some reflective activities and journaling in order to deepen your own awareness and in preparation for the end of Unit assessments.

You may have the opportunity to develop Core Skills in *Communication* and *Problem Solving* at SCQF level 6, and *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)* at SCQF level 5.